<u>The University of Edinburgh</u>

**Senate Education Committee
Thursday 10 September 2020, 2.00pm
Conducted via Microsoft Teams**

A G E N D A

1. Welcome and Apologies

2. Minutes of Meeting held on 24 June 2020   SEC 20/21 1 A

3. Convener's Communications

4. For Discussion

4.1 Student Survey Results September 2020   SEC 20/21 1 B

4.2 PGR Covid Survey: Themes and Actions   SEC 20/21 1 C

4.3 University of Edinburgh Students' Association Vice- SEC 20/21 1 D
     President Education Priorities 2020/21

4.4 PGR Matters: Verbal Update

   4.4.1 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)
   4.4.2 Allowing In-Person Supervision
   4.4.2 Policy Changes Around Remote Vivas

4.5 Recommendations for Online Examinations and SEC 20/21 1 E
     Assessment

4.6 Virtual Classroom Policy   SEC 20/21 1 F

4.7 Internal Periodic Review of Centre for Open Learning – SEC 20/21 1 G
     Recommendation Remitted to Senate Education Committee

4.8 Committee Effectiveness Review – Questionnaire Initial SEC 20/21 1 H
     Analysis

5. For Information

5.1 Senate Education Committee Priorities 2020/21   SEC 20/21 1 I

5.2 Course Enhancement Questionnaires – Hybrid Teaching SEC 20/21 1 J
     Questions

6.   Electronic Business Conducted Between Meetings

6.1   Guiding Principles for Personal Tutors and Student Support   SEC 20/21 1 K
Staff
*(Considered by electronic business between 11 and 27
August 2020)*

7.   Any Other Business

**Minutes of the Meeting of Senate Education Committee
held via Microsoft Teams at 9.00am on Wednesday 24 June 2020**

1.	Attendance

Present	Position
Colm Harmon	Vice-Principal Students (Convener) – Ex Officio
Tina Harrison	Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance (Deputy Convener) – Ex Officio
Sabine Rolle	Representative of CAHSS (Learning and Teaching)
Lisa Kendall	Representative of CAHSS (Learning and Teaching)
Stephen Bowd	Representative of CAHSS (Postgraduate Research)
Judy Hardy	Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching)
Michael Seery	Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching)
Antony Maciocia	Representative of CSE (Postgraduate Research)
Neil Turner	Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching, UG)
Sarah Henderson	Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching, PGT)
Paddy Hadoke	Representative of CMVM (Postgraduate Research)
Richard Andrews	Head of School, CAHSS
Mike Shipston	Head of Deanery, CMVM
Fizzy Abou Jawad	Edinburgh University Students' Association, Vice President Education
Stuart Lamont	Edinburgh University Students' Association, Permanent Staff Member
Sue MacGregor	Director of Academic Services – Ex Officio
Velda McCune	Representing Director of Institute for Academic Development – Ex Officio
Shelagh Green	Director for Careers & Employability – Ex Officio
Melissa Highton	Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Services Division of Information Services – Ex Officio
Philippa Ward	Academic Services (Secretary)
Apologies	
Iain Gordon	Head of School, CSE
Rebecca Gaukroger	Director of Student Recruitment & Admissions – Ex Officio
In Attendance	
Laura Cattell	Widening Participation, and Representing Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions
Nicola Crowley	Head of Administration – Medical Education, CMVM
Neil McCormick	Educational Technology Policy Officer, Information Services
Paula Webster	Head of Student Data and Surveys

2. Minutes of Meeting held on 25 May 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2020 were approved.

Postgraduate Research Governance (Item 3.2)

Members noted that the CAHSS Dean of Postgraduate Studies had joined the Adaptation and Renewal Team (ART) to represent the Doctoral College.

3. Convener's Communications

3.1 Update on COVID-19 Recovery – Adaptation and Renewal

The Convener advised members that the work being undertaken by ART was fast paced. Further consideration was being given to the best way of communicating outputs.

The current priority for Communications and Marketing was clarifying the arrangements for returning students, although it was difficult to provide specific information about teaching at this stage due to uncertainty over social distancing requirements. Information gathered from students in their penultimate years of study suggested that they were comfortable with the idea of lectures being delivered online, but were seeking reassurance around the arrangements for small group, workshop and seminar work which they would prefer to be delivered face to face.

It was difficult for the University to predict levels of recruitment for 2020/21. The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) was discouraging home and RUK students from deferring, but the situation with international recruitment remained uncertain. The data being gathered - for example around uptake of offers of accommodation - was encouraging, and College Admissions Offices were working hard to ensure that as many students with offers as possible matriculated.

Members agreed that reassuring returning students was a high priority, as was providing ongoing support for Postgraduate Research Students.

Members were asked to encourage those within their constituencies to share best practice around the development of hybrid teaching via the Edinburgh Hybrid Teaching Exchange https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/learningexchange/

Action: All members to encourage those within their constituencies to share best practice around the development of hybrid teaching via the Edinburgh Hybrid Teaching Exchange.

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4. For Discussion

4.1 Proposals for Student Support and Personal Tutors in MBChB

The paper was presented by the Head of Administration for Medical Education, who advised members that CMVM had been considering the way in which MBChB students were supported for some time. The University's Review of Student Support and Personal Tutoring and the COVID-19 pandemic had provided further opportunities to review the existing system.

The Committee noted that, at present, many MBChB Personal Tutors are NHS clinicians who are paid for the role. However, workload, lack of access to University systems, and poor communication between Personal Tutors and the Medical School can make the role challenging.

The MBChB Year Co-ordinators are the members of staff who are most consistently in touch with students and with placement staff who might raise concerns about students' wellbeing. The paper therefore proposed the redefining of the MBChB Year Co-ordinator role to give Co-ordinators the authority to triage student support issues. The Co-ordinator would be supported by an expanded Student Wellbeing team and NHS professional mentors who would recruited to empower, encourage and act as role models for students. The mentors would not be remunerated for their services but would be issued with honorary contracts to maintain a connection with the University.

The Committee discussed the need to define and review the professional mentor role carefully to ensure consistency of student experience. Caseload for the Year Co-ordinators was also discussed. It was recognised that numbers of students per Year Co-ordinator would be high, but the Medical School was confident that the model was workable.

Members supported and approved the proposed changes. It was recognised that the MBChB system differed from that which had been agreed through the Review of Student Support and Personal Tutoring. However, it was considered to be appropriate for the MBChB programme, and the Committee agreed that there was sufficient flexibility within the agreed student support model to accommodate the MBChB structure.

4.2   Online Assessment 2020-21 – Discussion Paper from CMVM

The Committee noted the concerns that exist around ensuring that assessed work undertaken by students online is both robust and secure. Members discussed:

- the value of ongoing dialogue with students, which makes it easier to identify anomalous performance;
- the possibilities around online proctoring, although in general, Schools would prefer to find alternative ways of ensuring that assessments are secure;
- essay mills - the Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance advised the Committee that student-led guidance highlighting the dangers for students of using essay mills was planned;
- whether the repurposing of closed book exams as open book exams for the May 2020 exam diet had inadvertently encouraged poor scholarship;
- the need to understand the full impact of the May 2020 exam diet;
- ways in which poor scholarship and plagiarism might be designed out;

- the potential to make greater use of vivas, although the Committee recognised that undertaking selective vivas raises concerns around equity, particularly for students with disabilities;
- the need to ensure that exams were fair for all students, remaining mindful of the fact that not all students have access to the same technology and networks;
- the value of undertaking benchmarking against other institutions;
- the need to ensure that any required policy and regulatory changes are made as quickly as possible;
- and overall, the importance of cultivating an atmosphere of trust and a compassionate approach. It was agreed that the University should be relying more on ongoing dialogue and encouraging good scholarship than on proctoring and plagiarism detection tools.

Members agreed that a task force should be set up within the Curriculum Resilience stream of the ART programme to give further consideration to issues around online assessment.

Action: Convener to discuss the establishment of a working group on online assessment with the Deputy Secretary, Strategic Planning.

4.3 Consultation on Proposals to Alter the Teaching Day / Week for Semester 1 2020/21

The Committee noted that the paper was based on a requirement for 2 metre social distancing and that by the time the University returned to teaching in September 2020, this may no longer be necessary. However it was agreed that it was important to plan for all possible scenarios.

Members recognised the significant work that had gone into developing the model outlined in the paper, but had substantial concerns about the implications for both student and staff wellbeing of introducing Saturday teaching. There were also some concerns around normalising an extended teaching day. Members discussed:

- the fact that the proposed changes could extend inequities for students and be particularly difficult for those with caring responsibilities or part time employment;
- the potential difficulties an extended working week might cause for those using public transport;
- payment of staff – would staff teaching outside of normal hours be paid at the same rate?
- the potential impact on staff morale of poor attendance of out-of-hours classes;
- concerns around workload and fairness in the allocation of teaching slots in areas of the University that do not have effective workload allocation models;
- the fact that the proposed changes would impact not only on students and teaching staff but also on support services, for example teaching office, laboratory and technological support staff;
- the importance of maintaining space within the week for students to undertake extra-curricular activities.

The Committee therefore agreed that the existing timetabling constraints should remain in place for curricular activity, but that Schools should be allowed flexibility to access teaching spaces outside of core times for non-curricular engagement with student cohorts.

The Committee also agreed that modelling going forward should be based on 1.5m social distancing.

4.4 COVID-19 Undergraduate Survey

Members welcomed the paper which focussed on students' experiences of digital learning in the last three to four months, their well-being and priorities outside their studies.

The Committee discussed the way in which the feedback loop might be closed. It was agreed that there would be benefit in asking Schools to consider practical ways in which they might respond to the survey's findings and to share these via the Hybrid Teaching Exchange.

> **Action:** Members to encourage Schools to consider ways in which they might respond to the survey's findings, and to share these via the Edinburgh Hybrid Teaching Exchange.

4.5 Learning Technology:

4.5.1 LTW Learning Technology Update for Semester 1

Members noted the paper.

4.5.2 Virtual Classroom Policy

Whilst recognising that it was preferable to deliver smaller group teaching face to face, the Committee agreed that the University should ensure that it had a policy in place to support the delivery of teaching and learning via the Virtual Classroom.

The Committee welcomed the content of the draft Virtual Classroom Policy but were concerned about proliferation of University policies. It was therefore agreed that the new content would be incorporated into the existing Lecture Recording Policy.

It was noted that there would be benefit in clarifying what was meant by 'a student is…recorded': in Collaborate, this could mean showing their face by video, speaking, chatting or, for example, voting.

Principle 12 within the draft Policy was felt to be difficult to enforce on account of the editing skills potentially required.

Members suggested that there would be benefit in extending the scope of the Policy to cover teaching delivered via Zoom or Microsoft Teams in addition to Collaborate.

5. For Information

5.1 Annual Monitoring: Changes due to COVID-19 Outbreak

Members noted the changes made to annual monitoring processes in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Philippa Ward
Academic Services
25 June 2020

Senate Education Committee

10 September 2020

Student Survey Results September 2020

Description of paper

1. The aim of this paper is to help colleagues understand what is driving low levels of Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate student satisfaction at the University of Edinburgh[1].

2. In doing so, this paper attempts to answer two questions:

    a. Are there significant differences in levels of satisfaction between different student groups?
    b. What insights can we draw from feedback in open comments on the issues that are driving low levels of student satisfaction at the University of Edinburgh?

Action requested/Recommendation

3. Education Committee are asked to discuss the findings presented in this paper.

Background and context

4. Since 2017 overall satisfaction in the NSS has fallen from 83% to 78% and the University of Edinburgh consistently appears in the bottom quartile of the Russell Group.

5. Overall satisfaction amongst Postgraduate Taught students has fluctuated in the last three years (from 79.3% in 2018 to 83.2% in 2019 and back down to 78.3% in 2020). In 2020 The University is ranked 42nd out of 68 participating institutions for overall satisfaction and in the bottom quartile for satisfaction with assessment and feedback (53rd place).

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[1] The full results for both the NSS and PTES are available here.

Discussion

Are there significant differences in levels of satisfaction between different student groups?

National Student Survey[2]

6. *There are significant differences in levels of satisfaction between different groups of students at the University of Edinburgh. That being said, whilst the differences between groups are statistically significant, they are not large enough to materially affect the overall level of satisfaction reported by our students. To improve NSS scores, the University will need to improve the student experience for all students.*

7. Female students are significantly more satisfied than male students with the feedback they receive on work and the helpfulness of comments provided (55% of female students compared to 49% of male students and 62% of female students compared to 56% of male students respectively). Satisfaction with assessment and feedback has a positive correlation with the percentage of female students in a School ($r = 0.53$) although if Informatics (which has a very low satisfaction score (27%) and a predominantly male undergraduate student body) is removed from the dataset there is no meaningful correlation ($r = 0.36$).

8. Mature students (aged over 21 on entry) are more likely to be satisfied with their experience of assessment and feedback (67% compared to 59% of young students), academic support (79% compared to 70%) and learning community (76% compared to 69%). Mature students are, however, significantly less satisfied with the timetable (75% compared to 82%). There are only weak correlations between the percentage of mature students in Schools and satisfaction scores.

9. Students with disabilities are less satisfied than students with no disabilities in nearly all areas of the survey. The satisfaction scores of students with specific learning disabilities are reported separately to students with other forms of disability. Students with disabilities other than learning disabilities are significantly less likely to feel that marking and assessment has been fair than students with no disabilities (57% compared to 66% of students with no disabilities) and are significantly less satisfied with learning resources (80% compared to 87%).

10. On the whole, UK students are less satisfied than students from the EU or outside the EU. UK students are significantly less satisfied than Overseas students with assessment and feedback (58% compared to 65% of overseas

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[2] The university receives aggregate data for the NSS so analysis by student characteristics is only possible at a university level. As some groups of students are more likely to take specific subjects this analysis included a review of the distribution of student groups in different Schools. Whilst this doesn't normalise the impact of different levels of satisfaction at a School level on the overall levels of satisfaction within student groups, it does help us to infer that there is a relationship between subject, student type and satisfaction (although the direction of this relationship can't be pinned down as correlations can't indicate causation).

students). Counterintuitively, there is a positive correlation between the percentage of home UG students in a School and satisfaction with assessment and feedback at School level (r = 0.42) although it appears that the very low score for Informatics which has a high proportion of international students skews the results. When this outlier is removed there is no evidence of a correlation (r = 0.15). Unfortunately it's not possible to disaggregate Scottish and RUK students in this data.

11. No significant differences were found when satisfaction rates for students from SIMD Quintile 1 & 2 areas were compared with Scottish students from other areas. There were only 170 respondents from WP neighbourhoods.

Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey

12. *Again, there are significant differences in levels of satisfaction between different groups of PGT students. These findings aren't, however, particularly helpful in understanding how PGT student satisfaction can be improved.*

13. Overall female PGT students are less satisfied than their male peers (77% compared to 80% for male students). This difference isn't statistically significant and there are no significant differences across the other primary themes in this survey.

14. The differences in satisfaction between younger (aged 21 to 24 on entry) and older students are the reverse of those seen for undergraduate students with younger PGT students reporting greater levels of satisfaction on the whole than older students[3]. Younger PGT students are significantly more satisfied with employability (74% compared to 69%) and with student safety (86% compared to 79%).

15. Satisfaction for PGT students can be broken down by fee status so Scottish students can be disaggregated from RUK students. As with the NSS, students from outside the EU are the most satisfied (77% of Overseas fee students are satisfied overall compared to 75% of Scottish students and 59% of RUK students). Satisfaction amongst RUK students is lower than that for Scottish students across all the primary themes of the survey and significantly lower for overall satisfaction and employability (58% compared to 71%).

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[3] For overall satisfaction older students are more satisfied (79.6% compared to 76.6%).

Findings from analysis of survey comments

16. Comments from PGT students refer to Covid-19 more frequently than comments from final year undergraduates. This is due to the different timings of these surveys. Just over 60% of the responses to the NSS had been collected by the time the UK went into lockdown whereas PTES opened in May 2020. Both sets of comments made frequent reference to the disruption caused by the UCU strikes. It is likely that Covid-19 and the impact of strikes will appear as issues in student comments, particularly in the NSS, for the next two or three years.

17. A key theme across all Schools in both surveys was a lack of consistency in experience. This covers many areas of teaching and learning from the level of support provided by Personal Tutors to the availability of office hours. For some students their experience is seen to be something of a lottery.

18. Teaching quality and the excellence, experience and knowledge of academics at Edinburgh comes through the comments in both surveys as a key strength. A key weakness is the (smaller number) of academics who don't meet expectations. Some comments describe members of staff who are 'aloof' or more interested in pursuing their research than in teaching.

19. Positive and negative comments relate to the amount of choice. Students often like the range of courses they can take however for others there is a problematic lack of structure and it is difficult for students to see a logical progression and development in their learning as they can't see any overarching programme aims and how their courses relate to these.

20. Joint honours UG students have a particularly difficult experience. Students relate that they don't belong in either School and receive different, often contradictory advice from them. Specific issues mentioned in comments include changing courses.

21. Lack of consistency is a particular issue for assessment and feedback and student comments go some way to explaining low satisfaction scores in this area. Students frequently relate that they are unclear what is expected of them in assessments. Mark schemes are either not shared or students believe they aren't applied uniformly – making some courses 'easier' than others. Marks are seen to be driven by the preferences of the marker rather than an objective evaluation of the student's work – this is a sentiment expressed more frequently by students in the College of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences. Students don't feel like they can predict what the outcome of a piece of assessed work will be.

22. Informatics has performed particularly badly this year in assessment and feedback in the NSS. One comment indicates why this might be:

    "The school is currently pursuing an agenda of reducing the number of firsts that are given out; however, they are going about it in a totally arbitrary and inconsistent manner."

23. A number of UG respondents from Informatics mentioned that they had been told that they were being held back from achieving a first class degree.

24. The quality and timeliness of feedback remains an issue. Comments from both UG and PGT students focus on the delay in receiving feedback and that on many occasions feedback doesn't help them to improve. To improve satisfaction with assessment and feedback the 15 day turnaround time needs to be addressed and the quality of feedback improved. Student comments indicate that the deadline is frequently missed. What is more important to students is that good quality, constructive feedback is delivered ahead of the next assessment.

25. Comments indicate that the work required for different assessments is inconsistent. Some students indicate that they have assessments for lower credit courses that take longer to complete than those for higher credit courses. This relates to a broader theme on work / life balance that came through comments in some Schools.

26. The University itself is perceived as remote. Where students refer to the university 'management' they do so in a negative light. In part comments relate to the strike action and tend to express sympathy with the teaching staff they have more contact with. Comments in both surveys indicate that some students believe that the University is only interested in them as a source of income. For PGT students in particular the size of programmes and lack of contact hours are related issues. PGT degrees are seen to represent poor value for money.

27. The provision of mental health support is a strong theme in NSS comments. Students feel that support services do not meet their needs.

Conclusions

28. There are significant differences in levels of satisfaction between different groups of students at a University level. Eliminating these differences is unlikely to materially increase student satisfaction scores in either the NSS or PTES.

29. Open comments help to shape our understanding of what needs to change in the Edinburgh student experience to improve levels of satisfaction for all students. Assessment and feedback remains a significant issue and providing assessment and feedback to scaffold learning in a consistent way will be key to this.

30. Comments relate to the lack of consistency across courses means that students have to learn and then relearn how to be a student in each course they take. Comments indicate that standardising what students should expect on courses and how they can access support would help to improve students' experiences of teaching and learning. Some standardisation between as well as within Schools would help to improve the experience of joint honours students.

31. Edinburgh is a large institution and comments indicate that students can feel anonymous. Structures like personal tutor and student support could go some way to helping students feel like they belong.

Risk Management

32. N/A

Equality & Diversity

33. N/A

Next steps & Communications

34. More benchmarking and long term trend analysis is planned.

Consultation

N/A

Further information

Author	*Presenter*
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Head of Student Analytics, Insights & Modelling	Head of Student Analytics, Insights & Modelling

Freedom of Information

Open paper

Appendix:

Table 1 NSS - UoE vs Sector for primary themes

		2017	2018	2019	2020	2019 to 2020	2017 to 2020
The teaching on my course	UoE	84.3	82.0	83.0	83.1	0.11	-1.2
	Sector	84.6	84.2	84.1	83.9	-0.26	-0.8
Learning opportunities	UoE	78.4	77.1	77.9	77.7	-0.19	-0.7
	Sector	83.6	83.1	83.2	82.9	-0.28	-0.7
Assessment and feedback	UoE	63.3	60.8	61.4	59.3	-2.11	-4.0
	Sector	73.4	73.3	73.4	72.6	-0.77	-0.8
Academic support	UoE	74.1	71.1	70.9	71.1	0.19	-3.0
	Sector	79.9	79.6	79.9	79.4	-0.43	-0.5
Organisation and management	UoE	74.8	69.3	72.1	71.9	-0.14	-2.9
	Sector	75.3	74.7	75.0	73.8	-1.23	-1.5
Learning resources	UoE	86.4	85.7	85.2	86.3	1.1	-0.1
	Sector	85.2	85.4	85.8	85.8	0	0.6
Learning community	UoE	73.5	69.9	67.7	69.2	1.47	-4.3
	Sector	77.2	76.6	75.9	75.7	-0.24	-1.6
Student Voice	UoE	66.7	65.2	66.8	65.6	-1.11	-1.1
	Sector	73.2	73.3	73.7	73.6	-0.1	0.4
The students' association	UoE	41.7	41.6	38.6	39.5	0.94	-2.2
	Sector	56.8	56.5	55.7	56.0	0.33	-0.8
Overall satisfaction	UoE	82.6	77.4	78.5	77.6	-0.9	-5.0
	Sector	84.2	83.5	83.7	82.7	-1	-1.5

Table 2 2020 Results by School

	The teaching on my course	Learning opportunities	Assessment and feedback	Academic support	Organisation and management	Learning resources	Learning community	Student Voice	Students Association	Overall satisfaction	No. Respondents
UoE	83.1	77.7	59.3	71.1	71.9	86.3	69.2	65.6	39.5	77.6	3012
BIO	82.7	75.4	55.4	76.2	80.3	84.4	79.2	65.7	43.1	80.8	126
BMS	83.3	77.6	62.2	72.6	78.9	87.3	67.3	70.0	36.1	84.0	150
BUS	75.2	73.2	56.1	67.1	79.0	81.7	70.3	58.8	36.7	67.8	153
CHE	86.3	79.1	63.5	78.1	70.4	86.0	78.4	70.6	31.3	83.2	102
DIV	88.6	81.0	62.1	72.9	80.0	83.8	64.3	75.2	39.4	85.7	35
ECA	80.3	76.7	64.5	67.3	66.6	81.8	70.5	59.5	40.8	68.4	280
ECN	77.8	68.7	60.1	67.0	75.6	85.6	58.8	65.8	29.8	73.2	97
EDU	86.0	83.3	60.2	77.2	69.5	87.7	81.5	71.2	52.0	79.2	221
ENG	76.7	78.5	48.5	67.0	73.0	85.8	74.6	65.5	47.5	74.3	183
GEO	85.2	83.7	64.6	73.7	71.8	87.7	75.2	74.8	42.9	78.7	123
HCA	82.6	72.6	55.8	66.4	73.4	83.3	45.3	54.6	27.2	74.8	203
HEA	93.0	93.8	86.7	90.6	88.5	95.8	89.1	89.6	83.9	90.6	32
INF	69.3	68.9	27.3	64.8	63.0	88.0	72.5	56.7	31.3	69.2	118
LAW	81.9	69.4	52.5	56.6	70.5	77.1	58.5	59.5	36.8	78.6	112

	The teaching on my course	Learning opportunities	Assessment and feedback	Academic support	Organisation and management	Learning resources	Learning community	Student Voice	Students Association	Overall satisfaction	No. Respondents
LLC	83.5	77.7	62.4	67.8	69.5	86.5	62.7	59.0	30.8	73.0	245
MAT	87.5	75.2	74.4	80.9	85.8	90.7	76.8	72.8	40.3	90.2	82
MED	91.5	89.4	63.1	79.0	62.1	92.7	91.3	77.1	52.8	87.4	183
PHY	83.3	74.8	66.3	78.3	83.8	86.9	70.5	65.7	19.7	83.3	66
PPL	84.1	71.5	53.9	69.0	73.0	91.0	48.1	61.1	37.0	77.7	185
SPS	81.6	76.6	55.1	60.1	68.4	86.7	52.2	60.4	33.5	72.9	182
VET	97.9	92.4	78.2	92.3	69.3	89.1	95.0	87.3	58.6	94.7	131

Table 3 PTES Primary Theme Scores

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2019 - 2020	2016 - 2020
Assessment and Feedback	72.3	73.7	70.3	73.0	71.8	-1.2	-0.5
Dissertation or Major Project	79.5	78.9	78.3	81.3	80.1	-1.2	0.6
Employability	-	-	-	75.2	71.0	-4.2	-
Engagement	78.9	79.0	78.0	79.5	78.2	-1.3	-0.7
Organisation and Management	75.3	75.0	71.9	76.8	74.0	-2.8	-1.3
Overall Satisfaction	84.0	82.9	79.3	83.2	78.3	-4.9	-5.7
Resources and Services	86.0	87.4	87.2	86.8	84.4	-2.4	-1.6
Skills Development	76.3	76.3	74.8	77.8	75.2	-2.6	-1.0
Teaching and Learning	83.2	83.2	81.2	84.0	81.3	-2.8	-1.9

Table 4 PTES results by School 2020

	Assessment and Feedback	Dissertation or Major Project	Employability	Engagement	Organisation and Management	Overall Satisfaction	Resources and Services	Skills Development	Student Safety	Teaching and Learning
BUS	69.0	76.1	82.8	78.8	73.0	72.4	87.4	80.1	89.6	77.9
CSE	80.9	36.8	71.0	85.5	74.5	93.9	85.2	73.0	72.7	87.8
BMS	73.2	83.2	69.7	79.4	73.3	83.2	82.9	78.0	75.9	80.5
CLI	79.1	77.6	79.3	81.2	78.7	88.6	82.3	84.1	74.3	84.6
MGP	74.0	82.4	74.1	80.2	74.6	87.4	87.0	79.9	82.2	86.0
ECA	64.9	77.2	64.2	73.3	64.6	70.9	74.4	71.8	82.9	73.8
MED	97.7	97.8	84.4	93.3	93.8	100.0	91.9	86.2	83.7	97.4
EDU	76.8	83.1	73.9	80.8	75.3	80.7	84.1	75.9	82.4	81.9
VET	77.8	79.4	71.4	82.0	81.7	89.2	87.4	78.6	77.1	88.5
BIO	77.1	80.9	74.9	77.5	77.9	80.7	87.6	74.3	86.0	88.3
CHE	88.9	90.6	94.4	88.9	94.4	94.4	95.8	92.6	97.2	89.6
DIV	71.4	75.0	54.5	71.4	87.0	85.7	80.4	65.0	88.9	80.6

	Assessment and Feedback	Dissertation or Major Project	Employability	Engagement	Organisation and Management	Overall Satisfaction	Resources and Services	Skills Development	Student Safety	Teaching and Learning
ECO	86.9	87.9	86.8	86.6	82.8	96.3	94.4	79.6	100.0	94.2
ENG	73.1	85.5	87.8	79.0	83.2	89.4	89.0	82.0	93.3	87.3
GEO	70.0	82.0	70.3	77.3	79.5	82.4	87.2	77.3	91.5	85.4
HEA	69.3	74.9	64.8	71.7	66.7	63.2	84.6	67.6	77.5	71.9
HCA	61.7	74.7	51.0	68.6	60.5	56.3	78.4	61.2	69.8	71.0
INF	57.4	88.1	74.1	74.1	76.1	87.3	88.3	79.3	89.4	84.2
LAW	71.3	84.6	68.1	76.9	75.1	78.5	84.7	74.1	84.1	81.9
LLC	76.2	80.2	58.5	83.4	74.1	71.1	79.5	68.9	76.5	81.9
MAT	71.3	84.1	87.3	81.6	82.9	89.7	93.5	77.8	91.6	90.0
PPL	65.4	80.4	58.0	80.7	71.5	76.0	86.7	68.6	76.8	81.4
PHY	49.1	71.2	61.5	62.9	62.3	64.3	72.3	61.9	64.3	78.6
SPS	66.8	73.2	65.2	76.0	67.1	70.2	83.4	72.4	80.9	77.4
UoE	71.8	80.0	71.0	78.2	74.0	78.3	84.4	75.2	82.6	81.3

Table 5 Student Safety Questions - NSS and PTES 2020

	NSS			PTES		
	Student safety	I feel safe to be myself at university/college.	My institution takes responsibility for my safety.	Student safety	I feel safe to be myself at university/college.	My institution takes responsibility for my safety.
UoE	75.4	88.7	62.0	82.5	89.2	75.8
BIO	77.0	88.1	66.2	86.0	93.0	78.9
BMS	73.7	89.7	57.7	75.3	85.9	64.6
BUS	69.2	83.6	54.2	89.6	93.5	85.7
CHE	75.5	82.4	68.6	97.2	100.0	94.4
CSC				74.3	76.6	71.9
DIV	66.7	86.7	46.7	88.7	92.9	84.6
ECA	75.5	88.5	62.5	82.8	88.6	77.1
ECN	76.1	89.1	63.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
EDU	71.0	86.7	54.7	82.4	88.3	76.5
ENG	83.1	88.7	77.5	93.3	98.1	88.5
GEO	82.9	92.9	72.9	91.5	95.6	87.5
HCA	63.7	81.7	45.3	69.9	79.7	60.0
HEA	86.8	94.7	79.0	77.3	88.6	66.1
INF	81.4	94.2	68.0	89.4	93.0	85.9
LAW	75.0	87.5	62.5	84.1	91.0	77.1
LLC	73.5	90.2	56.3	76.2	90.6	61.8
MAT	75.9	92.6	59.3	91.6	96.9	86.3
MED	89.1	95.5	82.7	83.7	83.3	84.0
MGP				82.1	89.6	74.7
PHY	77.1	91.4	62.9	64.3	71.4	57.1

	NSS			PTES		
	Student safety	I feel safe to be my self at university/co llege.	My institution takes responsibility for m y safety.	Student safety	I feel safe to be my self at university/co llege.	My institution takes responsibility for m y safety.
PPL	60.5	81.0	39.8	76.7	85.8	67.6
SPS	67.0	86.7	46.9	80.9	88.8	72.9
VET	92.4	96.2	88.5	77.0	81.3	72.8

NSS Comments - School Summaries

Students are asked to provide one positive and one negative comment.

School	Positive Comments	Negative Comments
BIO	- Sense of community in final year – field trips given as an example of a way of fostering that. Could more be done to generate a sense of community earlier on? - A key theme and often repeated comments made on the quality of teaching and how supportive some staff are - Courses provide a good level of challenge and interest	- Focus on assessment and feedback – unclear marking schemes and perceptions of unfairness in assessments - Feedback is lacking in detail and returned too late to act upon - Whilst some staff are praised others are described as 'aloof' or 'dismissive.' Some students report a lack of empathy when dealing with special circumstances or issues like changes during Covid-19 - Staff 'don't want to teach'
CHE	- Comments reflect sense of community and students express gratitude to staff for organising extra events that help to foster that sense of togetherness – 'welcoming environment' - The quality of teaching and learning is a strong theme - Quality of links with industry - Opportunities to feedback for students and a perception that the School listens to and engages with that feedback	- Some students have found the changes to the curriculum difficult to deal with and this has led to confusion re. requirements for assessments. Several students refer to themselves as 'guinea pigs' - Whilst some staff receive very high praise others are described as 'apathetic' or unkind
ENG	- Hands on and industry experience are valued by students - Some members of staff are described as excellent teachers - Variety and breadth of study	- Volume of assessments – too many deadlines mean it's difficult to produce good quality work - Teaching quality is seen as varied – 'lecturers do not care about the students' - Feedback from students is perceived to be 'brushed under the carpet' - Feedback on assessment is late and doesn't arrive in time for students to act on it
GEO	- Field trips (and the financial support for these) - Students feel that the School leadership listens to and responds to student feedback	- Students comment on a lack of organisation and confused communications - Students on joint degrees don't feel part of the School

School	Positive Comments	Negative Comments
	• Lecturers are engaging and impart a love of their subject • Students feel supported – that they can reach out for help	• Students comment on a lack of consistency in the marks they receive for assessments • There are too many students and not enough space to study • Some students fed back that there was a lack of structure to their degrees. Some joint honours students have found navigating their course choices difficult
INF	• Students like the range of course options that are open to them • Computing facilities • Students feel part of a community • Students feel that lecturers are experts in their subject and are supportive of their learning – 'treat students as equal partners'	• Issues with assessment and feedback dominate negative comments (bears out satisfaction score of 27%) • Feedback / results are not returned on time (or in time to be useful) • Perception that mark schemes are inconsistent between courses so it is difficult for students to know how to do well and a feeling that assessments are unfair as some courses are easier than others • Marking is seen to be inconsistent • "The school is currently pursuing an agenda of reducing the number of firsts that are given out; however, they are going about it in a totally arbitrary and inconsistent manner." • Students feel that their feedback is ignored – particularly around the organisation of courses / assessments which is viewed as poor • Some students reflect that the course can be too theoretical which does not adequately prepare them for entering the workforce • Comments indicate that students feel that the workload expected of them is unrealistic and does not support an appropriate work / life balance or the need for some students to work part time
MAT	• The majority of the positive comments relate to the quality of the teaching and friendliness of staff • Students like the amount of choice they have • Students have access to study space	• Negative comments also relate to teaching with some students feeling that the quality of teaching is variable between courses • Perception that assessments and marking standards are inconsistent • Students feel unsupported in their first year although this improves in later years

School	Positive Comments	Negative Comments
		• Students feel that they have been negatively affected by the strikes
PHY	• Positive comments relate to the quality of teaching • Staff are seen as friendly and approachable • Personal tutor support is seen to be effective • Students like the opportunities presented in the Summer projects	• Negative comments also frequently relate to the quality of teaching • Students feel that student numbers have expanded to their detriment e.g. unable to find space in the library, courses filling up too quickly, too few services • Poor provision of mental health services is mentioned by a number of Physics students • Physics students appear to be particularly dissatisfied with the Students' Association
BMS	• Students enjoy the variety of subjects on offer on their programmes • Students comment positively on the quality of teaching and the experience and enthusiasm of their lecturers • Teaching and learning focuses on skills development and students can see how these skills can be applied in their careers • Students love the trip to Firbush which they feel improves relationships between staff and students	• Some students find the pre-honours part of their degree too broad and some struggle to feel part of a cohort • Students also feel that there is a lack of support in their pre-honours years although this improves as they move into their specialisms • Students find feedback on assessments unhelpful for developing their learning • Lack of effective Personal Tutor support for some students
MED	• Some students feel that their feedback is being listened too and some students comment on the improvements they have experienced • The quality of teaching • Students feel supported ahead of assessments e.g. revision weekends • Students feel the early registration due to Covid-19 has been well-handled	• Issues with course organisation and timetabling – late cancellations not communicated effectively • Some students have struggled with changes that have been made during their degrees • Feedback and results have been released late • Experience of student support / Personal Tutors varies greatly • Students can feel 'anonymous' on their programme • "Student feedback is gathered but isn't acted on - we were told directly by a senior member of staff that even if students say something, it doesn't mean the medical school have to do anything about it."
VET	• Students find staff welcoming and supportive • Community feel • "School take suggestions seriously"	• Administration can be disorganised e.g. issues with timetabling • Students can feel disconnected from the rest of the university at Easter Bush

School	Positive Comments	Negative Comments
		• Transport to and from Easter Bush can be difficult
BUS	• Students like the opportunity to study abroad • Variety of courses • Students praise the effort and quality of teaching provided by some staff	• Students don't feel supported with their academic work • Feedback on assessments is of varied quality and after the deadline • Students have been affected by the strikes • Students don't feel like they're part of a community: "Some of the lecturers couldn't pick you out in a line up" • Class sizes in pre-honours years can be 'overwhelming' • Lack of study space: "Undergraduate students treated like second-class citizens at Business School; no teaching occurs within the school building"
DIV	• Quality of teaching • Student support is praised	• Students comment on the lack of diversity amongst the student population • Students have been affected by the strikes • Some students have commented about "prejudicial and offensive views to be shared, masked as an opinion… I hope this behaviour dies out soon" • Space / facilities for students to make drinks or food in New College
ECA	• Students have good relationships with tutors • Resources available and studio space • Technicians provide excellent support	• Organisation (timetabling) • Impact of Covid-19 and Strikes (lack of teaching time and degree show) • Students don't feel that their feedback is taken on board or respected • Lack of contact / engagement with academic staff – office hours not kept or published • Some students feel that their workload is unrealistic and increases levels of stress
ECN	• Quality of teaching • Go Abroad Economics trips • Reading groups • EconPALS provides good support	• A number of students have commented on high levels of staff turnover and the knock on effect of this for their course choices • Joint degree students have struggled with a lack of coordination between their Schools

School	Positive Comments	Negative Comments
		• Personal Tutor system is failing to provide some students with appropriate levels of support • Cancelling the Go Abroad Economics scheme
EDU	• Placements • Peer learning in a supportive environment • Staff are generally supportive of students • Personal Tutors are effective	• Number of negative comments also relate to Personal Tutor support – not enough contact • Feedback on assessments lacks detail and received late • Marking is considered inconsistent • Students impacted by strike action – late communication about the cancellation of lectures
HCA	• Students like the diversity of courses on offer to them • Staff are approachable and their expertise is valued	• Experience is a lottery – some teaching excellent whilst other courses don't deliver to the same standard • Some students feel there is a lack of structure to their programmes • Low number of contact hours perceived to provide poor value for money • Feedback on assessment isn't returned in a timely manner • Marking is felt to be inconsistent • Students impacted by the strikes – comments about the loss of teaching • Lack of effective Personal Tutor support for some students • Students feel more satisfied with honours courses than pre-honours
HEA	• Sense of community – small cohort so people get to know each other • "The lecturers looked after us well and I felt like they really supported us and wanted us to do well." • The School is responsive to student feedback	• Some students feel there is too much emphasis placed on research
LAW	• Teaching quality and the expertise of lecturers • Staff are approachable and willing to help • Understanding around special circumstances	• Whilst teaching quality dominates the positive comments poor relationships between staff and students feature a lot in negative comments • Students have been affected by the strikes • Marking criteria are unclear and perception that grades aren't awarded fairly • Students feel the allocation of course choices based on prior performance is

School	Positive Comments	Negative Comments
		• inequitable – one student commented that it is demotivating • Lack of core texts or space in the Law library • Personal tutor support has been ineffective for some students • Students lack experience in writing essays as this doesn't form part of the assessment for pre-honours courses
LLC	• Year abroad experience • Small class sizes • Excellent teaching	• Students aren't clear about expectations for assessments and marking criteria • Students have been affected by the strikes • Lack of organisation / poor communications to support years abroad • Lack of library space • Few contact hours • Lack of organisation across courses • Poor experience on joint honours programme – no coherence and dis-jointed communications • Late return of feedback on assessments • Difficult to get in touch with some staff • Student feedback isn't listened to (School and University level)
PPL	• Expertise of teaching staff • Student feedback taken on board	• Experience of personal tutoring has been negative for some • Slow turnaround of feedback on assessments • Some lecturers are 'indifferent' to students • Joint honours students struggle due to lack of communication between Schools • No sense of community – students don't know each other and feel unknown by the university • Students affected by strikes
SPS	• Quality of teaching • Staff are supportive • Variety of courses	• Lack of co-ordination between Schools for joint honours students • Students affected by strikes • Students feel that feedback on assessments is unhelpful for further learning and not provided on time • Lack of clarity around marking criteria • Examples of poor organisation e.g. tutor prepared for wrong week, incorrect rooms allocated

School	Positive Comments	Negative Comments
		• Examples of racism / inappropriate language • Courses are oversubscribed • Students don't feel like they are part of a community

PTES Comments - School Summaries

Students are asked to comment after each section. Summaries here are of comments made about teaching and learning and assessment and feedback.

Where no summary is provided there were too few comments to discern overall themes.

School	Teaching & Learning	Assessment and Feedback
BIO	• Enthusiasm of staff • Staff are supportive	-
CHE	-	-
ENG	-	-
GEO	• Teaching quality varies – some students have the impression that some lecturers are more interested in their research than in teaching • Low contact hours are an issue (exacerbated by strikes and Covid-19)	• Experience is inconsistent and student comments are mixed – some have very good experiences whereas some students have either a mix of positive and negative experiences and others all negative experiences • Lack of clarity around assessment criteria and poor turnaround times for feedback are reasons for negative experiences
INF	• Lack of contact with staff – no office hours for questions • Students affected by the strike action	• Quality of feedback varies between courses
MAT	• Availability of office hours for student questions varies between staff	• Feedback is returned after the deadline • Marking is perceived to be subjective – criteria aren't clear
PHY	-	-
BMS	• Students feel that they have little contact with staff • Teaching experience varies a lot • Some lecturers demonstrate enthusiasm	• Mix of experiences in terms of timeliness of feedback • Some students would appreciate more feedback focused on how they can improve • Students would like to see marking criteria in advance of undertaking assessments
CLI	• Staff have done their best to provide teaching in what students recognise to be challenging circumstances • Students would benefit from more feedback	• Students unclear on marking criteria for some areas of assessment e.g. discussion boards • Feedback provided late

SEC 20/21 1 B

School	Teaching & Learning	Assessment and Feedback
MGP	• Many students describe their experience as 'excellent' although for some this is not consistent • Students would value more contact time	• Inconsistency in clarity of marking criteria for assessments and quality of feedback provided
MED	-	•
VET	• Excellent teaching • Responses on discussion boards can be slow (online programmes)	• Feedback sometimes not provided in time to inform next assessment • Some students find marking to be inconsistent
BUS	• Students have limited contact time with staff and this issue has been exacerbated by Covid-19 – students are unclear how to engage with staff • Teaching quality varies a lot between lecturers / tutors • Some students find individual lecturers difficult to understand	• Mark schemes are applied inconsistently • Feedback can take a long time • Feedback not constructive / students can't use feedback to develop their learning • Group work can be difficult due to language barriers
DIV	-	-
ECA	• Positive experiences appear to be driven by the efforts of individuals • Students have been negatively affected by strikes and Covid-19 • Some students are unhappy with the balance of 'lectures' and self-led / group work and presentations	• Different expectations re. referencing formats between tutors • Students sometimes unclear what is expected of them in assessments • Some feedback not provided in advance of next assessment
ECN	-	-
EDU	• Comments indicate students feel programmes are oversubscribed – students don't get enough 1-2-1 contact with staff: 'largely left to fend for ourselves' • Students affected by strike action • Staff are supportive of students – particularly during Covid-19	• "Again it was a pretty big spread. The courses that did it well, really hit the nail on the head and again they were fantastic to have been a part of. Equally though, some courses really missed the mark. The expectation for the work was unclear, feedback at time was non-existent for formative pieces."
HCA	• Students have been affected by the strike action • Some lecturers are excellent but the quality of teaching varies	• Expectations vary across courses • Comments indicate that some students feel that marks are subjective and that there is a lack of fairness in marking
HEA	• Comments acknowledge the work of staff in transitioning to online learning and the efforts made to maintain quality • Quality of teaching can be varied	• Feedback can be brief or vague • Marking criteria applied inconsistently across courses

SEC 20/21 1 B

School	Teaching & Learning	Assessment and Feedback
	• Cohort sizes are too large – students don't get individual feedback	
LAW	• Students feel that they have too few contact hours • Students negatively affected by the strike action • Students would benefit from more guidance / structure in course readings	• Quality of feedback is an issue "Feedback rarely contained any constructive details" • Perceived lack of consistency in assessments (marking and feedback)
LLC	• Students negatively affected by the strike action • Students feel that there is a lack of contact time • Whilst teaching quality is generally positively commented on individual members of staff do not teach to the same level	• Some students receive feedback promptly but the majority of comments relate that feedback is late • The usefulness of feedback provided also varies across courses with some described as constructive and others less so • Marking criteria aren't clearly communicated to students
PPL	• Students negatively affected by the strike action • Teaching quality varies between staff	• Comments range from very good to very poor experiences. • For many students the experience of assessment and feedback is varied between courses • Students are unclear about marking criteria and feel that marks can be given inconsistently
SPS	• Students negatively affected by the strike action and Covid-19 • Students feel that there is a lack of contact time • Lack of uniform approach to contact / assessments during strikes and Covid-19 • Most staff are helpful and engaging	• Lack of consistency in approach to assessment and feedback • Some feedback helps students to develop and improve but this is not the case for all • "Marking is dependent on the marker"

Senate Education Committee

10 September 2020

PGR Covid Survey: Themes and Actions

Description of paper

1. This paper sets out an executive summary from the Doctoral College of key themes and actions following the PGR Covid Survey (23/6/2020 – 7/7/2020) as well as providing a more detailed report from the Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling. The response rate was 31% and received 1,492 responses with a dashboard being shared with Schools from middle of June 2020.

Action requested / recommendation

2. The committee is asked to **note** the key themes and planned actions which the Doctoral College will take forward in partnership with EUSA, Colleges, Schools and Deaneries throughout 2020/21. Members are invited to provide comment on any actions which will be fed into an operational plan which is being developed, and owned, by the Doctoral College.

Background and context

3. As part of the University's response to Covid, an ART:PGR group was set up and commissioned a PGR survey to get the views of our PGR community. This has helped shine a light on some new themes (e.g. remote supervision, access to research sites) as well as amplifying existing themes (e.g. mental wellbeing, careers and financial).

4. Analysis of the survey has provided PGR College Deans with contextual themes to help shape engagement with students and supervisors through local Town Halls as well as shaping our PGR FAQs which are being coordinated through the Doctoral College.

Proposal

5. The Doctoral College will use the key themes and associated actions as a basis of its operational plan to take forward through 2020/21. Specifically, this will form a strong student-facing commitment to enhancing their experience and help our efforts to close the feedback loop.

Resource implications

6. There are no additional resourcing requirements with work and communications taking place through existing, and established, Doctoral College channels.

Risk management

7. As part of the development of the operational plan, there will be a creation of a risk register which will be owned by the Doctoral College Management Group (Chair: Professor Antony Maciocia).

Equality & diversity

8. There are no obvious E&D issues other than the gender and ethnicity balance of the group.

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

9. There will regular meetings of the Doctoral College who will help communicate, implement and evaluate the operational plan throughout 2020/21. The members also sit on the other committees (SRSG, People Committee, APRC). Representation on FSG will route through Vice-Principal Seckl.
10. Communication and consultation around policy and process will route through College committees.

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21 August 2020

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Freedom of Information
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Covid-19 Survey – PhD Students

Executive Summary

1. This survey focuses on PhD students' experiences of continuing with their research digitally in the last three to four months and on students' well-being and priorities outside their studies. The survey forms part of a range of student voice activities planned over the next few months, with the aim of ensuring that our response to Covid19 is responsive to, and adequately reflects, student concerns.

2. Many of the findings in this research are in line with the findings from previous research with PGR students ([PRES 2019](#)). The key themes are as follows:

   a. **Supervisory Team:** Relationships with supervisors are critical to the experience of completing a PhD but there is a lack of consistency in the effectiveness of these relationships across the university.
   b. **Student Support:** Many students have praised the support they have received and for some the move to digital working has improved their supervision relationships and allowed for increased and more focused contact. Unfortunately, this is not the experience of all students. Some students report that they have received little or no support from their supervision teams.
   c. **Mental Wellbeing:** Another continuing theme is how lonely some students find the experience of completing a PhD. Again, the experience varies greatly across the university. Some students and supervision teams have established effective ways of socialising online but for others the move to digital working has made them feel more isolated.

3. Whilst quantitative analysis of the results of this survey show few statistically significant differences between different groups of students; qualitative analysis of student comments indicates that there are equality, diversity and inclusion issues that need to be addressed as the university prepares to transition into supporting students to complete their research in a hybrid environment.

4. Students who have access to a space that they can dedicate to their work; effective internet access and the money to buy additional texts or equipment (such as monitors or printers) appear to have had, on the whole, an easier experience than those who are attempting to continue their research with no access to an appropriate workspace, or who are having to manage different priorities, such as childcare. PhD students are also reporting increased levels of anxiety and other mental health issues.

5. The following section outlines how the Doctoral College, on behalf of the University, will take forward this work over the coming academic year and help feed into broader University-wide work as part of re-shaping the University.

Actions

6. **Clarity around access to study spaces / labs / archives is a priority**

A lack of study space is a concern for a large number of respondents. Many PhD students don't have access to an appropriate place in which to study. Comments indicate that students are eager to get back into their offices and, whilst some can see that this may need to be on a part time basis or within a rota, others discuss the benefit they get from social interaction as well as providing a space to work in. It may be important to manage expectations around how access to buildings will be managed as social distancing continues, as students are unlikely to be returning to an environment that will be the same as the one they left and returning to office spaces may not provide a solution to issues other than some access to work stations and equipment. In the meantime, could some managed access be arranged to allow students to retrieve belongings or borrow equipment such as monitors?

7. **Addressing the difference in supervision experiences**

There appears to be a real disparity in the experiences of different students, although previous research indicates that this was also the case before Covid-19. There are students who feel very well supported by their supervision teams with some reporting an improved experience since the move to digital working whilst others have very little contact with their supervision teams. Student comments recognise that staff are also facing challenges in balancing their work with other responsibilities. However, can more be done to ensure that all students are receiving support from staff in their School or subject area?

8. **Supporting students with digital skills and confidence**

Some students express a lack of confidence with digital skills and tools like Teams or Zoom – could more be done to support students to gain confidence in using these and conducting meetings or participating in conferences online?

9. **Mental health and wider student support (and communications) tailored for PhD students**

Undergraduate students have also reported increased levels of mental ill-health. However, comments from PhD students suggest that they need a more tailored approach to student support. The challenges of completing a PhD differ from the challenges of undertaking a first degree and students would value a more specific approach their support. Some comments indicate that communications lack relevance and don't address their primary concerns.

10. **Careers support**

Some students are expressing anxiety about the prospect of finding work in academia or needing to look for work in other areas. PhD students may benefit from being directed to resources and the support that the Careers Service can give, and supervisors should be encouraged and supported to

have serious conversations with their students about career prospects and building relevant experience.

11. Financial concerns

Many students report increased levels of anxiety around whether funding can be extended to cover any additional period of research after their maximum end date. Concerns have also been raised about the availability of part time teaching work in the next academic year and the impact this may have on some students' financial situation.

Actions

Clarity around access: Communicate with PGR students that they will have high priority for the managed access to buildings. Perhaps include communications to show where this is happening/ has happened? It may reassure PGR students if they see PGRs are getting priority as re-openings occur.

Clarity around access: From an EDI perspective, do we need to establish whether there are subgroups of PGR students (e.g. with caring responsibilities, with limited workspace at home, with pre0existing health issues) who have a greater need for support?

Clarity around provision of equipment such as laptops, wifi routers etc. – we need to make it easy for students to find out how to access equipment and what is available.

Supervisory experiences: an immediate action will be to emphasise to supervisors the need to 'reset' supervisory arrangements and develop new models for supporting PGRs.

Supervisory experiences: in the longer term, develop a standardised approach (and set of expectations) for supervision (e.g. student-supervisor contract), through the Doctoral College/

Supervisory experiences: widely share, with PGR students and supervisors, UKCGE examples of best practice through the Doctoral College to support dialogue between students and supervisors in developing supervisory arrangements.

Digital skills and confidence: work with IAD to explore opportunities to further develop new training that is tailored for PGR students in online meetings, conferences and networking. **Do supervisors also need training or are we safe to assume they have all adapted to use of online platforms? And take into account experience of future PGRs who as PGTs may be largely taught online this year.**

Mental health: develop a database of the mental health-related support available to PGR students across the university, including how to access.

Mental health: identify a range of preventative actions to address Covid-19 related concerns including access to study space, extension processes, financial support…..

Peer support networks need highlighted, strengthened and spread more widely.

Careers: signpost to, and develop opportunities for, training opportunities available to PGRs that will enhance employability (eg. encourage the use of Employ.ed for PhD internships), develop transferable skills, and maximise employability. The recent HEPI survey showed that PGR students are very unlikely to seek advice from University Careers advisers. We should signpost this service very actively to students and supervisors – there is no point trying to put in place new things if the existing services are not well used. Career conversations should also be further embedded into the overall PGR experience and review process via supervisors and Schools.

Careers: explore opportunities for establishing additional employment opportunities for PGRs immediately after completion (e.g. very early year PDF schemes), potentially using SFC support.

Careers: establish internship opportunities for PGRs immediately after completion as well as during their programmes. This could be internal through Employ.Ed or with external employers making use of BDEs in Schools and Deaneries.

Financial support: It is essential that we clarify as soon as possible, the support that has been approved for students, and the process for potential support for (predominantly) non-final year students where a decision on funded extensions has not been made,

Financial Support: Systems need to be put in place to identify and advertise teaching opportunities for PGR students in the next academic year.

Introduction

This survey was developed with the aim of understanding how PhD students at the University of Edinburgh have adapted to the changes introduced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The survey focuses on students' experiences of conducting research off-campus in the last three to four months and on students' well-being and priorities outside their studies. The questionnaire was developed by the Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling team in consultation with colleagues in the PGR Adaptation and Renewal Group and it is intended that the insights generated from this research be used to help tailor the university's approach to maximising support for research students and their research.

This paper provides a summary of the findings from the survey including analysis of the free text comments. An app containing the results drillable to School level has been released and is available here[1]. Comments have been grouped by College and have been published in a searchable format in the app.

Any questions or requests for further analysis should be sent to student.analytics@ed.ac.uk.

Methodology

The survey was conducted online and all currently matriculated PhD students were surveyed (4,692 invitations). The survey was conducted between 23rd June and 7th July 2020. There were 1,462

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[1] The standard publication threshold of 10 or more respondents or 10 or more comments has been applied to all published data to protect respondent anonymity. Comments have been redacted to remove names of staff or students.

respondents – a response rate of 31%. This is a good response rate for an online survey run over a limited period of time.

The survey is representative of the overall population across most metrics. Female students are overrepresented (54% of the sample, 48% of the population) as are Full Time students (77% of the sample and 63% of the population). Reviewing the findings, it is unlikely that these have significantly skewed the results, so data have not been weighted.

Detailed Findings

PhD student well-being and support services

The first section of the questionnaire asked respondents where they were living and in what type of accommodation. The majority of respondents have remained in Edinburgh (72%) and the majority of these respondents had stayed in their existing accommodation.

Just over 21% of respondents currently have to care for other people. Comments indicate that a number of students have been balancing childcare / home-schooling with their research.

Respondents were asked to rate whether their health, relationships or research work had become more or less important to them since the beginning of the pandemic. Just over 81% of PhD students reported that their mental health was of increased importance to them. This is significantly higher than the next highest priority (family and friends, 78%). Female students are significantly more likely than male students to have increased concerns around mental health (84% compared to 79%).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, students with caring responsibilities at the moment are more likely to find that their family and friends have become more important to them (85% compared to 77% of students with no caring responsibilities).

Just over a third of respondents stated that their research project had become more important to them since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. Just over a third said their research project was at about the same level of importance and a quarter felt that their research project had become less important. Overseas students are more likely to state that their research project has increased in importance than RUK, EU and Scottish students (51% increased importance). White students are significantly less likely to find their research project has increased in importance than BAME and non-UK students (24% compared to 43% and 44% respectively).

Students in CAHSS are more likely to state that concerns around their financial situation have increased than students in other Colleges (62% compared to 40% in CSE and 48% in MVM). Students paying overseas fees (60.5%) are significantly more likely to have increased concerns around their finances than EU, RUK or Scottish students. Student comments indicate that students with visas are very concerned about the potential costs of extending their visa. Increased concerns about finances are more likely in later years of study. Students with caring responsibilities are also significantly more likely to report increased concerns with finances than students with no caring responsibilities (59% compared to 48%).

Opportunities to earn money with tutoring are of concern – comments indicate that some students are anxious about how they might supplement their income in the next academic year if they cannot take up teaching work.

Feeling okay about the progress of my thesis, the one big worry is financial. As I am in the final year of my PhD my scholarship funding will soon be at an end. Other universities (for example, York) and the UKRI have offered six-month extensions to final year students, but this is not the case with Edinburgh. The hardship fund is not applicable as it refers to financial hardship at this time, rather than in three months' time etc. The prospect of less/no teaching hours in the next semester than I expected prior to Coronavirus means the autumn term will now be very stressful due to financial uncertainty, which the University has done little to address.

Respondents in MVM are significantly more likely to have increased concerns about funding than students in CSE (56% vs 57%). Third year students are also more likely to have increased concerns about funding than first year students (60% vs 42%).

Overseas fee students are more likely to have increased concerns about their housing than students on other fee rates (45%). Comments indicate concerns around costs of staying in residences and how the arrival of new students will be managed.

Other concerns include the future of the academic job market. Some student comments express pessimism around prospects for work in academia and students are considering what opportunities there might be for work in other sectors.

Respondents were asked how far they agreed with a series of statements that related to well-being. Just 45% of students have been able to keep in touch with friends from university and only 30% of PhD students agreed that they still felt part of the Edinburgh community. Students from CAHSS were significantly less likely to agree that they could keep up with friends (38%) or that they still felt a sense of belonging (26%).

Students with caring responsibilities are less likely to be able to keep in touch with friends (38% compared to 47% of students with no caring responsibilities).

Previous research with PGR students (PRES) has indicated that students can find the experience of undertaking a PhD isolating and comments in this survey suggests that for some students the experience of transitioning to working digitally has exacerbated this.

Overseas and EU students are significantly more likely to agree that they still feel part of the community (36% and 33% of Overseas and EU students and 23% and 22% of RUK and Scottish students).

For some, opportunities for social interaction and collaboration have reduced:

Understand that doing a PhD is not like a normal office job. As PhD student we do most of our work in 'isolation' (i.e. we do not work in teams that often), therefore not being in an office dramatically decreases contact with people. For example, I only speak to my supervisors 2 times a month, this is a good amount for my PhD progression. But otherwise I have no other contact during the work week with other people... whereas friends who work in companies have regular team meetings, meetings with managers etc... Therefore, working in an office is very important for PhD mental health as it is an isolating experience even without the current working from home situation.

This is not the case for all students and examples of students or supervisors setting up informal coffee meet-ups over Zoom or Teams have demonstrated that a sense of community can be maintained however it is also clear that this is very dependent upon the initiative of individuals. The university may wish to consider what it might do to support more of this activity.

> *I think the ability to have formalised interactions within the research group (rather than just bumping into people in the coffee room etc.) has become important, so scheduling coffee meetings so simulate those informal chats is really helpful.*

Only 32% of respondents were aware of how to access support services for well-being. Students in MVM are significantly more likely to know how to access support services than those in other Colleges (41% vs 30% in CAHSS and CSE).

Respondents were asked to rate how satisfied they were with their experience of using support services.

The IAD had the highest level of service use and the highest rate of satisfaction. Comments indicate how helpful PhD students have found some of the IAD seminars

	Service Use (%)	Service Use (N)	Satisfaction (%)
Accommodation	17.4	254	23.6
Residence Life	13.3	194	18.6
Counselling	11.7	171	18.7
Disability Support	9.7	142	17.6
Online Well-being Services	14.4	210	22.4
Chaplaincy	8.8	128	13.3
Students' Association	12.7	186	18.3
IS Helpline	33.7	492	50.8
Advice Place	11.5	168	26.2
IAD	40.9	598	58.7

Although this is not a new issue; one comment on communications illustrated how PhD students can feel like they 'slip through the gaps':

> *Communication to PhDs from Schools/Departments/central University has been sporadic. In the first few weeks of lockdown especially, I think most of us were quite stressed and unable to concentrate properly on our work. An occasional reassuring email to PGRs would have been good at this time (even just to express it is ok to be a bit slower when adjusting to things). Also, the Easter days off for staff - it would have been a nice gesture to encourage PhDs to take these too, we act more like staff in many cases than students, and many of us are mature 'students'. Things like that would help with feeling supported and a sense of community. We often slip through the gap in not being typical students, and not being staff.*

Extra time
Nearly two thirds of respondents felt that they would need an extension to their maximum end date to complete their PhD.

Students in CSE and MVM are more likely to need extensions than students in CAHSS although the difference is not statistically significant (67% for CSE and MVM and 61% for CAHSS).

Comments indicate that students undertaking lab based research are very concerned that they have less time to collect data however comments indicate that many students undertaking research outside labs have also been negatively affected. A key theme in comments is increased levels of anxiety and decreased levels of productivity. Some of the reasons for this are explored in more detail later in this paper.

A number of students have suggested applying an opt-out rather than an opt-in system for requesting extensions to reduce levels of burden and bureaucracy.

Adjustment to lockdown

When asked how easily they had adjusted to their local lockdown restrictions, 44% of respondents found the adjustment either easy or very easy however a third of respondents had found adjustment not to be easy. There are no significant differences between student groups in this survey.

Financial support / hardship funds

Just 10% of respondents applied to the University for Additional Financial Support. Of those who applied for support, 50% were satisfied with the process. This is reflected in the comments received. Many students were grateful for the support whilst others found the process to be difficult and bureaucratic. Having a partner or children was seen to add to the complexity of the process and respondents reflected that there were delays in receiving a decision.

Working environment

The questionnaire asked respondents how far they agreed with a series of statements about their working environment. Only 40% of respondents agreed that they had the space to work effectively. A common theme in respondent comments was the lack of appropriate space to work at home. Many PhD students have relied on study rooms or PGR office spaces on campus as places to work. Lack of access to a dedicated space has hampered the ability of many respondents to continue with their research with some students reflecting that they had chosen to live in smaller or shared accommodation because they had been assured that they would be able to work on campus.

Many respondents called for office spaces to be re-opened quickly. Experiences of being asked to transition to working from home appear to vary greatly. Some students were able to arrange to take equipment home whilst others appear to have been taken somewhat by surprise. The decision to close office spaces is often referred to as 'the University's' decision rather than being a requirement of the Scottish government. It may be worth considering how this is communicated so students can understand that timelines are being driven by the government.

Some comments indicate that students are aware that they may need to return to shared spaces on a part time basis or using a rota but others relate that they are missing the social aspects of shared work spaces and the ability to drop into one another's or their supervisor's office. Clearly communicating how buildings will re-open and expectations around appropriate social distancing

would be advisable to manage expectations when PhD students do get access as it is unlikely that buildings will operate in the way they did before the pandemic in the immediate future.

In the meantime, it may be worth considering whether Schools could arrange for managed access to allow students to retrieve materials. Some students commented that papers or hard copy notes integral to their research projects were inaccessible in on-campus study rooms.

> *I am still waiting to hear when I will be able to return to my desk in the shared university office. I am capable of working at home, but a portion of my field notes and books relevant to the thesis remain under lock-and-key.*

Under half of all respondents have access to the equipment they need to research. Lack of access to labs is a clear hindrance for many students in CSE and MVM however comments indicate that access to computer monitors and printers has been causing issues for students more generally. Students are struggling to work for prolonged periods of time with no desk, office chair and using laptops.

Just over 67% PhD students have access to reliable internet services. This is approximately the same proportion of UG students in the previous survey. It may be possible to infer that about a third of the students at the University of Edinburgh are not able to access digital resources and services effectively.

Student comments indicate that students living in shared accommodation or with partners who are working from home have struggled with streaming and communications apps.

Only 51% of respondents have access to the library resources they need. Students in CAHSS are significantly less likely to agree that they have access to the library resources they need (36% compared to 59% in CSE and 67% in MVM). Students in HCA and ECA have particularly struggled without access to archives. Others have commented on the lack of digitised texts. Some students have suggested that the library could provide a 'click and collect' service for books to allow students to access additional texts.

Just over a third of students have been able to make their research a priority over other commitments. Students in CAHSS are significantly less likely to be able to make their research a priority than students in CSE (30% and 38% - students in MVM scored higher although the difference is not significant).

Students who have caring responsibilities have been significantly less likely to be able to make their research a priority (19% compared to 38% of students with no caring responsibilities).

Students who have mental health conditions are significantly less likely to be able to make their research a priority than students with no disabilities (21% compared to 35%). Student comments indicate that PhD students are increasingly experiencing anxiety or that the environment created by the pandemic have made existing conditions worse. The university should consider how it can increase support for these students. There appears to be a perception that support services aren't designed or appropriate for PGR students.

Experience of working digitally

Respondents were asked whether aspects of their research experience had got better, got worse or remained the same since the beginning of the pandemic and the move to working digitally. Across all questions respondents feel that their experience has got worse.

Nearly two thirds of respondents report that they are less able to speak to peers and this is a particular issue for students in CAHSS (66.5% compared to 62% in CSE and 54% in MVM).

Over two thirds of respondents felt less able to speak to other researchers. Again, students in CAHSS are more likely to find communications more difficult (71% compared to 68% in CSE and 61% in MVM). Students from CAHSS were also significantly more likely to feel that their ability to engage with the intellectual life of their academic community had got worse (67% compared to 54% in CSE and 40% in MVM).

The experience of supervision has changed the least. Whilst a quarter of respondents feel that their ability to speak to their supervisor has got worse, the net change is -9% indicating that more students feel that their supervision experience is about the same. Likewise, 25% of respondents feel that their remote supervision experience has been less effective, the net change is -12% indicating that many students feel it is about the same.

In some Schools, students report a positive net change in the effectiveness of their supervision experience: HEA +11%, Vets + 10%, Business School +3% and Engineering +1%.

Whilst the difference is not statistically significant it should be noted that students with disabilities report that they are finding the effectiveness of supervision worse than students with no disabilities (34% compared to 25%).

Student comments in this area provide more insights into students' experiences of supervision since the beginning of the pandemic. In many ways these findings can be seen as a continuation of the feedback received in previous Postgraduate Research Experience Surveys that the quality and productivity of supervision depends on the relationship between students and their supervisors and this is very much driven by individuals. Many comments show that students have excellent relationships with their supervisors and describe how supervisors or supervision teams have made concerted efforts to keep in touch with students and to keep the academic life of their research area going digitally.

> *My supervisor has been phenomenal and I couldn't have managed without his support.*

Unfortunately, comments reveal that this is not the case for all students:

> *Some supervisors just drop you*

Students' show awareness of the pressures some supervisors are under but for some this has led to decreased levels of contact.

> *Factoring in supervisors who are home-schooling etc. my contact hours with them have been reduced a lot, feedback is slower etc. which is understandable given the circumstances, but still frustrating.*

Some students relate that the advantage of being on campus is proximity and the ability to drop in for quick questions:

Frequency of supervisor meetings hasn't changed but have lost the ability to quickly 'pop in' to their office.

Could more use be made of less formal communications to avoid students feeling like they have to engage in lengthy conversations by email? Some students relate that they lack confidence when communicating digitally – are there opportunities to build students' digital literacy and confidence?

Whilst some students have struggled with the transition to digital communications, for others there have been benefits:

I feel less anxious meeting my supervisor online which has improved our relationship

The student who made this comment didn't relate why face to face meetings with their supervisor made them feel anxious, but they have found that online supervision has helped their relationship. For some, scheduling meetings has become easier and they have had more focused conversations. Other students who have related that they have found the new way of working helpful include students with disabilities, students who have to travel or commute to get to Edinburgh and those who have other responsibilities and have been able to work more flexibly. A student who usually studies at a distance related that they felt this had 'levelled the playing field' as they could attend meetings and access resources they would ordinarily be excluded from.

When asked whether working remotely would affect their progress over two thirds felt it would. Whilst the differences aren't statistically significant – students with disabilities are far more likely to say that their progress will be negatively affected than students with no disabilities.

Over half of the respondents are less confident that that will be able to complete on time than they were before the pandemic. Female students are significantly less confident than male students (63% compared to 54%). Students with mental health conditions are significantly less confident than those with no disability (67% compared to 49%). Students in their first year are significantly more confident that they can complete on time than students in their second, third or fourth years of research.

Continuing with research
Respondents were asked how they felt about continuing with their research. The comments are polarised – whilst some respondents express anxiety and reticence about returning to campus, or the UK, until they feel it is safe to do so others are equally anxious to be back in labs or their study spaces.

A decrease in levels of motivation is a common theme in the comments and a small number of students relate that they are considering whether or not to exit with an MPhil or leave their PhD. Comments suggest that uncertainty around extensions (especially funding extensions), increasing levels of mental ill-health and the precarious academic job market are significant factors in this.

Comments suggest that students would benefit from more social / community interactions. Whether students feel that these should be provided by Schools or Subject areas or whether

students would like support to establish these themselves isn't clear from the comments but providing examples of activities students have already set up and how they have gone about it might help other students to do the same.

One clear message from student comments is the need for clear and targeted communications.

Financial concerns and the approach to extending funding was another strong theme in the comments. Some students have called for a rebate on fees whilst others are very concerned about their ability to continue to live in Edinburgh and study if they do not have continued funding. This concern is combined with anxieties about a lack of teaching opportunities next year.

Senate Education Committee

10 September 2020

University of Edinburgh Students' Association Vice President Education Priorities 2020/21

Description of paper

This paper provides an overview of the Students' Association Vice President Education's priorities for the academic year 2020/21.

Action requested / recommendation

For discussion

Background and context

In March 2020, Fizzy Abou Jawad was elected as the Students' Association's Vice President Education for the academic year 2020/21. This paper outlines her priorities for the year ahead, including key areas of work.

Discussion

Over the coming year, Fizzy will be focusing on the following priority areas:

Improving the quality and consistency of teaching and feedback

Fizzy will work with Schools and university bodies to improve the quality and consistency around assessment feedback. Her aim is to build on new practice arising from COVID-19 by continuing to push for online assessment feedback, delivered consistently across all Programmes.

Fizzy will be working on promoting academic representative roles in the wider student body. The Student Association will research effective structures to improve communication between Programme and School reps, so that feedback can effectively be brought to staff.

Ensuring all students have access to high-quality academic support

Fizzy will be exploring ways to give students who are completing joint honours more freedom to 'design' of their academic support structure.

Since implementation of the Personal Tutor and Student Support Review has been delayed until next year, Fizzy will take this as an opportunity to ensure that changes will work for all students and can be adapted to provide sufficient support for all cohorts.

Creating an inclusive and accessible learning environment

Fizzy's current focus is on the impact which COVID-19 will have on the learning environment. The Hybrid Model has potential to create a more inclusive environment for all students long term. Fizzy will working alongside Schools on universal lecture recording and promoting the use of alternative forms of assessment beyond this academic year. Fizzy will be also be supporting BME Liberation Officer throughout the year on their work tackling the BME attainment gap at the university.

Risk management

To be considered if specific actions arise from the paper.

Equality & diversity

The principles of equality, diversity and inclusion remain at the heart of the Students' Association's work, and this paper reflects that. Equality and diversity implications will be considered if specific actions arise from the paper.

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

To be agreed if specific actions arise from the paper.

Author

Stuart Lamont
Academic Policy Coordinator, Edinburgh University Students' Association
26/08/20

Freedom of Information

This paper is **open**.

Presenter

Fizzy Abou Jawad
Vice President Education, Edinburgh University Students' Association

Senate Education Committee

10 September 2020

Recommendations for online examinations and assessment

Description of paper

1. Following submission of a discussion paper by CMVM, SEC requested that the ART-Student-Curriculum Resilience group review and make recommendations for assessment in 2020/21. This was undertaken by the OREA working group over 5 weeks to Sep 3rd 2020.

Action requested / recommendation

2. To discuss and approve the recommendations in the OREA report, and agree routes to take them forward.

Background and context

3. The move to almost entirely online assessment raises concerns and risks to students, staff, and reputational risks to the University.

Discussion

4. Recommendations with urgency, practice, or resource implications, and in the case of the first two a need for careful messaging, are
   - Implementation of a viva ('affirmation') process to verify student's understanding of work where any question raised.
   - Cautious recommendations on use of online proctoring.
   - Consequent expectation of requirement for some cohorts of students to have on-campus invigilated (but usually computer-based) high-stakes exams in Semester 2.
   - Schools should provide on-campus facilities for students unable to undertake or submit assessments on an equal footing from home.

Note that because of the very short timeframe, the detail of some recommendations is subject to minor change as further feedback from group members is received. Work has also begun on some of the immediate issues, and updates on views will be brought to the Committee.

Resource implications

5. Some are mentioned in the document.

Risk management

6. There would be serious reputational risk if we were unable to provide reliable assessment results in the coming academic year. Should any serious examples of misconduct become known, it will be essential that we can point to having carefully considered and implemented preventive measures.

Equality & diversity

7. We believe no new immediate implications, but this needs to be monitored, and for some possible later changes this will need to be examined.

Communication, implementation, evaluation of impact of any action agreed
8. Implement earliest from Sep 2020, timeframes in document. Monitoring via QA routes and through report back to SEC.

Author   **Presenter**

Neil Turner   Neil Turner

4 Sep 2020

Freedom of Information – open

Online/Remote Examination and Assessment (OREA) group

A working group of the UoE ART* – Student – Curriculum Resilience strand

REPORT   3 Sep 2020

CONTENTS

* ART: Adaptation and Renewal Team. https://uoe.sharepoint.com/sites/ART/

Summary

The group met through August 2020, and considered a wide variety of written and spoken evidence. The level of interest from all groups was high. There was concern from staff, but notably also considerable student concern, about the potential for unfairness and misconduct arising from the move to online assessments and examinations.

Feedback from Semester 2 of 2019/20 confirmed local concerns, but it was reported that academic misconduct pathways had identified more confusion and poor academic scholarship than actual misconduct. As previously, most examples were identified in students under pressure and stress.

There was, however, concern at our limited ability to recognise or act on misconduct other than plagiarism. A key question was how to be certain that work returned came from the unaided named student (while appreciating that that is not the intention of every assessment).

Recommendations cover assessment design, information and training for staff and students, and particularly focus as requested on online proctoring, and on interviewing for affirmation of student knowledge ('vivas'). Consensus was reached on all the recommendations with on each issue agreement across the professional and student groups represented.

Some recommendations will require urgent regulatory approval so that they can be implemented in 2020/21, and these are highlighted. Some will need to be handed on to Academic Services or existing or new groups for completion or integration.

We elected to report concisely, giving brief background to recommendations, but referring to more detail and notes from meetings. These can be found in the OREA SharePoint folder at **https://edin.ac/2CLAFre** – please request access to this if you are not already able to see it.

Key recommendations are around the use of an affirmation process, usually based on a viva, as a preliminary step where academic misconduct or irregularity in exam process is suspected; and around online proctoring. Some recommendations around on-campus provision have space or timetabling implications.

Recommendations

Recommendations are clustered into related groups and followed by indication of urgency, and who should take forward

Key:

No.	Action needed Immediate / Soon / Later	Name/group taking forward

Immediate – by Sep 7; Soon – by Sep 21; Later – Sep 30 or continuing

Monitoring of assessment outcomes

1 The outcome of future online assessments should be prospectively mapped to a variety of student characteristics, to understand whether there is any change in systematic advantage or disadvantage of particular student groups. This should be reported through standard data dashboards and Schools asked to reflect on the data and outcomes in annual QA reports.

1	Sep 30 - report on Semester 1; ongoing on reporting	Senate QA Committee

Staff should expect

2 Guidance, training, and easy to follow resources which provide:

- Approaches to course and assessment design in an era of mainly-online examinations and assessment.
- Pros and cons of each assessment type. Implications of each, including impact on library resources and timetabling.
- How to identify academic misconduct of all types, given the evidence that awareness greatly increases detection.
- Pathways to follow should academic misconduct be suspected.
- Course organisers should be made aware of routes to make, and seek approval for, late changes to assessment, in discussion with students, where this could improve assessment acceptability, quality and security during 2020/21.

2	Sep 21 – draft guide (will need continuing upkeep)	Neil Lent, Neil Turner; IAD

Students should expect

3 Pointers to coherent, simply expressed reasons for guidance and expectations, with strong advice on benefits of good academic practice, and risks of misconduct. With an expectation that they will have read and understood this.

4 Clear information about what is permitted and expected for each assessment, including time commitment, whether conferring with peers or other individuals is recommended or permitted, and any specific advice around resources to use.

5 For online examinations, opportunities to practise submitting work in the manner required, if this is new to them. Wherever possible, the opportunity to practise the type of time pressure and questions that will be experienced in an examination.

6 That the University has fair and robust mechanisms to discourage and prevent cheating. Staff guidance should be openly accessible for those who want to read it, and to keep student guidance aligned.

7   A clear route to raise concerns about assessment and examination issues, and that these will be taken seriously. (See also recommendation 19)

9   A sympathetic and understanding response from staff, including specific responses to expressed concerns.

3-7, 9	Sep 21 – review progress	EUSA with IAD
7	See Recommendation 19	

Online proctoring

10   The use of online proctoring should not be mainstreamed. However, the option of online proctoring should be retained for use where there is a clearly defined need.

11   Guidance should be provided about which circumstances are suitable for its use. Use cases should be developed to help illustrate this.

12   There should be an approval process to ensure consistent decision-making. This should utilise and align with existing University processes and structures (e.g. School and College Education/Learning and Teaching Committees, APRC, SEC etc).

13   Centrally-supported or centrally-facilitated platforms for proctoring should be provided. Work to identify options should include consideration of adapting existing IT tools for proctoring purposes, as well as commercial offerings.

14   For December 2020 exams, use of online proctoring should be limited to those courses that are already using it.

10	Soon – draft guidance	Ac Services with JH
13	October – options for Semester 2	ISG

Vivas for affirmation

15   The University should implement a selective process, usually a viva, to evaluate the extent to which a student holds the knowledge that was presented in a remote assessment. It would create an 'affirmation process' by which the mark previously awarded is confirmed. An alternative outcome would be to move to an academic misconduct route. A third possible outcome, of requiring further assessment, was not favoured at this stage.

The affirmation process might be triggered by examiners having reasonable doubt about an irregularity in the assessment or a suspicion of possibility of misconduct, or occasionally in response to specific allegations of misconduct.

Students would be made aware of the reasons for the viva. It would focus on a particular piece of submitted work. It should usually take place soon after the assessment process. More detailed guidance will be needed. Suggestions for the process are in the full report and in notes from Subgroup 3.

16   We do not recommend the use of random vivas to test students understanding of previously submitted work.

17   The use of 'vivas for all', which could explicitly test either new or previously submitted work, or both, and carry a summative mark as part of course or programme assessment, should be actively encouraged.

15	Immediate – propose reg changes, take to SEC, APRC	Academic Services, ANT
17	Consider with recommendation 2	

Schools and the University should provide

18   On-campus facilities should be provided by schools for a limited number of students to take assessments or examinations where there is no feasible way to provide them with an adequate experience or suitable alternative assessment remotely. For example:

- home circumstances (connectivity, environment) prevent effective study or work
- disability requirements cannot be adequately fulfilled

Assessments would usually be the same online assessment, at the same time, as for students undertaking them remotely.

19   Clearly signposted pathways for student enquiries and concerns about assessment. Some further work may need to be undertaken to agree guidance around this.

20   The University should be ready to provide on-campus invigilated examinations for some selected whole cohorts of students undertaking computer-based high-stakes examinations in Semester 2 of 2020/21. Online invigilation would be recommended for students unable to attend in person.

18	Soon – notify schools of responsibility	Schools
19	Soon – discussion and policy around this	Ac Services & Coll heads admin
20	Soon – plan for on-campus invigilated online exams	Premises, Timetabling

Other issues

22   It was felt that current misconduct processes are adequate to cope with these new routes of referral, but that is should be kept under review.

23   Late submissions – consideration should be given to allowing variation of the additional time allowed for submission of short-duration assessments depending on the nature and duration of the assessment, e.g. whether an upload is required at the end, 30% time rather than a fixed duration of 1 hour.

Need to add specific recommendation about policy and penalties here?

24   Timezones – we recommend continuing the guidance that 1300 GMT is usually the least-bad start time for exams. Where this causes difficulty, Schools are encouraged to give sympathetic consideration to alternatives where feasible.

25   Essay mills – we do not propose stringent efforts to block essay mill websites from the University network, but request that IS investigate the feasibility of auto-diverting requests for some common sites to an advice page.

26   Strategic lead role (QAA recommendation) – we ask that this be reviewed at a senior level.

23	Immediate – changes to handbooks etc required	Academic Services, LK
25	Sep 30 – feasibility of diverting essay mill URLs	ISG
26	Sep 30 – leadership for assessment integrity	Colm Harmon, SEC

Background

Although online remote assessment has been announced as the major element for Semester 1 of 2020/21, it seems clear that it is likely to be a substantial element of assessment further into the future. There could be significant risks from that, bearing in mind:

- We want it to be fair to students in different circumstances.
- Where summative, we need assessment to be robust so that we can give a confident mark without no-detriment policies.
- We want it to withstand external scrutiny (employers, press, professional bodies, others).
- Reputational risk to the University and our graduates if students were found to have cheated.

'Fair' includes ensuring that new formats do not unfairly disadvantage students, as well as minimising the risk of cheating.

Surveys and conversations with students, locally and more widely, suggested that anxiety that peers may be cheating is a widespread concern. There are suggestions that where times for submission of remote exams are extended, conferring with peers and others is very common, probably usually at low level, but to varying degrees.

Some course organisers and academic misconduct officers have expressed concerns that our ability to detect cheating other than plagiarism is limited.

The College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine (CMVM) submitted a discussion document to Senate Education Committee in June 2020, and it was agreed that this work should be taken forward by the ART-student-curriculum resilience group.

Remit

The remit for OREA was further developed into a series of background issues and objectives for three subgroups to consider. Each addressed particular areas:

1. Assessment type, resources, training (led by Lisa Kendall and Neil Turner)
2. Online proctoring (led by Judy Hardy)
3. 'Vivas' as a mechanism for assessing or checking a student's understanding (led by Richard Blythe)

The questions each subgroup was asked to address are listed in <u>Appendix 1</u>, as part of the detailed remit for the OREA group.

Meetings

The main group met at the start, mid-point, and end of the one-month project. The first meeting agreed the detailed questions and allocation to subgroups. The second heard progress reports, agreed what was feasible within the time available, and what might need to be continued later. The third meeting heard conclusions and updates from each subgroup, agreed the framework and outline of content for the final report, and was prompted to feed back on the forthcoming draft report.

The steering group advised on a first draft of the final report, which was then revised and circulated to all group members for further electronic comment.

Group Membership

Name (subgroup)

Steering group

Neil Turner (1)	CMVM Dean UG Learning & Teaching CMVM (Medical School)
Sabine Rolle (3)	CAHSS UG Teaching Dean (School of LLC)
Lisa Kendall (1)	CAHSS Director of Academic and Student Administration
Judy Hardy (2)	CSE Dean of Learning & Teaching (Physics & Astronomy)
Alex Laidlaw (2)	CSE Head of Academic Affairs
Fizzy Abou Jawad (1)	EUSA (VP Education, prev. CSE student)
Roshni Hume (1)	Academic Services

Full group members
Steering group as above, plus

Leah Sinclair (1)	Timetabling and Examinations
Rena Gertz (1)	Data Protection Officer
Neil Lent (1)	Institute for Academic Development (IAD)
Victoria Buchanan	Student Disability Service Asst Dir (or Paddy Corscadden)
Karen Howie (1)	ISG Head of Digital Learning Applications and Media, ISG
Paul De'Ath (1)	ISG Project Manager e-exams (replacing QMP)
Myles Blaney (2)	ISG (scoping proctoring solutions)
Marshall Dozier (1)	ISG Library resources (or Fiona Brown)
Gemma Riddell (1)	EUSA (Senior Academic Adviser, the Advice Place)
Julian Mashingaidze (2)	EUSA (UG Veterinary Studies Rep)
Ameer Ibrahim (3)	EUSA (PGT rep)
Esther Mijers (1)	CAHSS Director UG Studies in HCA
Emily Taylor (3)	CAHSS Director of Teaching HiSS
Jon Beer (2)	CAHSS Teaching and Student Services Manager, Economics
Dave Saunders (2)	CAHSS CAMO (Moray House)
Richard Blythe (3)	CSE CAMO (also School of Physics & Astronomy)
Patrick Walsh (1)	CSE Director of Teaching, School of Biological Sciences
Gillian Bell (3)	CSE Head of Teaching Org (Informatics)
Alan Jaap (2)	CMVM Head of Assessment MBChB
Lesley Forrester (3)	CMVM CAMO
Lindsay Dalziel (3)	CMVM Manager Vet Teaching Organisation

Group Membership

1. Feedback from Semester 2 in 2019/20 and elsewhere

Led by Lisa Kendall

We received reports relating to all aspects of the exam diet in Semester 2 of the previous academic year, including from schools, Timetabling, Library resources, Academic misconduct, and reports on the performance of students with disability profiles and other characteristics. Evidence from these have been included in discussions and recommendations.

It is proposed to circulate a document summarising the information received by Sep 30th.

2. Staff resources and requirements

Led by Neil Lent

It was seen as important to provide pragmatic advice to course organisers and designers. In reviewing assessment for online, the opportunity to make changes that would better align outcomes, and make other academically desirable changes, should not be missed.

Content and presentation of this advice was discussed. Appendix 2 outlines general guidance, and a model for a pragmatic guide to pros and cons of different assessment types, under the headings:

- Principles and general features of assessment design
- Assessment design to support trusting relationships
- Factors that may increase the risk of third party cheating
- Misconduct risk factors
- How to spot misconduct
- Assessment methods pros and cons one by one

The aim is to have a report drafted by mid-September, with a commitment to improvement and continued updating thereafter.

3. Student resources and requirements

Led by Fizzy Abou Jawad

Experience from CAMOs and from EUSA representatives and the Students' Association Advice Place is that many instances of academic misconduct occur when students are under pressure and lack understanding of what they are being asked of in an assessment. Many student concerns around the last exam diet were reported to be due to misunderstanding the referencing requirements of their assessment ,or what resources they were permitted to utilise. Students need clear guidance on what is expected of them in an assessment.

As the hybrid environment will be new for both staff and students, students may initially be more confused as to what constitutes as academic misconduct. Clear information surrounding format of assessment and expectations of students should help to reduce the likelihood of academic misconduct as highlighted in the staff guidance document. Including students in conversations regarding expectations should also encourage them to feel a greater sense of community with their staff.

As highlighted in the QAA report some students engage in academic misconduct due to lack "of essay writing skills; feeling unable to seek support from their providers; lack of confidence". To mitigate this, students should be directed to central resources that could help improve their skills and thus their confidence throughout their academic journey.

Appendix 3 extends more detail from the EUSA report, including resource links.

Further work on student information and support will be coordinated with work on information for staff described in the previous section.

4. Measures for particular student circumstances

As we discussed issues experienced by students with particular home circumstances, or disability profiles, it was clear that inequalities for a limited number could not be eradicated remotely. We recommend that schools offer on-campus facilities for assessments where necessary. With the exception of any modifications for disability profiles, these would usually be the same assessments, at the same time, as for other students.

5. Student queries and reporting

There was unanimity on the importance of a dominantly supportive approach to student issues around assessment. Pathways for student enquiries and concerns about assessment should be established and made clear to students. There may be a need for University guidance on handling this. Likely enquiries will be around expectations and specifics around assessments, concerns of the possibility of anonymous academic misconduct rather than specific allegations, and discomfort rather than formal complaint.

Most favoured that the process should be routed initially through schools, with a common policy to ensure consistency, but there was an alternative view for issues around exam misconduct. We felt this required further consultation to agree policy.

In the case of allegations about named individuals, it should be made clear that usually only non-anonymous reports can be taken forward (though identities of complainants will be kept confidential), and that frivolous or unjust allegations are serious disciplinary offences.

6. Online proctoring

Subgroup 2, led by Judy Hardy

Online proctoring is essentially an attempt to translate exam hall invigilation to an online assessment. Most commercial online proctoring tools utilise a combination of student device functions - cameras, microphones and desktop recording (e.g. keystrokes) - to identify particular behaviours/triggers which then generate a report. Reports often include video clips, timelines and flagging of triggers for further consideration by course teams, who will be best placed to determine whether flagged incidents require further investigation.

In general, there are three models for online proctoring, with cost being the major differentiation:

- Automated – AI-based
- Semi-automated – 'record and review'
- Live proctoring – human proctor provided by vendor or based at institution observing exam via video – for individual student, or for many students simultaneously

ISG have recently reviewed some commercial proctoring solutions, the market, costs, and benefits/challenges of online proctoring, and have produced a discussion paper on this that is available on the SharePoint site for the project, as is a longer account of the background to the subgroup's recommendations.

Use of online proctoring at Edinburgh

Online proctoring tools are not currently supported by ISG, but some form of online proctoring has been used at Edinburgh in a small number of courses, including

- The Distance Learning at Scale (DLAS) initiative using RPNow
- The DSTI programme in Informatics using ProctorU to proctor 10-40 distance students who sit exams at the same time as up to ~400 on-campus students.
- The MBChB programme used existing technology (MS Teams) and internal staff to proctor small numbers of students undertaking resits. This seemed to work well from a practical and pedagogical perspective, and was well-received by students, who did not appear to find it too intrusive. It seems difficult to scale, but reports are emerging from other medical schools of adapting similar approaches to large cohorts.

Pros and Cons of Online Proctoring

Potential benefits:
- Students can sit their exams from a location of their choice. But this is also a challenge; Students may not have access to a quiet space, or a good internet connection.
- The University is not dependent on the physical space available for an exam.
- The security of online assessment is improved – it is more difficult (although not impossible) for a student to cheat during an online exam that is proctored.

Potential challenges:
- Large class sizes may be an issue for some suppliers (particularly for human rather than AI proctoring).
- Technical problems with proctoring are not uncommon. We need to ensure we have an alternative plan for students who have technical issues. Technical problems will also likely cause a great deal of anxiety for students impacted.
- These tools can raise privacy issues collecting biometric data, showing students personal spaces, information about applications running on their computers. One potential commercial supplier for DLAS failed a data protection impact assessment.
- Most external services are costly.
- Some exam types may be complicated to proctor, in particular handwritten examinations which are digitised and then submitted.

7. Vivas

Subgroup 3, led by Richard Blythe

The subgroup considered the possibility of the selective use of vivas to test knowledge and understanding following a non-invigilated assessment.

It was concluded that this process could reassure that marks are reliable, and that it may also serve as deterrent against assessment misconduct.

The specific term *affirmation* is recommended to describe the process, to describe its purpose, and to distinguish it from standard assessments (particularly oral assessments that may overlap in style).

Affirmation should only be used only in exceptional cases where there is reasonable doubt as to the authenticity of a student's submission, but insufficient evidence to establish a prima facie case of Academic Misconduct. Where many affirmations are considered for a single assessment, this likely points to poor assessment design and should be addressed by other means.

If a Course Organiser or School wishes to achieve the goals of affirmation at the whole-class level, this should be built into the course or programme assessment structure from the outset and not tacked on at the end.

Oversight, likely at the School level, will be needed to monitor affirmation rates between courses, and to ensure that no student is unnecessarily subjected to a repeated process.

Affirmation may be applied to any piece of non-invigilated assessment: it is not restricted to centrally-timetabled examinations.

An affirmation meeting should be limited to a discussion about the single piece of work under consideration. Questions may relate to the academic content and the process of construction (for example, the rationale behind choices made to approach the task as it was done). A 15-minute discussion should be sufficient for these purposes.

An affirmation meeting may have one of two outcomes: either (i) the mark proceeds unaltered to the Board of Examiners; or (ii) there is sufficient evidence to refer an Academic Misconduct report to the School (SAMO).

A third possible outcome suggested in the CMVM document to Senate Education Committee was of 'further assessment required', in the event that there was not hard evidence of misconduct, but substantial suspicion remained. It was felt that this might pose a significant additional burden on schools and students, and this was not included in our recommendation. This could be reviewed with experience.

Appendix 4 describes a proposed process. It is noted that implementation of this recommendation will require modification to regulations and some further consultation on wording and suggested procedures.

8. Other issues

We were asked to consider some other specific issues, and have added some others that did not clearly fit other headings, and have added here some others that did not fit other headings.

Late submissions

It was confirmed that there had been variation in practice, but it seemed that understanding and latitude had been extended in most circumstances. There was some concern about the potential for abuse if it became standard to accept all delays.

Consideration should be given to altering additional time for submission to be a proportion of the exam time (e.g. 30%)rather than a set +1h. Where the exam delivery system does not require a substantial upload at the end of the exam, it may be reasonable to keep the exam at its usual (in exam hall) duration, without any supplement.

Timezones

This is only relevant when scheduling short-duration (<24h) exams. At the recommended hour for short duration exams (2pm), the major disadvantaged group would be in the West of the Americas. This does not seem to have caused major issues in the last exam diet. We recommend that the 2pm exam time continues to be the preferred time for short-duration exams, but schools who have students in the Americas, in particular, should consider what alternatives are possible.

Essay mills

Essay mills, websites offering to write assessments for you, have become an endemic problem, particularly in some institutions, and perhaps differentially in different regions of the world. Some institutions have gone to significant lengths to block access to essay mill websites. We felt that this would have diminished impact in an era of home-study, as the institution can have no impact on what is available from home networks.

However there may be benefit from signalling awareness, and taking the opportunity to point to guidance, by redirecting requests to at least some prominent contract cheating websites from the University network. We have requested information about the feasibility and cost of doing this.

Student reporting of concerns

This is the subject of recommendations 7, 19. Subgroup 3 considered processes for this in some detail, and leant towards a university-level approach, possibly via a web form. The wider group felt that clear pathways were necessary, but that a local, school-based approach may be preferable. We recommend further consultation to agree policy.

Academic leadership

The QAA's second edition of 'Contracting to Cheat in Higher Education' (Appendix 5) included a recommendation that institutions should identify a named senior member of staff with responsibility for ensuring assessment integrity. We viewed this as an important function, but did not take a view on where it should sit. It is a role that could be taken on by existing Quality structures, or under the umbrella of Senate Education Committee.

APPENDIX 1

REMIT

Formal remit from the ART – Student – Curriculum Resilience Group

The work group is expected to identify lessons learned from the May 2020 diet of exams, and report back at the end of August. This should include:

- The development of an understanding of the full impact of the May 2020 diet including investigation of the following specific issues:
    - The need to ensure that exams are fair for all students, remaining mindful of the fact that not all students have access to the same technology and networks.
    - Whether the repurposing of closed book exams as open book exams for the May 2020 exam diet had inadvertently encouraged poor scholarship.
    - Possibilities around online proctoring, although in general, many schools would prefer to find alternative ways of ensuring that assessments are secure.
    - Ways in which poor scholarship and plagiarism might be designed out.
    - Concerns over consistency of approach to late submission of online exams.
    - The potential to make greater use of vivas, while addressing issues in relation to equity (in both directions).
- Identification of proposals to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the assessment diet in December 2020; including the provision of guidance and support resources for staff/students. Note: the project to replace QMP will not deliver in Semester 1 and therefore no substantive change to available tools is currently anticipated.
    - Consistent with cultivating an atmosphere of trust and a compassionate approach, this is likely to focus on encouraging good scholarship as well as considering proctoring/plagiarism detection tools.
- Consider the recommendations of QAA reports on 'Contracting to cheat in higher education) (https://bit.ly/30X4OgH) and their implications for the University.

Minute from Senate Education Committee June 2020

1.1 Online Assessment 2020-21 – Discussion Paper from CMVM

The Committee noted the concerns that exist around ensuring that assessed work undertaken by students online is both robust and secure. Members discussed:

- the value of ongoing dialogue with students, which makes it easier to identify anomalous performance;
- the possibilities around online proctoring, although in general, Schools would prefer to find alternative ways of ensuring that assessments are secure;
- essay mills - the Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance advised the Committee that student-led guidance highlighting the dangers for students of using essay mills was planned;
- whether the repurposing of closed book exams as open book exams for the May 2020 exam diet had inadvertently encouraged poor scholarship;
- the need to understand the full impact of the May 2020 exam diet;
- ways in which poor scholarship and plagiarism might be designed out;
- the potential to make greater use of vivas, although the Committee recognised that undertaking selective vivas raises concerns around equity, particularly for students with disabilities;
- the need to ensure that exams were fair for all students, remaining mindful of the fact that not all students have access to the same technology and networks;

- the value of undertaking benchmarking against other institutions;
- the need to ensure that any required policy and regulatory changes are made as quickly as possible;
- and overall, the importance of cultivating an atmosphere of trust and a compassionate approach. It was agreed that the University should be relying more on ongoing dialogue and encouraging good scholarship than on proctoring and plagiarism detection tools.

Members agreed that a task force should be set up within the Curriculum Resilience stream of the ART programme to give further consideration to issues around online assessment.

Adopted final remit

It was agreed to break into three subgroups to consider 3 key areas. For each, some background issues are summarised, then objectives for each group are listed. These have been checked back against the recommendations made.

1. Assessment type, resources, training

The remit for this group is the most wide-ranging. It will be important to major on recommendations that require early action. It may be possible to propose further work on topics that require longer and are less pressing.

Background

- Students with poor facilities at home: poor study environment, poor connectivity or IT equipment, are less able to access resources for 'open book' exams, or submit on time.
- Remote assessment is more than usually vulnerable to academic misconduct. The recent QAA report (see Appendix) and others have concluded that no form of assessment makes it possible to completely design out misconduct.
- Extended time assessments (e.g. 24h or days) incur risks from helpful family members and friends, WhatsApp groups. Vulnerability to essay mills may be increased rather than reduced by short timelines.
- Restricted-time (e.g. 2-3h) exams provide less time for conferring, but are not immune to malpractice. None of the available countermeasures can fully circumvent 'helpful assistants'. Questions that are time-consuming to create may be recorded.
- Examinations & Timetabling are collecting data on broad types of assessment currently being planned by schools.
- We will seek feedback from the online assessment conducted in Spring 2020.

Key recommendations required

- Considering fairness, risk of misconduct, professional constraints, and other issues, should we be recommending particular types of assessment?
- Do we need to raise staff awareness of the possibility of misconduct? Do we need a senior appointment around this, as suggested by QAA?
- Are there other student or staff interventions that we should consider?
- Are there comprehensive good resources we can point to? If not adequate, what is needed to provide this info?
- What cautions should we apply to each major type of assessment? To include staff time for exam setting or marking, library resource requirements (e.g. limited number of simultaneous users of key books).

- What would be the appropriate response to suspected misconduct? Noting the topics of subgroups 2 and 3, could these help?
- Students lack of familiarity with exam format: should we make a recommendation around formative assessments in the same format?
- Do we need greater consistency in managing assessments in different timezones.
- Late submissions. It appears that there has been wide variation in practice on this across Schools. We have been asked to make recommendations.
- Are there other additional specific measures to recommend?

2. Online proctoring

Online proctoring has been implemented in some UoE examinations already, including in our Distance Learning at Scale venture. We should hear reports from this, and hopefully of experiences elsewhere. Edinburgh University does not so far have formal policy around this.

Background

- Proctoring in some form has become widely regarded as essential for some high-stakes time-limited online assessments.
- Some professional exams in Edinburgh have been run at usual duration but open-book (versus University default of usual time plus 1h), and are considering proctoring.
- Work to scope some commercially offered solutions has been undertaken in ISG, and it is anticipated their report should be available at the end of July.
- Some institutions have used existing supported technology such as Collaborate, Teams, or Zoom, to conduct remote proctoring. These do not have some of the frills of commercial systems. There would be clear capital cost advantages, possibly to be balanced against effectiveness, staff time.
- It has been suggested that the need for online proctoring can be reduced by countermeasures*.

Key recommendations required

- Should the University offer online proctoring for its examinations?
- If yes, should we offer guidance about when?
- How: should we be recommending any particular approaches?
- How do available or proposed solutions scale to large programmes of 200, 300+ Undergraduate students sitting an examination simultaneously?
- Are there significant new ethical or data protection issues; can we make a statement on this?
- Is formal policy, regulation, or guidance essential or desirable?
- What do you do if student reports bandwidth too poor or connection has failed and proctoring connection drops?
- What do you do if you suspect misconduct but cannot prove it remotely?
- Online proctoring isn't a magic bullet. What other measures might be valuable?

* Counter-measures beyond time limit include randomize order of questions, and preventing going back to previous questions. These reduce conferring between candidates. Different questions for different candidates raise issues of fairness or exam reliability. Short answers

might replace MCQs, perhaps in the future with ability to compare phrasing of answers in a systematic manner.

3. Vivas

At present our regulations prevent use of vivas selectively, for example pass/fail for borderline or distinction level performance. However one possible approach if there is a lack of confidence in results, is to test understanding in a viva (usually online).

The CMVM document considered by Senate Education Committee suggested these would almost never directly change a mark. The outcome could be either to endorse a mark, or lead to a judgement that additional assessment was required to achieve greater certainty about a mark. That could keep vivas short. However in some circumstances further assessment may need to be physically proctored, and therefore possibly delayed.

Background

- The purpose would be to test marks that are out of kilter with previous performance (up or down). Examples might include: scores very variable, performance in one element or type of activity or assessment unusually different from another, missing significant items of assessment, or other constraints related to circumstances of remote/hybrid teaching or Coronavirus.
- To verify a mark if there were any irregularities about the exam process (including connectivity difficulties during it), its oversight or (online) proctoring, or suspicions that the work may not be solely that of the student.
- Random vivas have also been implemented in some Universities, a policy that is felt to be a significant disincentive to serious misconduct.

Key recommendations required

- Should the University implement selective vivas in this way?
- Should random vivas be included as an option, as part of our measures to discourage cheating?
- Management of the viva process. Including what should the staff member(s) participating and the student be told about the reason for the viva.
- Do we need new policy and regulations around this; if so, what principles?
- Include recommendations around record-keeping. Offer recording of interviews?
- Would this raise any new equality/disability issues? How could these be taken into account or dealt with?
- Action to be taken if the viva suggests mark does not accurately reflect understanding. Does the exam board determine the format of further assessment?
- What if academic misconduct is suspected?
- What if the process delays progression?

Note on vivas as a standard part of assessment

Probably the most powerful way of detecting misconduct, or of underperformance caused by a problem or crisis, is knowing your students. That means that out-of-character performance or style is more readily recognised.

There are good reasons to consider vivas for all students as a replacement for some other form of individually marked assessment. For remote students, a live academic discussion with

a tutor is a valuable experience. Vivas as a form of assessment are permitted by current regulations, may not take more time than marking an essay, and perhaps could be encouraged.

APPENDIX 2

Online assessment – framework for a concise guide

A guide aimed at course organisers and designers will advance general principles of assessment design, and give specific pros and cons of a range of assessment types. IAD will take development forward, linking to existing resources.

Key headings and some description are outlined here.

Overall assessment design principles

Principles and general features of assessment design

1. Keep it simple (at least no more complicated than necessary)
2. Go back to your learning outcomes: How are they addressed in your teaching; where and how are they tested across the course.
3. Before you plan the final summative assessment:
    i. Have your students already addressed and met some LOs already?
    ii. Do you need to assess these again?
    iii. Can you concentrate on those LOs yet to be met?
4. What is the best way to assess what remains? Is it an exam or something else? With online assessments, try to avoid replicating what you've done face-to-face and instead think about what can be done well

Assessment design to support trusting relationships

Assessments with the following characteristics can support trusting relationships and care for student wellbeing, while providing challenging and meaningful ways for students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding:

- Requires significant intellectual input from every student.
- Shows the learning process and provides rich opportunities for feedback (from peers and/or tutors).
- Provides opportunities for creativity, personalisation, and contextualisation.
- Covers the key aims / knowledge of the assessed course.
- Is manageable for staff and students.

The prominence of commercial essay mills and contract cheating in media reports may be distorted, or there may be substantial international variation. More third-party cheating in the UK may be carried out by fellow students, friends, and family members.

Factors that may increase the risk of third party cheating

- High stakes, low turn-around times are associated with more misconduct
- Dissatisfaction with the learning and teaching environment
- Perceived opportunities to cheat
- English as a second language
- Prevailing disciplinary culture: where students feel disempowered and undervalued, misconduct may be more likely. Where they feel included and understand what's expected of them then misconduct is less likely

Misconduct risk factors

Academic misconduct is an under-researched area, and evidence is not definitive. Some assessment methods perceived as 'safe' may not be. Evidence suggests:

- All assessment formats have a level of risk associated with them. None are completely safe.
- Programming tasks, MCQ and group assignments are the formats where cheating is hardest to detect.
- Exams: MCQ and short answer exams are most at risk of third party cheating. Vivas and supervised timed essays seem to be much lower risk.
- Assessed coursework: reports and essays seem to be most at risk. Portfolios, placement report and research theses least at risk.

Identifying misconduct

- Simply knowing that there is potential for cheating can make assessors quite effective in finding contract cheating. From Phill Dawson's work, around 60% detection rate (but some false positives).

Pros and cons of individual assessment methods
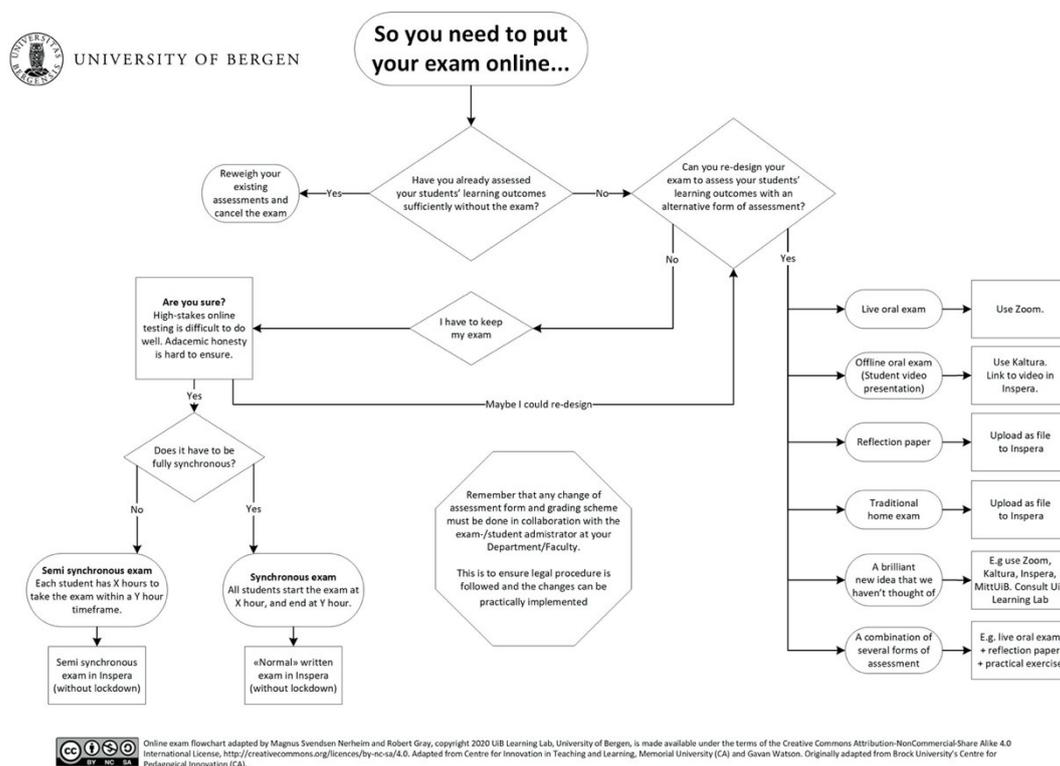
More detail on pros and cons of specific assessment methods follows.

To follow – two examples in landscape pages section

Sources and further reading

Bretag, T, Harper, R, Burton, M, Ellis, C, Newton, P, van Haeringen, K, Saddiqui, S & Rozenberg, P 2019, 'Contract cheating and assessment design: exploring the relationship', Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, vol. 44, no. 5, pp. 676–691

Harper, R, Bretag, T & Rundle, K 2020, 'Detecting contract cheating: examining the role of assessment type', Higher Education Research and Development, online, pp. 1-16.

Tim Fawns and Jen Ross (UoE Teaching Matters blog) https://www.teaching-matters-blog.ed.ac.uk/spotlight-on-alternative-assessment-methods-alternatives-to-exams/

Velda McCune https://www.teaching-matters-blog.ed.ac.uk/spotlight-on-alternative-assessment-methods-assessment-and-feedback-in-the-context-of-hybrid-learning-environments/

Jenny Scoles https://www.teaching-matters-blog.ed.ac.uk/spotlight-on-alternative-assessment-sharing-good-practice/

UCL online assessment guidance is good:

https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/education-planning-2020-21/planning-your-assessments/designing-effective-online-assessment#ln%20tray%20when%20to%20use

APPENDIX 3

EUSA view on student issues around online assessment

Nature of assessment

Many instances of academic misconduct occur when students are under pressure and lack understanding of what they are being asked of in an assessment. The Students' Association Advice Place is also aware that many student concerns around the last exam diet were due to misunderstanding the referencing requirements of their assessment or what resources they were permitted to utilise. Students need clear guidance on what is expected of them in an assessment.

- Students should be provided with straightforward guidance of what the assessments in the course are likely to entail – as early as possible. This should include:
  - what is expected from them in these assessments, ideally shown in an easily accessible standard marking criteria with access to examples.
  - clear guidance on the referencing requirements of the assessment and on what resources it is permissible for the student to use.
  - information on the format of the exam as well as details that address concerns about timezones, learning adjustments and required equipment.
- Best practice would be for students to be provided with opportunities to participate in formative assessments of the same nature prior to summative assessment / practice exams.
- Engaging with formative assessment enables students to receive feedback (from staff or their peers), thus allowing students to study more appropriately as well as improving students understanding of the nature of assessment
  - Practice exams will ensure students are confident with the new exam format thus removing some of the added pressure on exam day
  - As highlighted in the QAA article formative assessments will also enable staff to become more familiar with students work, thus enabling them to identify students who need support with good scholarship
  - Feedback from formative (and summative) assessments should be accessible to students and consistent in the manner in which it is ensuring all feedback is online will achieve this.
- Students should be given a clear point of contact to be able to discuss any concerns they have about their circumstances that impact on their ability to undertake the assessment remotely.

Academic integrity

As the hybrid environment will be new for both staff and students, students may initially be more confused as to what constitutes as academic misconduct. Clear information surrounding format of assessment and expectations of students should help to reduce the likelihood of academic misconduct as highlighted in the staff guidance document. Including students in conversations regarding expectations should also encourage them to feel a greater sense of community with their staff.

- Students should be provided with clear **written and verbal** guidelines on what constitutes academic misconduct with emphasis on areas students typically get confused over such as:
  - What constitutes collusion vs collaboration
  - The ins and outs of self-plagiarism

- o What citation style is expected from students
- o Appropriate use of quotation marks
- o What constitutes paraphrasing
- Signposting to central documents outlining the academic misconduct policy
- Students should be pointed to details on the University's approach to preventing academic misconduct as well as the repercussions of engaging in it.

Many students do not give due attention to the handbook pages on academic misconduct as they do not intend to cheat, so do not appreciate their relevance. It would be useful for students to understand that the majority of academic misconduct cases occur due to poor note taking, time pressures or not understanding the rules. The key information, reinforcing the importance of good scholarship, should be emphasised around assessment points, emphasising that unintentional academic misconduct results in the same consequences and encouraging students to access support in advance of submission if necessary.

Tone will be very important when relaying this information to students. It is imperative to address communication with students from a place of compassion and understanding and ensure there is a positive focus on academic integrity rather than a negative focus on academic misconduct.

Directing students to resources

As highlighted in the QAA report some students engage in academic misconduct due to lack "of essay writing skills; feeling unable to seek support from their providers; lack of confidence". To mitigate this, students should be directed to central resources that could help improve their skills and thus their confidence throughout their academic journey.

Good resources include

- The Advice Place: Read, Write, Cite campaign
- IAD Study Hub
- IAD Support for PG Students
- IAD Support for UG Students
- Library Bitesize sessions
- The Student's Association Peer Learning & Support Schemes (PALS)

APPENDIX 4

Suggested process for an Affirmation viva

An affirmation meeting should have the same status as the (optional) preliminary meeting with the SAMO (§3.5 of the Academic Misconduct Investigation Procedure), so that the information obtained can be considered by SAMO or CAMO as required. All other aspects of the Academic Misconduct procedure would remain unchanged. This includes the SAMO or CAMO being able to conclude that there is no case to answer; the possibility of reaching a verdict of Poor Scholarship; the student being able to contest the allegation; and formal penalty outcomes being available only at CAMO level upwards.

Students will need to be informed that information obtained during an affirmation meeting could be used as evidence in an Academic Misconduct referral.

The meeting should generally involve a panel of two members of staff in the School, at least one of whom should have the relevant subject expertise. A suitable representative (e.g., the student's Personal Tutor or EUSA Advice Place academic advisor) may also attend the meeting at the student's request.

It is possible that the affirmation procedure reveals a wider issue with the assessment that potentially affects a larger number of students than those called for affirmation. It is unclear how such issues can be addressed without adversely affecting students who completed the assessment fairly.

The following paragraphs provide indicative details about process, the safeguards that are likely needed and outstanding concerns. All of this requires wider discussion, and particularly both workload and equality impact assessments, should the above principles be adopted.

Suggested process

1. During marking, a marker may notice certain irregularities which may be indicative of inauthenticity (but equally, might have a valid explanation). Examples include: material that is at a very different level to, or otherwise disconnected from, the course content; an unexpected approach replicated across multiple submissions; unusual selection of references; or strong shifts in style or quality between different parts of the assessment, e.g., where an excellent answer to one part would imply a low likelihood of a basic error in another. It is unlikely that an exhaustive list of possible irregularities could be constructed, as these will vary between assessments and disciplines. In deciding whether to affirm, it is important to bear in mind that each of the above can arise in fully invigilated assessments.
2. A course organiser may also receive a note of concern regarding potential irregularities from student or other reports.
3. A decision about whether to affirm should be made as soon as possible, for example, within the 15-day feedback period for continuous assessment, or in time for the relevant Board of Examiners meeting for terminal assessment. Anonymity of the student should be preserved until the decision to affirm is made. A member of staff with oversight of affirmations within the School should be consulted when making the decision, to guard against overzealous use of the process or individual students being singled out for multiple affirmation meetings. Multiple markers independently having concerns about a single student may constitute sufficient prima facie evidence for a direct Academic Misconduct referral.

4. When invited to an affirmation meeting, a student should be given information about the reason for affirmation, an outline of what will happen at the meeting and procedural information (e.g., about who else may attend, possible outcomes etc). It might be appropriate for the invitation to come via a Student Support team or a Personal Tutor, to reduce the stress burden on the student.

5. The meeting should be chaired by the Course Organiser or an appointed representative with specialist subject knowledge. Another member of academic staff should also be in attendance. The student may be accompanied by a representative (e.g. Personal Tutor or EUSA Advisor) at their own discretion.

6. The scope of the meeting should be restricted to the content of submission and the process of its construction. It should not evolve into a wider assessment of the student's ability, knowledge or working habits

7. If, following affirmation, the panel concludes that there is sufficient evidence to launch a formal Academic Misconduct Investigation, they should complete an Academic Misconduct Report Form and refer to the SAMO. This should include a note of the meeting so that the SAMO can decide whether to determine an outcome or refer to CAMO. This meeting may be deemed equivalent to that described under §3.5 of the Academic Misconduct Investigation Procedure, removing the possibility of a SAMO having to repeat an affirmation meeting for purely procedural reasons (or having to attend every affirmation meeting in the School).

8. In all other cases, a note should be made for the Board of Examiners that the affirmation took place and the mark is deemed secure.

Safeguards

9. Extensive, but sensitive, promotion of the introduction of affirmation will be needed so that both staff and students know what it is well in advance of it happening. Presentation as part of a larger package of integrity measures, and drawing parallels with traditional invigilation processes, may help people approach it positively.

10. Restricting the locus of enquiry to aspects of a single assessment, and to a limited set of well-defined outcomes, should help maintain fairness. Maintaining anonymity (to the extent possible) until the decision to affirm is made should reduce potential for bias.

11. School-level oversight of invitations to affirmation reduce the danger of it being used more than exceptionally by individual members of staff, and to prevent individual students being unnecessarily subject to multiple affirmations.

12. Students are kept informed about the process from invitation to outcome, have a right to contest any Academic Misconduct allegation that results, and to appeal any penalty ultimately applied.

Concerns

13. Students may view this as an unfair extra assessment that applies only to an unlucky few. Couching affirmation meetings as a form of invigilation may help with this.

14. Devolution of affirmation meetings to course level may lead to divergent practice between and within Schools. Some high-level oversight may be needed.

15. Staff may attempt to use affirmation as an ad-hoc replacement assessment; or be frustrated that the procedure does not permit that.

16. There are workload implications certainly on Course Organisers, likely on Student Support Teams, Personal Tutors, possibly also on SAMOs, CAMOs and other Professional Services staff. These need to be carefully enumerated.

17. If a course-level action (e.g., rescaling) is recommended as a result of an affirmation, this may have negative implications for students whose work is authentic.

APPENDIX 5

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

How to discourage and detect contract cheating

A thoughtful 50 min talk about contract cheating, its prevalence and how to discourage and detect it (Phill Dawson, Deakin University, Melbourne): https://bit.ly/3g4RWcZ   Also: http://philldawson.com/ta-cheating and/or transformingassessment.com/events_29_april_2020.php

QAA: Contracting to Cheat in Higher Education (Editions in 2017, 2020)

The first edition of *Contracting to Cheat in Higher Education* was published in 2017. That 'gave parity' to prevention and detection.

The second (2020) edition regards it as impossible to design out cheating, and focuses on awareness and detection. While it relates particularly to essay mills, the principles are broader. https://bit.ly/30X4OgH (18 June 2020)

> *"The COVID-19 pandemic has seen essay mills target students as they seek to take advantage of the uncertainty and anxiety that might arise as a consequence. An anxious student physically distanced from their academic community may be more vulnerable to essay mill marketing. This is reflected in additional content focused on student support."*

> *"Many UK higher education institutions have designed effective institutional strategies and academic integrity practices to educate staff, support students, reduce opportunities to cheat and detect academic misconduct. However, more needs to be done."*

Key findings and recommendations:

- Identifying a strategic lead with responsibility for staff training and institutional coordination can help improve detection of essay mill use.
- Assessment design can help reduce opportunities to cheat, but no assessment should ever be considered cheat proof.
- Technology can help detect the use of essay mills, but is most effective when used by experienced staff with knowledge of the student.
- Essay mill marketing seeks to exploit students who are feeling vulnerable or anxious, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Effective institutional and peer support can help.
- Staff and students should be aware of, or be able to easily access, information and procedures to follow to report a suspicion of academic misconduct.

Additional information

Further relevant documents are in the Background folder at the OREA SharePoint site.
https://edin.ac/2CLAFre

Senate Education Committee

10 September 2020

Virtual Classroom Policy

Description of paper

1. The paper proposes the updated Policy appended that seeks to maintain the virtual classroom as a secure and inclusive digital space for teaching, learning and the fostering of academic community. The policy extends principles agreed for the Lecture Recording Policy on uses of recordings and participant rights to teaching delivered in virtual classes.

Action requested / recommendation

2. Senate Education Committee is requested to **approve** the appended policy and to **approve** the recommendation to keep the potential for resource implications where students request to be deleted from virtual class recordings under review.

Background and context

3. There is currently no comprehensive University statement on ownership or licensing of copyright or performers' rights for these services, nor for permitted uses of recordings made using them, as there is for the Lecture Recording service.

4. An earlier draft of this policy was discussed by the Education Committee on 24 June 2020. Further consultation has since been undertaken, principally with trades union colleagues, and the updated policy reflects this consultation.

Discussion

5. Trades Union representatives share concerns raised by Education Committee and College colleagues about paragraph 12 in the previous draft, regarding students requesting their contribution be deleted post hoc. There is concern that this has the potential to lead to an increase in editing effort required for academics and/or learning technologists, since interactive teaching may be recorded more often under the hybrid teaching model than usual. The suggestion was made that it might be better simply to remove an entire recording rather than editing it in these circumstances. There were also concerns raised over editing when text chat is recorded along with video and audio.

6. In response, the following are proposed:
    a. A revision of proposed paragraph 12, following consultation with Legal Services, that strengthens the message to students to ask beforehand if they do not want what they say to be recorded.
    b. Proposed guidance on paragraph 10 (included as a footnote) that best practice may be to have an unrecorded conversation at the start of a Course between lecturers and students about recording interactive sessions.
    c. Preparation of a standard slide for lecturers to use at the start of recorded interactive classes.

d. An understanding that the lecturer is not expected to learn to carry out such cuts to recordings, but that they and the student concerned are best-placed to identify where in the recording the student's contribution is.

e. That the School is responsible for determining how to balance staff resources and the student experience when deciding whether to edit or delete a recording.

f. A detailed investigation into how recordings, including video, audio, text chat and other artefacts, are stored and can be edited, should form the basis of guidance for lecturers, learning technologists or others who are editing virtual class recordings.

g. We **recommend** that the frequency of student requests for deletion be kept under review at least for Semester 1 of 2020/2021.

Resource implications

7. There is a potential noted above that Schools may receive an increased number of requests for cuts to be made to recordings, and the paper and policy include mitigation to reduce this risk. Some resource from within ISG and Communications and Marketing will be required to publicise the policy and its associated guidance and resources.

Risk management

8. The policy itself provides mitigation to the risks of delivering and recording digital teaching without clarity on data protection, intellectual property rights and user responsibilities.

9. We note again the potential for Schools to receive an increased number of requests for cuts to be made to recordings, and that the paper and policy include mitigation to reduce this risk.

Equality & diversity

10. The policy codifies existing rights or regularises existing practice in relation to digital collaboration services for which impact assessments exist.

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

11. Learning, Teaching and Web Services will coordinate communication of the policy and associated resources through Heads of Schools and Directors of Teaching, and through a number of other internal staff and student communications channels.

Author
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Educational Technology Policy Officer
02 September 2020

Presenter
Melissa Highton
Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Services and Assistant Principal Online Learning

Freedom of Information
Open paper

Virtual Classroom Policy

THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

Purpose of Policy

This policy clarifies rights and responsibilities when delivering and recording teaching and learning using the Virtual Classroom service and other online communication and collaboration technologies.

Overview

The Virtual Classroom service is used in the regular delivery of fully-online programmes, and, in response to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, has also permitted online and hybrid delivery of programmes normally delivered on campus.   The intention of this policy is to help manage the potential risks posed by challenges and complexities in the arrangements for virtual classes. The policy extends existing principles agreed for lecture recording to this context, amending them or making separate provision where required.

Scope: Mandatory Policy

The policy applies University-wide to all staff, students and visiting lecturers involved in running or participating in virtual classroom sessions using the Virtual Classroom service or any other supported communication and collaboration service. The policy also covers online student pastoral support meetings. This policy does not cover teaching recorded or live-streamed using the Lecture Recording service, or non-teaching online events, meetings and other activities.

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Document control

Dates	Approved: DD.MM.YY	Starts: 14.09.20	Equality impact assessment: DD.MM.YY	Amendments: DD.MM.YY	Next Review: 2021/2022

Approving authority	Senate Education Committee
Consultation undertaken	College Teaching Deans and Heads of IT, EUSA, Trades Unions, Legal Services, Knowledge Strategy Committee
Section responsible for policy maintenance & review	Learning, Teaching and Web Services
Related policies, procedures, guidelines & regulations	Accessible and Inclusive Learning; Dignity and Respect Policy; Disciplinary; Student Conduct; Learning Analytics; Lecture Recording Policy; Open Educational Resources; Web Accessibility; Timetabling; IP Exploitation; Student IPR;
UK Quality Code	QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education Part B: Assuring and Enhancing Academic Quality, Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching; and Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement
Policies superseded by this policy	None
Alternative format	If you require this document in an alternative format please email Academic.Services@ed.ac.uk or telephone 0131 651 4490.
Keywords	Virtual Classroom, Collaborate, hybrid delivery, online delivery

Virtual Classroom Policy

Definition

The term "virtual class" here refers to a teaching session delivered to some or all of its participants online using the [Virtual Classroom service](#) or using [any other supported communication and collaboration service](#). This policy also covers online student pastoral support meetings.

Maintaining a safe space for teaching and learning

The University intends each virtual class to remain a safe place for the exposition and discussion of potentially controversial ideas between the lecturers and students on a Course. A safe space is a prerequisite for building academic community which is in turn critical to student engagement and learning.

1) Virtual class participants will abide by the [Dignity and Respect Policy](#).

2) Access to a virtual class by default will normally be limited to the staff, students or learners on the instance of the Course(s) that the teaching relates to. The lecturer may authorise access for other relevant participants. A student or employee accessing a virtual class without authorisation may be investigated under the [Code of Student Conduct](#) or [Disciplinary Policy](#) (as applicable).

3) Staff and students contributing to a virtual class will normally be identified within the service by name. This is in the interests of maintaining a safe learning space, supporting academic community and student engagement, and of the effective running of the session. Where a student believes their interests in not being identified within a virtual class may outweigh these interests, they should contact their personal tutor or the lecturer or course organiser for the Course concerned in advance to discuss whether their participation can be anonymous or pseudonymous.

4) While the building of online academic communities of learning is often likely to be more effective when interactions include video, each participant may nonetheless choose whether or not their video and/or still image is displayed to others within a virtual class.

Making a virtual class recording

Who can record

5) No recording of the virtual class may be made using the service without the lecturer's authorisation.

6) The person who initiates and stops the recording must make all participants aware that recording is about to commence, and that recording is stopped. Participants should be made aware whether other virtual class elements such as text chat or the participant list will be recorded.

7) Students may, under the [Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy](#), make their own audio recording of any of their teaching on their own device for the sole purpose of their own personal study.

What can be recorded

8) A recording may include all or part of a virtual class.

9) Where the virtual class contains a lecture, and unless they have a good reason not to, the lecturer should record the lecture to allow students on the Course to review it. 'Good reason' is as defined in paragraph 2.2 of the [Lecture Recording Policy](#).

10) There is no expectation on the lecturer to record other, more interactive virtual classes such as seminars, tutorials or laboratories. Lecturers who intend to record such sessions should check for any objections from participants before commencing recording[1].

11) The University will provide guidance on what elements of the virtual class can be recorded. The lecturer may consider which elements of the virtual class (e.g. video, audio, slides, file uploads, text chat) will be most useful for student revision.

12) A student is required to be recorded if the recording is a mandatory part of their assessment. If a student otherwise wishes to make a contribution within a virtual class without it being recorded, they may request that recording is paused or stopped for their contribution or may nominate a proxy within the class to contribute for them.

    a) The University will only delete a student's contribution from a virtual class recording if the student's interests in deleting their recorded contribution clearly outweigh the University's interests in keeping it. The student should contact the lecturer in the first instance to request deletion of all or part of their contribution. Where necessary, the School will decide whether the student's contribution shall be cut from the recording or whether the whole recording shall be deleted.

Uses of virtual class recordings

13) Virtual class recordings may be used for the following purposes:

    a) The University will provide access to recordings, where available, to students and relevant staff on the instance of the Course to which the virtual class relates.

    b) A student may only use the recording for the purposes of their own personal study. The student must destroy any copy of the recording they hold once this purpose has been met. This will be on completion of the final assessment to which the Course relates or when the student leaves the University, whichever is sooner.

    c) Students will access recordings by streaming them, and will not be permitted to download local copies except:
       i) where the School provides a download of a recording to a disabled student on the Course when this has been specified as a reasonable adjustment.
       ii) that the lecturer at their discretion may provide download access to all students on the Course where, in the lecturer's opinion, this is appropriate.

    d) The lecturer may publish the recording as an open educational resource, with appropriate modifications and safeguards, including an appropriate attribution, licence and having obtained any permissions required from other participants or third parties whose intellectual property resides within the recording. Guidance on this is contained within the [Open Educational Resources Policy](#) and [Website Accessibility Policy](#).

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[1] Guidance: where a Course includes regular recording of interactive virtual classes, it is recommended that the Course Organiser discusses recording with the students at the start of the Course, prior to any recording taking place. This might include the reasons for recording, how the recordings will be used and ways to opt out of being recorded.

e) A lecturer may use recordings of their own virtual classes within their own performance review; to facilitate peer observation of their teaching; or if they are investigated under the Disciplinary Policy.

f) The University may use a virtual class recording within the scope of an investigation under the Code of Student Conduct.

g) A School may use a virtual class recording in exceptional situations to provide continuity, as specified within business continuity plans relevant to the School. Examples of exceptional situations might include significant disruption from a pandemic or other natural event or the unforeseen loss of part of the University estate. The School will, where reasonably possible, inform the lecturer beforehand that their recording is to be used and for what purpose, and the lecturer will retain the right not to permit this use. If the lecturer, acting reasonably, objects to use for this purpose, the School will not be permitted to use the recording.

h) The relevant Service Owner[2] may audit recordings in the context of service operation and management, and may where necessary delete an inappropriate recording sooner than the end of the normal retention period.

14) Any other use of a recording will require further, separate agreement between the University and other parties with rights in the recording. In particular:

a) The recordings and any associated metadata will not be used by the University for staff performance review or disciplinary processes without the lecturer's permission, except in the case of alleged gross misconduct.

b) Recordings may not be used as a replacement for intended staff presence in a lecture room or virtual class unless the lecturer permits this.

c) Recordings will not be used to cover University staff exercising their legal right to take industrial action without the lecturer's consent.

d) Staff and students may otherwise only use, modify, publish or share restricted-access virtual class recordings or excerpts with the permission of the School that provides the Course and of the lecturer and of any other participants in the recording. It shall be a disciplinary offence to use, modify or distribute recordings without permission, including but not limited to: copying the recording, issuing copies of it to the public, renting or lending copies of it to the public, playing it in public or broadcasting it. An employee or student using, modifying or distributing a recording without permission may be investigated under the Disciplinary Policy or Code of Student Conduct (as applicable).

Participant and University rights

15) In contributing to a virtual class that they have been notified is being recorded, participants agree to the University recording them and agree to give the University the licences necessary to use any recordings for the purposes in this policy.

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[2] The senior owner of the service within Information Services, ultimately accountable for ensuring that the service meets current and future needs and expectations.

16) The policies on [exploitation of intellectual property](#) and [student intellectual property rights](#) cover the status of intellectual property generated by the University's employees and students. Where the University and an employee have agreed that the employee retains some or all of the intellectual property rights to material used within a recording, the employee agrees to grant the University a non-exclusive licence to use the material for the purposes in this policy.

17) Performer rights reside with the lecturer and other virtual class participants, who by using the services agree to the recording and agree that the University may use their performance for the purposes in this policy. Participants wishing to assert their right to be identified as author or performer should do so as part of the recording, for example on an introductory slide.

18) Where a student holds some or all of the intellectual property rights to material used within a recording, the student grants the University a non-exclusive licence to use the material for the purposes in this policy.

19) External visiting lecturers (or their employer as appropriate) retain copyright in work and any other intellectual property rights they generate and, by accepting the terms of the external visiting lecturer agreement, agree to grant the University a non-exclusive licence to use the recording for the purposes in this policy.

Data protection, security and retention

20) The privacy statement for each service will detail how the University will use, share and retain data in relation to that service.

21) Recording of sensitive personal data shall not take place without the explicit written consent of the person(s) to whom the data relate.

22) The University or its software partners will securely host media captured within a virtual class. Data are hosted within the United Kingdom or European Economic Area and the data protection and data security arrangements must satisfy the University's Data Protection Officer and Chief Information Security Officer respectively.

23) If a lecturer wishes to retain a recording for longer than the normal retention period then they should transfer the recording to the University's [Media Asset Management Platform](#). The University cannot be held responsible for any recordings deleted after the retention period.

24) Learning Analytics relating to virtual classes may be used in accordance with the [Learning Analytics Principles and Purposes, Policy and Governance](#) arrangements.

Accessibility

25) Recordings must not breach equality legislation and must comply with the [Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy](#). The University will provide clear, accessible guidance on how to access virtual class recordings.

Copyright and licensing

26) Anyone presenting material within a virtual class must ensure that they do not infringe third-party intellectual property rights, including copyright. Presenters must cite copyright material appropriately on slides and for recordings used within virtual classes and must ensure that materials do not contain any restricted information in actionable breach of confidence or in

breach of data protection law, nor constitute a breach of publishing or collaboration or other agreement that governs their research or work at the University or elsewhere.

27) If a licence for material used within a recording constrains the University to retain that material for less than the recording retention period then the lecturer must arrange for deletion of the material at the end of the time specified by the licence.

Student support meetings

28) Access to online student pastoral support meetings will be limited to those agreed to beforehand. Meetings will not be recorded using the service except in exceptional circumstances and with written agreement from all participants.

DRAFT 02 September 2020

Senate Education Committee

10 September 2020

Internal Periodic Review of Centre for Open Learning – Recommendation Remitted to Senate Education Committee

Description of paper
1. The paper provides details of a recommendation remitted to Senate Education Committee following the recent Internal Periodic Review (IPR) of the Centre for Open Learning (COL).

Action requested / recommendation
2. Members are asked to consider ways in which COL might be given opportunities to fully embed its activities and broad range of expertise in language teaching, adult education and widening access in the fabric of the institution.

3. The Committee is required to provide COL with an initial response to the recommendation and the way in which it will be actioned by 14 October 2020. A further report on progress against the recommendation will be required by 8 July 2021.

Background and context
4. The University runs Internal Periodic Reviews as part of its quality assurance framework to enhance student experience of its taught and postgraduate provision.

5. Recommendations for enhancement of provision arising from Internal Periodic Reviews are tracked in onward reporting.

Discussion
6. The following recommendation was remitted to Senate Education Committee following the recent IPR of COL:

*"The Review Team **recommends** that the University's Senate Education Committee create opportunities for the Centre of Open Learning to fully embed its activities and broad range of expertise in language teaching, adult education and widening access into the fabric of the institution. The Committee should ensure that COL has a voice in institutional discussions about key projects and planning and help raise its profile within the University, ensuring that the excellent progress made by the Centre's own marketing team can be developed to help it grow sustainably."*

Resource implications
7. Not included

Risk management
8. Not included

Equality & diversity
9. Not included

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed
10. Not included

<u>**Author**</u>   <u>**Presenter**</u>
Philippa Ward   *Tina Harrison*
2 September 2020

Freedom of Information
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Senate Education Committee

10 September 2020

Committee Effectiveness Review – Questionnaire Initial Analysis

Description of paper

1. Following a light-touch Committee Effectiveness Review, initial analysis of the feedback received from Senate Committee members is presented for discussion.

Action requested / recommendation

2. Each of the Senate Committees is invited to consider the narrative and, while recognising the low response rate to the review, to take forward a set of recommendations that will aid continuous improvement of our approach to academic governance in 2020/21.

Background and context

3. The University is required under the 2017 Scottish Code of Good HE Governance to carry out annual internal reviews of Senate and the committees which carry delegated responsibilities. In summer 2020, Academic Services carried out a primarily self-reflective review with input requested from committee members across the themes of Remit, Composition, Support, Engagement and Impact of the committees' work.

Discussion

4. The response rate was extremely low across all three committees (13 replies in total), so there is little to act on, but there are potentially some common themes such as in relation to committee remits, communication and equality, diversity and inclusion.

5. Overall, committees reported that their remit was clear and that they had adapted well to the change in composition and terms of reference introduced in 2019/20. Members also reported that they had a good understanding of their role and that there is an understanding of how the committee's work relates to the bigger picture.

6. There was feedback across all the committees indicating a recognition that consideration of EDI within the committee business and in terms of membership needs to be improved.

Resource implications

7. The recommended actions will require coordination by Committee Secretaries in Academic Services as part of their established role in support of Conveners and the cycle of committee business.

Risk management

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

Equality & diversity

9. The findings of the questionnaire demonstrate a recognition of the need to improve diversity of our committees. It is recognised that as a high proportion of committee members are appointed by virtue of their job/role (*ex officio*) the committees can do little to change the diversity of the membership as this depends upon the characteristics of staff recruited to positions across the university. It is suggested in the report that committees actively consider their membership and in particular look to the opportunity for co-option of members and the inclusion of a range of non-committee members in task groups in order to diversify the input to business discussions and decision making. It has been recommended that the committees seek a more active approach from contributors - for example requiring better evidence that EDI has been considered when constructing cover-papers.

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

10.

Author
Sue MacGregor
24 August 2020

Presenter
Sue MacGregor

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Committee Effectiveness Review 2019/20 – questionnaire responses initial analysis

1. **Context**

    1.1. Under the 2017 Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance, universities are expected to carry out an annual internal review of the effectiveness of their academic board (at the University of Edinburgh, the academic board is Senate). Senate Standing Committees operate under delegated authority from Senate. Therefore, during Summer 2020, Academic Services conducted a light-touch review of the Senate Standing Committees (Education Committee, Quality Assurance Committee, Academic Policy & Regulations Committee).

    1.2. The review was primarily self-reflective and the input requested from committee members was intended to be proportionate to the current University priorities, particularly taking into account the ongoing University response to the Covid-19 emergency.

    1.3. The review process intended to gather information on and evaluate effectiveness in terms of the:
        i. Composition of the committee
        ii. Support and facilitation of committee meetings
        iii. Engagement of members and knowledge and understanding of their roles and committee remits
        iv. Impact and strategic relevance of Senate Committees' work

2. **Response rate**

    2.1. The response rate was extremely low across all three committees (13 replies in total), so there is little to act on, but there are potentially some common themes such as in relation to committee remits, communication and equality, diversity and inclusion.

3. **Analysis of comments by Committee**

    SQAC

    - **Committee Remit** – respondents felt the remit was clear and the Committee adapted effectively to challenges and changes to priorities. *"The remit is clear. It often has oversight of the work of others which is appropriate given the nature of the committee role."*
    - **Governance and Impact** – the majority of respondents understood how the Committee linked to the wider governance framework and University strategic priorities. However linkages to the University Executive could be better, particularly regarding feedback on recommendations and business passed up to Exec by SQAC: *"I do not feel that the work of Executive is well connected to SQAC (ie academic related business going via Exec)"*
    - **Composition/EDI** – respondents were satisfied that the Committee had the appropriate composition to fulfil its remit but some responders felt that it could be more diverse (in relation to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) – *"I think the composition isn't suitably representative of the diverse population of the University - and certainly not its aims. If we look at the race"*

- **Role** – most of the respondents felt they had a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities.
- **Communications** – respondents felt that the Committee communicates effectively with stakeholders.
- **Support** – all respondents felt that the Committee was effectively supported by Academic Services.

APRC

- **Committee Remit** – respondents agreed that the remit was clear and that the Committee had adapted to changes well. Agreed that there had been very little in the way of formal APRC task groups recently – *"Would be good to use task groups so that others outside the Committee could have opportunities to be part of the work"*. However, the Committee has been focused on other projects/groups that require feedback from APRC at key stages of their work (for example in relation to special circumstances and coursework extensions).
- **Governance & Impact** - majority agreement that there are clear links between Committee business and the University proprieties and that APRC makes the desired impact. Slight disagreement about effectiveness of the flow of business between College Committees, Senate and other Committees – *" membership allows for a good flow of information to Colleges (and so to Schools/Deaneries)". "Would be helpful to have a visual diagram of how the committee link".* It was noted there are a great deal of papers and it's a lot of reading to ask members to get through – *"Maybe use targeted pre reading"*.
- **Composition** – respondents agreed that the size and composition was suitable and that *" meetings work well and members are not afraid to discuss difficult issues"*. It was recognised that this is a Committee *" where quite wide representation is important, professional staff and academics"*.
- **EDI** –agreed that this could be improved – *"More emphasis should be placed on EDI to embed it into the decision making and discussion".*
- PGR – agree that further thought needs to be given to APRC's role in relation to PGR governance. Members have noted that we also need to better articulate where the Doctoral College will sit within this when it comes to policy and regulations relating to PGR students.
- **Role** – there was majority agreement that members had clear understanding of their role and responsibilities with an appreciation of strong member engagement in the Committee.
- **Communications** – respondents agreed that the Committee communicates effectively with stakeholders and members had clear understanding of their role in cascading information - *"the Senate Committees newsletter has been a big help." "Sometimes there is not enough time between getting the papers and the meeting to undertake consultation".*
- **Support -** all respondents felt that the Committee was effectively supported by Academic Services.

SEC

- **Committee Remit** – respondents felt the remit was clear and the Committee adapted effectively to challenges and changes to priorities. However, some improvements were suggested - *"there needs to be better strategic use of task/workgroups". " We need to explore further how better to join up Student Experience with Senate Committee activity".*
- **Governance and Impact** – all respondents understood how the Committee linked to the wider governance framework and University strategic priorities, including the links between Senate and the Committees. However, some respondents felt that communication to the wider community could be improved e.g. *"…decisions made in Senate Committees [may not]*

reach everyone and always lead to changes in practice in all Schools." There was concern that making an impact could be a struggle - "*In the current crisis where the lines of governance have been somewhat undermined."* Specifically in relation to oversight of PGR (as a result of the disbanding of REC) there was a sense that the SEC should strengthen its consideration of PGR matters within the cycle of business and should ensure clarity of the relationship between the Doctoral College and academic governance.

- **Composition** – respondents were satisfied that the Committee had the appropriate composition *"It has been really helpful to include Heads of School…"* although *"Committees are rather large which makes them less agile."*
- **EDI** – The majority of respondents agreed that the Committee adequately addresses EDI considerations when discussing its business. However, all respondents disagreed that the composition of the SEC is suitably representative – *"OK on gender but no BAME representation". "Cover papers rarely genuinely address EDI and evidence deep and change orientated thinking"*.
- **Role** – Respondents felt they had a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities and that members engaged fully in Committee business.
- **Communications** – Most respondents felt that the Committee communicates effectively with stakeholders and all said that they had a clear understanding of their role as a representative of their College or Group. However some did not have a clear understanding of their role in cascading information from the Committee – *"I do not believe that Committee members should be expected to deliver decisions and actions unaided"*.
- **Support** – all respondents felt that the Committee was effectively supported by Academic Services.

4. Committees and Coronavirus Covid-19

4.1. Academic Services has reviewed Senate Standing Committees' Covid-19 preparedness for 2020/21, in the context of ongoing developments in the governance and management of learning and teaching and the student experience as part of the University's management of the impact of the Covid-19 emergency.

4.2. Each of the Committees has played a role during 2019/20 in the response to Covid-19 in particular:

   i.   APRC has provided the necessary oversight for concession arrangements and academic guidance and moved its business to online meetings which will continue for the foreseeable future.

   ii. SQAC has done significant work, supported prominently by the team in Academic Services, to ensure that the approach to scheduling and conducting IPRs and other QA processes are streamlined, taken online and that colleagues and externals can carry out their roles safely and effectively either remotely or on campus in 2020/21. Preparation for ELIR has been re-organised to ensure we meet the revised QAA schedule for review in 2021.

   iii. SEC convened additional meetings to ensure it could cover items of business relating to assessment, timetabling & the teaching week and hybrid learning & teaching. The Committee is well prepared to conduct its business flexibly and online during the new academic year.

4.3. There are cross-overs in the membership and interests of SEC and the ART working groups. It is suggested that SEC strengthens its role in governance of learning & teaching matters in

relation to the ART programme and hybrid learning and teaching is fully implemented in the new academic year.

5. **Suggested Actions in light of responses (combined)**

5.1. Because of the low number of respondents, a combined analysis of the answers to the review questions suggests the following recommended actions:

Area Under Review	Recommended Action	Responsible	Date
Remit	1. Committees to discuss the relevance of task groups for areas of business in particular to enable wider participation and representation which could be beneficial to the Committee in its decision making 2. SEC to consider how to include relevant matters relating to student experience into the cycle of business (while recognising how student experience is handled by Executive). 3. SEC to consider how to strengthen governance of hybrid L&T and curriculum matters in 2020/21 where these are initiated via the ART programme. 4. SEC to consider its coverage of PGR matters and continue to monitor the development of the Doctoral College and its role (if any) in PGR governance.	Academic Services and Senate Standing Committee Conveners SEC Convener SEC Convener SEC Convener	
Composition	5. Committees to consider their membership actively in the course of each year in order to ensure it remains relevant (e.g co-opted members)	Academic Services	
Governance & Impact	6. Paperwork – Committees to consider whether it may be possible to allocate readers for some of the more peripheral items. 7. Presentation of papers - Committees to invite those who submit papers to present them if they are not a member. This seems to happen in some cases but not in others. This would ensure a more helpful discussion and better understanding for those who are putting the proposal forward for approval and understand the issues raised when a paper is not approved.	Academic Services Academic Services	
EDI	8. More emphasis across all Committees on EDI as an integral consideration to all business and decision making. 9. Committees to request that contributors ensure that cover papers portray more evidence of EDI considerations	Senate Standing Committee Conveners Academic Services	
Role	10. Conveners and Secretaries to introduce continually improved inductions for members 11. Re-set the expectations for the role of members in the cascading of information to constituencies in respect of each Committee's remit and decision making, with specific reference to the requirement for information to be reported to and from relevant College committees.	Academic Services and Senate Standing Committee Conveners	
Communications	12. Academic Services to work with Committees to build on the success of the Committee Newsletter and to support increase in effective cascading of information to stakeholders.	Academic Services	

Senate Education Committee

10 September 2020

Senate Education Committee Priorities 2020-21

Description of paper
1. The paper outlines Senate Education Committee's agreed priorities for Academic Year 2020-21.

Action requested / recommendation
2. For information

Background and context
3. Senate Education Committee's draft priorities for Academic Year 2020-21 were reported to E-Senate in May 2020. These priorities have been updated in line with developments over the summer.

Discussion
4. The agreed priorities are attached.

Resource implications
5. For information only. The resource implications of specific areas of work will be assessed in due course.

Risk management
6. For information only. The risks associated with specific areas of work will be assessed in due course.

Equality & diversity
7. For information only. The equality and diversity implications of specific areas of work will be assessed in due course.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed
8. Senate Education Committee will report against these priorities in its annual report to Senate in May / June 2021

Author
Philippa Ward
2 September 2020

Presenter
No presenter – for information

Freedom of Information
Open

Activity
• Guide and provide oversight for the curriculum transformation agenda in the evolving context
• Oversee the ongoing development of the Doctoral College and monitor its impact upon the experiences of PGR students, including discussion and influence of the University approach to PGR scholarships.

• <u>Adaptation and renewal</u>
 	
    o Provide guidance on the lessons and challenges of teaching delivery in the 2020-2021 academic year, including refinement of practice during the year in light of updated guidance from Government, internal evidence on effectiveness etc.
 	
    o Monitor the evolution and implementation of the institutional policy to support the University's Lecture Recording service in the context of Adaptation and Renewal post-Covid-19 and more broadly, give guidance to the blend of digital content and support in teaching delivery (in collaboration with the Knowledge Strategy Committee of Senate where appropriate)
 	
    o Consider the evolving challenges with Semester 2, and guidance on directions to take in preparation for Semester 2.

• Provide insight and policy oversight for key debates in the areas of Widening Participation and Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)
• Monitor ongoing effectiveness of Student Health & Wellbeing Strategy in the context of overall student learning experience.
• Continue to provide oversight of and learning from our work to foster a strong sense of belonging among our students.
• Ensure strengthening of the Committee's link to the Space Strategy Group.

Senate Education Committee

10 September 2020

Course Enhancement Questionnaires – Hybrid Teaching Questions

Description of paper

1. This paper provides the wording of two free text questions that are to be added to Course Enhancement Questionnaires (CEQs) to generate insights into students' experiences of hybrid teaching and learning in the 2020/21 academic year.

Action requested / recommendation

2. For information. (The wording of the questions was recently approved by Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC)).

Background and context

3. This is the last year the University of Edinburgh will be running centrally managed end of course feedback surveys – a review is underway to develop the new approach. To reduce the administrative burden on Schools University Executive have approved the proposal that questions on individual teachers be made optional. Decisions around whether or not to include teaching staff will be made locally.

4. CEQs were suspended (with an option to opt in) in Semester two of 2019/20 as it was recognised that there was a need to reduce burden on Schools during the digital pivot. CEQs currently form part of the University's Student Voice policy so will be reinstated this year as the CEQ Review concludes its work on a new approach to end of course feedback.

5. The Rethinking Student Administration and Support (RSAS) Project Board approved a programme of work focused on collecting student feedback and sharing any insights generated during 2020/21. One element of this work plan was to add a small number of free text questions to CEQs to collect early feedback on experiences of hybrid teaching and learning.

6. The Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling (SAI&M) team will analyse student comments to identify any examples of good practice; common themes that are emerging, or issues that are raised across a number of courses and will report these through the RSAS board e.g. access to services / library resources / study spaces.

7. Responses will also be included in Course Organiser reports which are generated as soon as the questionnaire closes and will be included in the end of semester comment extracts which are shared with Directors of Quality.

Discussion

8. The agreed questions are:

> The University is collecting feedback from students on their experiences of ~~hybrid~~ digital teaching and learning throughout the year.
>
> i)   Reflecting on your experience of ~~hybrid~~ digital teaching and learning on this course, what has worked well for you?
>
> ii.a)   Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your experience of ~~hybrid~~ digital teaching and learning on this course that would help us improve our approach?
>
> OR
>
> ii.b)   ~~Reflecting on your experience of hybrid teaching and learning on this course, what has not worked well for you?~~

9. One Director of Quality asked if two of the Core questions could be removed but this will not be possible in the time frame. Where Schools choose to remove the teaching staff questions questionnaires will be considerably shorter.

10. The initial question set had a neutral second question but one Director of Quality fed back that it would be better to ask directly what has not worked well. **Senate Quality Assurance Committee was asked to state a preference for either question ii.a or ii.b. Question ii.a was the preferred question.**

Resource implications

11. Resource will be made available in the SAI&M team to analyse student comments and to share insights generated from the analysis.

12. There are no additional resource requirements for Schools.

Risk management

13. N/A

Equality & diversity

14. Student responses to CEQs are anonymous and any comments shared will be redacted to ensure that individual students or staff members cannot be identified.

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

15. The additional questions will be added to all CEQs automatically.

16. Heads of School and CEQ contacts will receive an email notifying them of all the changes to CEQs this year.

17. Findings from the weekly analysis will be shared through the RSAS project board and the Student Voice SharePoint page.

Author
Name Paula Webster
Date 14th August 2020

Presenter
Name Paula Webster, Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling

Freedom of Information
Open paper

Senate Education Committee

10 September 2020

Guiding Principles for Personal Tutors and Student Support Staff

(Considered by Electronic Business between 11 and 27 August 2020)

Description of paper
1. The paper provides finalised Guiding Principles for Personal Tutors and Student Support Staff, approved by ART Students on 27 August 2020 following electronic consideration by Senate Education Committee.

Action requested / recommendation
2. For information

Background and context
3. Draft Guiding Principles were circulated to Education Committee for comment on 11 August 2018. Comments were received from all three Colleges and Support and Professional Services noting support for many aspects of the draft Principles, but highlighting a small number of concerns, particularly around the recommendation that face-to-face meetings should be offered to all new undergraduate students at the start of Semester 1. Not all Schools felt that this would be logistically possible and safe in the current context.

4. The draft Guiding Principles were amended to take account of the feedback received, and a final version was approved by ART Students on 27 August 2020.

Discussion
5. The finalised Guiding Principles are attached.

Resource implications
6. For information only.

Risk management
7. For information only.

Equality & diversity
8. For information only.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed
9. Members have been asked to circulate the Guiding Principles within their constituencies. They will also be appended to the University's [Academic and Pastoral Support Policy](#) and have been added to the '[Preparing for Semester 1](#)' SharePoint page.

Freedom of Information
Open

Guiding Principles for Personal Tutors and Student Support staff

Contents

Background

These guiding principles are not intended to be a prescriptive set of rules. They aim simply to augment and adapt existing advice about how, when and for what purpose to meet with your taught students, in the context of hybrid learning and physical distancing.

The shape and form of the existing Student Support and Personal Tutor structures have not changed. The recommendations following the 2019 Review of Student Support and Personal Tutoring are currently on hold due to the impact of the global pandemic, awaiting University Executive approval in the coming academic year.

However, academic year 2020-21 will not be 'business as usual' due to the shift to hybrid learning and teaching for those programmes which had previously been on-campus taught programmes. These Guiding Principles constitute a temporary addendum to the existing *Academic and Pastoral Support Policy* and are designed to support schools in setting up and running student support despite the extraordinary challenges caused by the Covid-19 pandemic for academic year 20/21. For programmes which have always been and continue to be delivered Online, these Guiding Principles may be less relevant, albeit it is acknowledged that the nature and frequency of support required by our existing Online students may differ this year due to the impact the pandemic might have had on their studies.

Whilst these principles are not intended to be prescriptive, In the interests of continuity and to reassure our students, the prescribed set of PT/tutee meetings and timings described in the Academic and Pastoral Support policy remains in place.

However it should be noted that students in AY20/21 are likely if anything to need more support and guidance as they engage in their hybrid education, and students who are having difficulties may well need **more frequent** contact with their PTs and / or student support contacts than is set out in the Policy.

Schools and Deaneries are not required to update their PT Statement.

Basic principles

As an outcome of their interactions and relationships with you, students should:

- have the opportunity to discuss their academic development and plans at appropriate and timely intervals
- know who they can approach in their School for any discussion of pastoral issues
- be contacted proactively, and for earlier-years students, more frequently, and not only in times of need or concern
- be welcomed into the academic community in groups and individually
- be registered on appropriate courses that allow them to progress and develop academically in the right time frame
- be signposted to the relevant specialist services (e.g. Student Counselling, Student Disability and Chaplaincy services, Careers and Employability, Institute for Academic Development, the Advice Place) when necessary
- have **on campus, face–to-face meetings with staff**, where it is safe to do so. Appendix A sets out the current health and safety information about how the University is preparing our Estate for a safe return to on campus work. Where it is not deemed safe to meet students in

person, we should use digital meeting tools (see Meetings, Communications and Technology).

First meeting of the year

Regular and timely meetings are important for the PT-student relationship and we recognise the value of in-person, on-campus meetings, particularly to help establish new relationships as part of wider orientation and induction activities. These meetings are of particular importance and impact for new entrants to the University, both UG and PGT.

However, in-person, on-campus meetings should only be offered where it is safe to do so (see Appendix A - Health and safety information on returning to the campus), with particular attention to suitability and availability of meeting spaces, circulation and queuing spaces, and students and staff who might be at higher risk from the Covid-19. We also recognise that in many parts of the University's Estate, it will not be feasible to host large numbers of meetings over short periods of time (due to queue management, circulation and hygiene protocols) and it is therefore likely that in these areas of the University, in-person on-campus meetings might need to take place over a longer period of time (and therefore start of Semester administrative / transactional activities will need to be undertaken digitally).

During the first month of Semester, please make proactive contact with all of your tutees, and in particular those who might need more support (e.g. care-experienced students and students we know are either in quarantine or self-isolating as a result of the pandemic). Please refer to section entitled 'Awareness of particular cohorts or student profiles' below. Please also ensure that you communicate clearly with your students about what the nature and timings of their meetings with you and colleagues in your School / Deanery is likely to be. Email templates are being developed and will be shared via the Toolkits site in advance of Semester 1.

The situation will be reviewed in late September/early October to ascertain the viability and safety of increasing the number of in-person on-campus meetings with students.

Clarity of communications with students about whom to contact and how

Schools and Deaneries should make it clear whom the student should contact for what kind of support, which might typically be:

- The Personal Tutor for discussions relating to academic choices, development, and progression, and issues which might have a direct bearing on these. Depending on your School/Deanery or Programme, this might also be for initial pastoral support
- Student Support teams and roles (where these exist), including staff in Teaching Offices, for administrative, procedural and, potentially, pastoral and wellbeing issues
- Course Organisers and Lecturers with questions relating to specific courses and their hybrid delivery
- Specialist professional services teams across the University (including Student Disability and Student Counselling Services and Careers and Employability Service) which the student can and should access proactively, with or without a school referral.

We must ensure that Joint Programme students are not redirected on multiple occasions and/or receiving conflicting advice. This causes dissatisfaction, uncertainty and, potentially, academic misdirection. Ideally, every Undergraduate student on a Joint Programme or Combined Degree

should have access to a key contact in their 'home' school. The key contact will have clear understanding of the Joint / Combined Programme and its challenges and context.

It is more than ever important that the tone and style of communications are friendly and supportive. Please endeavour to avoid communication styles which might put students off contacting staff about their concerns. Where appropriate, please encourage students to seek advice and support.

Setting expectations

Students' anxieties regarding assessments and examination marks, their implications, individual performance and preparedness for subsequent years of study, amongst other issues, may have been heightened by the impact of the pandemic and our shift to hybrid learning. It is important to help students arrive at reasonable expectations of themselves, their educators and those who provide support.

In your capacity as a Personal Tutor, you should:

- provide students with academic guidance and help them to reflect on their progress in order to get the most out of their studies.

All staff in Schools / Deaneries who are in student support roles (including but not limited to Personal Tutors and Student Support Officers or equivalent) should:

- provide students with relevant signposting and information about the university's wider network of specialist support, guidance and advisory services
- acknowledge the limits to which privacy and confidentiality can be offered. It is not always possible or appropriate to maintain confidentiality, for example if a student makes a disclosure which indicates they or somebody else might be in danger / at risk of harm in which you must consider sharing this information. (For more information, please refer to the [Charlie Waller Memorial Trust e-learning](#))
- ensure you set appropriate time limits and have an appropriate environment, on campus or remote, for your discussions
- be clear on the best way to contact you (e.g. by email or over Teams), if you are in a position to host 'office hours' and if so, what these are, and the typical time in which you are likely to respond. *We suggest including this information in your email signature*
- set expectations on what is not appropriate or reasonable (e.g. expecting / demanding responses in the evening or weekend) and [maintain appropriate boundaries](#).

Meetings, Communications and Technology

Clarity of communications is more important than ever in a hybrid learning and support environment. We have adapted rapidly to using more and more varied digital communication tools. As highlighted above, now more than ever it is important to be friendly, approachable and supportive in all communications and ensure students know they can approach you for support if needed.

Please consider the nature of the discussion or meeting you are having, and the need for appropriate levels of privacy, when choosing the tool by which you communicate with your students. ISG has also developed a helpful tool for helping you to decide which technology may be

best suited: https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/computing/comms-and-collab/online-meetings-and-events/which-tool-to-use

Examples of the kinds of tools supported by the University are included in this link from ISG: https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/computing/comms-and-collab/online-meetings-and-events/supported-tools. Within your College, School or Deanery, there may be further guidelines.

Where it is deemed safe and appropriate to meet in-person with your students, consider what the best venue for your meeting might be.

If you need access to your computer and / or need to have a more private discussion, meeting in a University office space may be most suitable, provided you can be comfortable that physical distancing (as per current Scottish Government guidance) can be maintained, and that the set-up is consistent with the health and safety guidance provided in Appendix A. If your discussion does not need to be private, you might consider meeting in a larger space rather than a private office, where you will still have access to EduRoam should you need systems access via a laptop or portable device.

Some colleagues and students might favour meeting outdoors for a 'walking meeting', or in an appropriate outdoor space (such as the outdoor social facilities that are expected to be set up in Bristo Square, KB and other campuses by the start of semester one) - especially if you are less likely to need to access systems during your discussion. In keeping with the Five Ways to Wellbeing, this has several benefits including keeping active and enjoying the outdoors. It might also provide you and your students with a welcome change of scenery.

Other students and staff enjoy the convenience of online meetings as they do not need to travel between meetings or to and from campus, and this will be especially relevant for those students who have not been able to arrive in Edinburgh due to ongoing travel restrictions, concerns and quarantine periods. Many students have responded well to the switch to virtual interactions with staff and whilst some students may prefer the opportunity to meet in person on campus, others will continue to have valid reasons (convenience, anxiety about transmission of covid19, reluctance to travel) for preferring online meetings.

Please do not invite students into your home or private space for a meeting.

Key dates and record keeping

- Students will now be required to re-register annually and update contact details, including emergency contacts etc. here: https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-systems/support-guidance/students/matriculation/online-registration

- Additional fields in the EUCLID Student Record and enhanced reporting tools are being developed in order to provide Schools / Deaneries with better information about the location of our students (in Edinburgh or studying remotely) and how they are engaging in their studies

- Student Systems are currently finalising the Key Dates for 2020-21. These will include deadlines for registering students on a course, assessment / examination periods, deadlines for publishing results and graduations. Key dates will be available here as soon as possible: https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-systems/key-dates.

Supporting student development

Many colleagues use coaching and mentoring tools and conversations to aid their discussions with students, and these can work well whether face to face or online. These kinds of techniques can:

- empower students to take greater accountability and ownership for their success
- help students to identify their strengths and develop their skills
- shift a conversation from problems to potential solutions.

If your School/Deanery uses the "Making Transitions Personal" questionnaire, please note that a section has been added to reflect the impacts of the global pandemic, and we encourage you to review the results (for your individual students or on aggregate) to inform the nature of your conversations and meetings.

We are developing a toolkit on supporting student reflection and solutions-focused techniques which will be added to the toolkits site as soon as possible. You can also look at the coaching toolkit from HR on the University's Learning and Development site.

Awareness of particular cohorts or student profiles

Students from particular backgrounds or with particular characteristics may have a unique set of concerns about hybrid learning/support and the impact of the pandemic (including but not limited to mature students, students with caring responsibilities, students from widening participation backgrounds, students of colour, LGBTQ+ students).

We have tried to anticipate these in a further set of toolkits (currently in development) that will offer some thoughts on responses and signposts and will be shared on the toolkits site as soon as possible.

- Based on work undertaken in 2019 by the Widening Participation team, we ask that Schools / Deaneries pay particular attention to the matching of Personal Tutors to students from care-experienced backgrounds when allocating students to PTs. Further information will be shared by the Widening Participation team on how to use BI Reports from the Student Record in order to do this.

In AY2020-2021, (and potentially beyond), we also need to be mindful that some students may be self-isolating or in travel-related quarantine at various points during the year and may require further support from you at this point. For this reason, we encourage you to make regular proactive contact with your students, to ensure students are aware of the support available and that they need not feel isolated from the university community whilst they are in physical isolation or quarantine.

Looking after yourself

It is always important to keep relationships and meetings with students as friendly, as constructive and as safe as possible for everyone involved. This includes setting and maintaining appropriate boundaries. It also requires personal disciplines that maximise empathy and minimise over-involvement in students' problems and their solutions, which risks creating dependencies. Nonetheless you may need to have uncomfortable or distressing conversations with a student, and it is very important that you are able to debrief or switch off after this sort of conversation:

- Debrief - think about who you speak to after such a conversation – in the first instance your manager, a colleague, or the Listening Service

- Switch off - try to schedule breaks between student meetings so you can process your thoughts, step away from your workspace, or simply have a glass of water.

Monitoring and Improvement

All Schools and Deaneries must define a mechanism that ensures that that the advice and assistance that students receive from their support teams and Personal Tutors is of high quality and responsive.

The results, in the form of feedback and reflections on the support provided, should be included in the School's Annual Quality Report.

The mechanism for monitoring and improvement must be made public and made clear to both students and the Assistant Principal for Quality Assurance.

Appendices

Appendix A - Health and safety information on returning to the campus

- The University has arrangements to ensure measures are in place to control and reduce the risk of transmission of the Covid 19 virus on campus. These measures are in line with Scottish Government sectoral guidance for universities, Public Health Scotland and the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) advice.

- University staff are working very hard to implement these new ways of working to have a safe return to campus for all. Working in partnership with the Trade Unions, all the Trade Union Health and Safety representatives are involved in reviewing the return to campus arrangements with the Colleges and review matters weekly before the operational plan and return to campus is approved for each building.

- All staff in the University will receive an induction to these control measures and new ways of working before coming back onto campus. These are being provided by the local building review teams that have been set up by the six College and Professional Services co-ordinating groups, overseeing the safe return to campus buildings.

- The staff inductions are initially being delivered remotely and have been supported to ensure a consistent message in all cases covering the following:
  - physical distancing requirements (currently at 2m),
  - signage and one way systems,
  - the enhanced cleaning of buildings and the additional visible touchpoint cleaning throughout the day by Estates' cleaning teams,
  - the review of building ventilation,
  - the reduction of occupancy of the buildings and how that will be managed and
  - building safety arrangements such as first aid and fire safety.

- A key message that staff and students receive is about staying at home should they be symptomatic and hand and respiratory hygiene. Staff are encouraged to wash hands frequently throughout the day and hand sanitiser stations will also be available within buildings. There is information available on the University Covid 19 website on face coverings for staff and students; the advice in line and as explained by current Scottish Government guidance is that people are expected to wear face coverings in University buildings unless they have good reasons not to.

- Staff concerned about their own health and returning to the campus should follow the advice provided on the Covid 19 FAQ page on the University's website. This explains how staff will be supported by their manager and university services. Also, following Scottish Government advice, how they can undertake an individual health and Covid 19 risk factor assessment to facilitate a discussion, if needed, with their GP and line manager. The same advice has been provided for students to support them.

- The building review groups are ensuring, where work activities are returning to the campus in line with the Scottish Government's route map and the University's plan, that risk assessment for work activities are reviewed. These assessments may identify additional measures required to reduce risk and these are then put in place. This includes reception

roles, customer and student facing roles and work within offices. These assessments will identify measures for university services and also for individuals to put in place for their own work activity. Work as a personal tutor conducted in an internal or external campus space will be included in this assessment for staff.

- If staff have any questions they can go to the Covid 19 website, where there is an FAQ section on return to work, their local school safety adviser who is involved in the building review groups, their line manager and they can also email covid19@ed.ac.uk on any matter.