

**Minutes of the Meeting of Senate Education Committee
held via Microsoft Teams at 2.00pm on Thursday 10 September 2020**

1. Attendance

Present	Position
Tina Harrison	Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance (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)
Paddy Hadoke	Representative of CMVM (Postgraduate Research)
Richard Andrews	Head of School, CAHSS
Iain Gordon	Head of School, CSE
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
Sian Bayne	Assistant Principal Digital Education
Philippa Ward	Academic Services (Secretary)
Apologies	
Colm Harmon	Vice-Principal Students – Ex Officio
Rebecca Gaukroger	Director of Student Recruitment & Admissions – Ex Officio
Sarah Henderson	Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching, PGT)
In Attendance	
Neil McCormick	Educational Technology Policy Officer, Information Services
Paula Webster	Head of Student Data and Surveys

Members welcomed the 2020/21 Edinburgh University Students' Association Vice President Education to the membership of the Committee.

2. Minutes of Meeting held on 25 May 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2020 were approved.

3. Convener's Communications

3.1 Update on COVID-19 Recovery – Adaptation and Renewal

The Convener advised members that the focus of the current work being undertaken by the Adaptation and Renewal Team (ART) was the impending return to campus, extended welcome activities, and timetabling. Members noted that the majority of teaching activities were now on the timetable.

4. For Discussion

4.1 Student Survey Results September 2020

Members welcomed the paper which sought to ascertain whether there were significant differences in levels of satisfaction between different student groups, and what insights could be drawn from feedback in the open comments sections of the surveys. The paper concluded that, while there were differences between different student groups, it was unlikely to be possible to drive improvements by targeting specific groups. Instead, the University needed to look at systemic issues that were driving dissatisfaction overall.

Key causes of student dissatisfaction were:

- Lack of consistency across Schools and courses and in the way in which 'Learn' is used by different areas of the University.
- Lack of structural scaffolding in programmes: for some students, the amount of choice is overwhelming and difficult for them to navigate.
- Assessment and feedback, including the view that marking is inconsistent
- A sense amongst students that they are a source of income for the University and that the University is not welcoming (a lack of sense of belonging).
- Inadequate mental health support services: a sense that these require investment and prioritisation by the University.

Members appreciated the level of analysis in the paper and considered the focus on the surveys' open text comments to be particularly useful. Members noted that:

- the information obtained from the Survey would provide useful input for discussions relating to curriculum transformation. It was noted that the issues raised were not new and highlighted the need to progress the curriculum reform agenda as soon as possible.
- there was a link between some students' poor experiences of individual staff members and the findings of the Staff Survey that poor staff performance is not well managed by the University.
- while some students find course choice overwhelming, programme choice and flexibility remain a selling point for the University.
- there would be value in comparing the data for online and on campus PGT programmes to see if there were lessons to be learnt from this.
- the issue may be a wider, cultural one and the University may need to ensure that its focus is learning, not teaching
- organisational management may be a key issue.

The Committee agreed that the Convener would discuss with the Vice-Principal Students developing an action plan to address the issues raised by the survey. Members recognised that any action plan should align with action that had already been or was being taken (for example through the Student Experience Action Plan, Service Excellence Programme and implementation of the Student Mental Health Strategy) and should take careful account of the student voice.

Members were reminded that all survey data could be accessed at:

<https://uoe.sharepoint.com/sites/StudentAnalytics/SitePages/Insights-Hub.aspx>

Action: Convener to discuss with the Vice-Principal Students developing an action plan to address the issues raised by the student surveys.

4.2 PGR Covid Survey: Themes and Actions

The Dean of Postgraduate Research (CSE) advised members that many of the survey's findings were in line with previous surveys of the University's PGR students. Key themes were:

- The quality of the supervision experience
- Lack of study space
- Lack of access to resources
- The need for more investment in mental health support
- The need to embed careers development

The Committee was advised that the Doctoral College was planning to use the survey's findings as the basis for a development plan for the Doctoral College.

4.3 Students' Association Vice-President Education Priorities 2020/21

The Students' Association Vice-President Education provided the Committee with an overview of her priorities for the year:

- Improving the quality and consistency of teaching and feedback – it was noted that there is significant student discontent about the way in which feedback is relayed. Hybrid teaching had required all feedback to be provided online, and it was hoped that this would continue post-Covid.
- Ensuring all students have access to high quality academic support – the level of academic support received by students is highly variable. It would be important to take steps to address this in academic year 2020/21 given that the implementation of the outcomes of the Personal Tutor and Student Support Review had been delayed.
- Creating an inclusive and accessible learning environment – the Vice-President Education expressed the view that hybrid teaching had been beneficial in this context, and again hoped that the progress made would continue post-Covid. The Vice-President Education would also be assisting the BME Liberation Officer with work to tackle the BME attainment gap during the year.

The Committee noted that the Vice-President Education's priorities were well-aligned with the issues raised by the 2020 student surveys. Members discussed low levels of student

satisfaction with the Students' Association. It was hoped that planned worked around improving student representation would help to address this.

4.4 PGR Matters:

4.4.1 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)

The Committee was advised that PRES is run every other year and is due to be run in academic year 2020/21. A number of universities were choosing not to run the survey this year due to Covid-19, but Edinburgh would run the survey to allow issues to be identified and to ensure continuity.

4.4.2 Allowing In-Person Supervision

A position paper on in-person supervision for PGR students, mirroring the guidance put in place for taught students meeting with their Personal Tutors, had been produced. It permitted in-person supervision to be offered where safe to do so. The paper would be considered by ART Students on 14 September 2020 and sent to Senate Education Committee for information.

4.4.3 Policy Changes Around Remote Vivas

The Committee was advised that the University is in the process of considering policy changes around remote vivas. At present, it is not possible to run vivas in person, but historically, remote vivas have been discouraged. It was hoped that going forwards, a more flexible approach would be possible and that both in person and remote vivas would be permitted under the regulations.

4.5 Recommendations for Online Examinations and Assessment

Members recognised that it is essential for the University to have robust, fair and defensible arrangements in place for online examinations and assessment. Both staff and students are concerned about the potential for unfairness and misconduct to arise from a move to more online assessment.

The Committee considered the paper's recommendations and discussed the following:

- Recommendation 1 – members were content to accept the recommendation but recognised that the timescales involved were short and that annual monitoring for academic year 2020/21 was already underway. The Convener and the paper's author would give further consideration to what was feasible in terms of monitoring of assessment outcomes in the coming academic year.
- Vivas – Members expressed the view that these should always involve two members of staff or, as a minimum, be recorded. The Committee recognised the potential difficulties associated with a viva taking place some time after the original assessment, which was likely to be case for vivas associated with end of Semester 1 assessment.
- Online proctoring – the Committee had significant concerns about online proctoring. It was noted that the expectation was that this would be used exceptionally, and that the University would produce clear guidance on what these exceptions were. Mainstreamed proctoring was not the intended direction of travel.

- Allowances for upload times and application of late penalties – it was agreed that there was a need for greater clarity and consistency here.

The Committee was content to approve the paper's recommendations, subject to more work being done on the way in which they would work in practice. Members highlighted the need to ensure that any decisions taken in order to address current issues did not create unintended, long-term issues for the University.

The Committee discussed Semester 2 2020/21 assessment and the need to communicate a clear position on this as soon as possible.

Action: Convener and paper's authors to give further consideration to Recommendation 1.
--

4.6 Virtual Classroom Policy

Following consultation with the trade unions, Education Committee had agreed between meetings that the University should produce a separate Virtual Classroom Policy. The Committee noted that paragraph 12 of the draft Policy had been substantially revised in response to concerns about the potential editing effort required if students asked for their contributions to be deleted from recordings after the event.

The Committee approved the Policy and agreed that the frequency of student requests for deletion of their contributions from recordings should remain under review in Semester 1 of academic year 2020/21. A communication about the new Policy would be sent to all staff and students.

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

The Committee considered the recommendation from the Internal Periodic Review (IPR) of the Centre for Open Learning (COL) that COL should 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.

The Assistant Principal Digital Education noted that the Edinburgh Futures Institute was keen to work with COL to consider access routes to PGT programmes in particular.

The Committee recognised that COL was represented on the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences' (CAHSS) Undergraduate Education Committee and therefore had access to Senate Education Committee through this route. It also noted that the Dean of Learning and Teaching for the College of Science and Engineering (CSE) sat on the CAHSS UG Education Committee and that there was therefore a link between COL and CSE. As such, Education Committee agreed that the correct structures were in place to allow COL to contribute to University-level discussions around Education, but recognised the need to remain mindful of COL's contribution, particularly during forthcoming discussions around curriculum transformation.

4.8 Committee Effectiveness Review – Questionnaire Initial Analysis

Members noted the outcomes of the review and accepted the actions recommended in the paper.

5. For Information

5.1 Senate Education Committee Priorities 2020/21

Members noted the Committee's priorities for academic year 2020/21

5.2 Course Enhancement Questionnaires – Hybrid Teaching Questions

The Committee was advised that two new questions would be inserted into Course Enhancement Questionnaires (CEQs) in the coming year with the aim of gathering information from students about their experience of hybrid teaching.

The Committee supported including the additional questions in the CEQs, but had concerns about some of the terminology used. Members considered there to be a lack of clarity about whether the University was seeking feedback on hybrid or digital learning.

The Convener, Head of Student Data and Surveys and Assistant Principal Digital Education would give the matter further consideration.

<p>Action: Convener, Head of Student Data and Surveys and Assistant Principal Digital Education to discuss the terminology used in the additional CEQ questions.</p>

6. Electronic Business Conducted Between Meetings

6.1 Guiding Principles for Personal Tutors and Student Support Staff (*considered by electronic business between 11 and 27 August 2020*)

Members noted the approved Guiding Principles, which were provided for information.

7. Any Other Business

7.1 Outdoor Education

The Head of Moray House School of Education and Sport advised members that the current circumstances were raising interesting questions around learning theory and the relationship between place, space and pedagogy. A discussion paper considering these issues would be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

7.2 Support for Curriculum Development Group

Members were advised that the Support for Curriculum Development Group (a task group of Education Committee) had not met since before lockdown because business that would usually be considered by the Group had been taken forward by other bodies. In particular, there was significant overlap between the work of the Group and matters that were

currently being considered by the 'Delivering Curriculum Resilience' strand of ART. Members noted that the work of the Group would continue to be paused for the time being, although ELDeR requests would be considered and approved electronically by the Group.

Philippa Ward
Academic Services
20 September 2020