

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Senatus Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC)
held at 2pm on Wednesday 14 November 2018
in the Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House**

1. Attendance

Present:

Ms Megan Brown	Edinburgh University Students' Association, Academic Engagement Co-ordinator (Ex officio)
Ms Rebecca Gaukroger	Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions (Ex officio)
Professor Iain Gordon	Head of School of Mathematics (Co-opted member)
Ms Shelagh Green	Director for Careers and Employability (Ex officio)
Professor Judy Hardy	Director of Teaching, School of Physics and Astronomy (CSE)
Professor Tina Harrison (Convener)	Assistant Principal (Academic Standards and Quality Assurance)
Dr Sarah Henderson	Acting Director for Postgraduate Taught (CMVM)
Ms Melissa Highton	Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Services Division (Ex officio)
Dr Velda McCune	Deputy Director, Institute for Academic Development (Director's nominee) (Ex officio)
Ms Diva Mukherji	Vice President (Education), Edinburgh University Students' Association (Ex officio)
Professor Neil Mulholland	Dean of Postgraduate Studies (CAHSS)
Professor Graeme Reid	Dean of Learning and Teaching (CSE)
Dr Sabine Rolle	Dean of Undergraduate Studies (CAHSS)
Professor Neil Turner	Director of Undergraduate Teaching and Learning, (CMVM)
Mrs Philippa Ward (Secretary)	Academic Services
Mr Tom Ward	University Secretary's Nominee, Director of Academic Services (Ex officio)

Apologies:

Professor Rowena Arshad	Head of Moray House School of Education (Co-opted member)
Professor Sian Bayne	Director of Centre for Research in Digital Education (Co-opted member)
Ms Nichola Kett	Academic Governance Representative, Academic Services
Professor Charlie Jeffery	Senior Vice-Principal
Professor Mike Shipston	Dean of Biomedical Sciences (Co-opted member)

In attendance:

Professor Stephen Bowd	Incoming Dean of Postgraduate Studies (CAHSS)
Mr Jim Galbraith	Governance and Strategic Planning
Mr Filip Margetiny	Governance and Strategic Planning
Ms Eszter Sebek	Deanery of Biomedical Sciences
Ms Katie Scott	Edinburgh University Students' Association

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

LTC approved the minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2018.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 Resource Lists

The Secretary advised members that this would be discussed again at the January 2019 meeting of LTC.

4. Convener's Business

Members agreed to introduce a template for Committee papers, similar or identical to that used by Court. The template would be piloted by LTC from January 2019. If successful, all Senate Committees would be asked to use the template from the start of 2018/19.

Action: Secretary to develop and circulate paper template.

5. For Discussion

5.1 Research into Undergraduate Non-Continuation

Two pieces of research had been carried out: a statistical modelling analysis exercise, and an analysis of Schools' insights into the reasons for patterns of non-continuation amongst students on their programmes.

LTC noted that the statistical analysis had broadly been based on the HESA definition of non-continuation given that most of the students who withdraw without an award do so during the entry session, or at the start of the following session. Data for several years had been aggregated to overcome problems associated with having only a small number of non-continuing students. The research had included strong use of regression analysis to provide greater insight into the factors affecting student non-continuation.

The Committee noted that age, gender, ethnicity, disability and University School were broadly not influential in retention. School attended before coming to University, identifying as 'first in family', Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation quintile, and socio-economic factors were much more influential. Those in receipt of bursaries were more likely to continue than those who were not in receipt of bursaries.

In relation to the consultation with Schools about reasons for non-continuation, LTC noted that in a number of Schools, the relevant population was too small for robust analysis. However, key reasons for non-continuation were thought to be:

- changes in students' academic choices
- financial reasons
- health reasons
- other personal reasons

- within the College of Science and Engineering, difficulties with the Mathematics requirements of programmes

Actions being taken within Schools to address non-continuation included:

- strengthening student support, induction and transition arrangements
- introducing more stringent entry requirements
- providing additional support for Mathematics

The Committee thanked Mr Galbraith, Mr Margetiny and the Director of Academic Services for the high quality research undertaken. Members discussed the following:

- the value of keeping analysis of non-continuation at institutional level to ensure that the data was robust
- the value of capturing better information about the reasons for withdrawal from non-continuing students
- the need to continue debating ways in which the University might better support those students at greatest risk of withdrawing, and to share best practice in this area
- the need to think carefully about the structure of Year 1 in the context of any curriculum reform
- the value of strengthening the University's understanding of attainment prior to coming to University as a key factor in non-continuation (eg. exploring the hypothesis that Scottish students entering the University with Highers only (including those entering through widening participation routes) were at particular risk of withdrawing, and would benefit from receiving more pre-entry support and interventions throughout the first year of study)
- the value of a recently introduced Level 7 Mathematics course, and the potential benefit of rolling this out to students out with the School of Mathematics
- the potential benefit of introducing a broader suite of Level 7 courses
- the potential value of peer support to students at greatest risk of withdrawing
- the potential value of awarding student bursaries to all Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP) students
- the value of considering more flexible and part-time study options

LTC agreed the following:

- to ask Governance and Strategic Planning to undertake further research to investigate the impact of other factors on non-continuation eg. prior attainment, the availability of peer support, mode of study (online or on campus), whether or not students are also employed, home location of Scottish students
- that analysis would be at institutional and College as opposed to School-level
- that the Academic Lifecycle Strand of the Service Excellence Programme would be asked to consider ways in which better information about students' reasons for withdrawal might be gathered
- that Academic Services would co-ordinate the gathering and dissemination of best practice around supporting students at risk of withdrawing.
- that particular attention should be given to the structure of Year 1 if curriculum reform was undertaken
- that current work on student support arrangements should consider the issues outlined in the report

- that work around the implementation of the Widening Participation Strategy should consider the issues outlined in the report

Action:

- 1) Secretary to refer the matters discussed by LTC to the Service Excellence Programme and the Widening Participation area of Student Recruitment and Admissions.
- 2) Director of Academic Services to coordinate the gathering and dissemination of best practice around supporting students at risk of withdrawing.
- 3) Deputy Secretary Student Experience to be asked to take the issues outlined in the report into account as part of the current work on student support arrangements.
- 4) Governance and Strategic Planning to scope out and cost the proposed further research in this area.

5.2 Proposal to Review the University Common Marking Schemes

LTC noted that there was significant dissatisfaction with the University's current Common Marking Schemes. There was concern both about the number of schemes (5), and about the schemes themselves when being used for qualitative or holistic assessment.

Representatives of the Students' Association reported that students did not, in general, understand the schemes, and were keen to develop greater assessment literacy and an understanding of the way in which they were being marked.

A previous subgroup of the Senate Curriculum and student Progression Committee (CSPC) had undertaken initial work on improving the schemes, but its recommendations had not been taken forward. In the context of current discussions around potential curriculum reform, LTC agreed that it may be timely to look at the schemes again. It agreed that further scoping work should be carried out, including consultation with staff and students, and taking into account developments across the Higher Education sector. The work should report by the end of the academic year.

LTC was advised that CSPC was also undertaking work on taught postgraduate mark schemes. Members expressed concern about putting this work on hold indefinitely whilst the broader work was taking place. It was agreed that the Director of Academic Services would assess which aspects of the CSPC work could be taken forward now without affecting the broader work.

Members discussed whether the University did currently have 5 'common' schemes, given that 3 of the schemes were used only by 2 degree programme and 1 School. They agreed that the aim of any work undertaken should be not just to rationalise schemes, but to create a scheme or schemes that were fit for purpose. If more than 1 scheme was to be used, it would be essential to ensure that it was possible to translate easily between them.

Action:

- 1) Further scoping work to be undertaken and to report by the end of the academic year.
- 2) Director of Academic Services to assess which aspects of the CSPC PGT-related work can be taken forward now without affecting the broader work.

5.3 Investigating the Potential Impact of the Peer Assisted Learning Scheme (PALS) at the University of Edinburgh

LTC was advised that a research project had been undertaken to investigate the impact of PALS. This had demonstrated that there had been an increase in both the number of schemes operating, and in the numbers of students participating in schemes. Satisfaction rates with schemes were high, and there was a strong correlation between participation in a scheme and academic success. Students participating in schemes reported an increased sense of community and belonging. Those involved as PALS leaders were developing strong leadership skills.

Success factors included the locally-owned and student-led nature of schemes, the fact that they were supported by key staff, the availability of small funding pots, and the training opportunities available to PALS leaders.

Barriers to participation included lack of School or staff support in some areas, and limited funding.

LTC discussed the following:

- the potential value of investigating:
 - why some students choose not to attend a scheme, or to attend only once
 - which groups of students (ie. international, RUK, Scottish) are more and less likely to attend
 - participation and impact by course/discipline
- the potential value of peer support to students at risk of withdrawing

The Department of Peer Learning and Support in the Students' Association agreed to provide Schools with University and College-level information about the Scheme going forwards, in addition to School-level information. It was also agreed that the Director of Academic Services would ensure that peer support was included in the developing student support action plan.

Action:

- 1) Department of Peer Learning and Support to provide Schools with University and College-level information about the Peer Assisted Learning Scheme.
- 2) Director of Academic Services to ensure that peer support is included in the developing student support action plan.

5.4 Student Employment Matters

LTC agreed that the recommendation for the maximum number of hours of paid employment to be undertaken by PGT students should be the same as that for undergraduate students: 15 hours per week during semester time. (It would be important for the Careers Service to make clear that this was only a recommendation, and that it applied only to full-time, on-campus students).

The Committee also broadly supported the recommendations in the paper around supporting working students, whilst noting that some may only be relevant to particular areas. LTC agreed to remove the recommendation relating to flexible deadlines and

timetables on the basis that this may prevent students with work or caring commitments from being able to plan.

The Careers Service would update its guidance for working students and would prepare a briefing for PGT Directors.

Action:

Careers Service to update its guidance for working students and prepare a briefing for PGT Directors.

5.5 Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) Minimum Standards Project

LTC supported the revised Project as outlined in the paper and asked Committee members to email any suggestions about the Project to the Director of the Learning, Teaching and Web Services Division of Information Services. It was noted that the Project was focussing on the undergraduate experience of Blackboard Learn at this stage.

Action:

Members to provide the Director of the Learning, Teaching and Web Services Division with suggestions about the Project by email.

5.6 Thematic Review 2017/18 – Mature Students and Student Parents and Carers – Remitted Recommendations

LTC was strongly supportive of the remitted recommendations. It was noted that the introduction of more part-time and flexible study options would be beneficial to all students, not just to mature students and student parents and carers. Further consideration would need to be given to the way in which this recommendation was taken forward. One starting point might be to identify those areas (or years of study) in which more flexible study might not be appropriate.

The recommendation relating to lecture recording was also supported, although it was recognised that messaging in this area would be important: students should not be encouraged to rely heavily on lecture recording.

6. For Approval

6.1 National Student Survey (NSS) 2019 – Bank and Institutional Questions

The Committee discussed the value of bank questions, and whether it would be more beneficial to include the employability or the students' union related questions in the 2019 survey. Overall, it was agreed that optional questions should only be included if the University was confident that responses would generate useful information.

Members were unable to reach a conclusion about which questions to include. It was agreed that the Secretary would circulate additional, background information to members to help the decision-making process. The Senior Vice-Principal, in consultation with stakeholders, would take the final decision on which questions to include.

Action:

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Secretary to circulate additional, background information to the Committee2) Senior Vice-Principal, in consultation with stakeholders, to take the final decision on which questions to include. |
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7. For Information and Noting

7.1 Teaching and Academic Careers Project

Members were advised that a paper on the Project would be taken to the next meeting of the University Executive.

7.2 Lecture Recording Programme Update

LTC was advised that the number of scheduled recordings was increasing, and that scheduling would soon be integrated with the timetabling system. The majority of the problems being encountered at this stage related to audio quality due to inconsistent use of microphones. Evaluation of the system was ongoing, including via a Principal's Teaching Award Scheme (PTAS)-funded project. The Lecture Recording Policy would come into operation on 1 January 2019. Representatives of the College of Science Engineering raised concerns about the limited availability of board capture equipment. LTC agreed that there would be benefit in installing more board capture equipment during planned refurbishment of buildings at Kings Buildings.

7.3 Report from the Knowledge Strategy Committee

The Committee noted the report from the meeting held on 12 October 2018.

7.4 University of Edinburgh Learning and Teaching Conference

LTC was advised that the next Conference would take place on 19 June 2019.

8. Any Other Business

Members noted that Professor Mulholland would be stepping down as Dean of Postgraduate Studies (CAHSS), and therefore as a member of LTC, in the new year. Members thanked Professor Mulholland for his contribution to the work of the Committee in recent years.

Philippa Ward
Academic Services
23 November 2018