

Senate Education Committee

Thursday 14 September 2023, 9.30am to 12.30pm

Hybrid meeting: Torridon Room, Charles Stewart House and Microsoft Teams

1. Attendance

Present	Position
<i>Colm Harmon</i>	<i>Vice Principal, Students (Convener)</i>
<i>Tina Harrison</i>	<i>Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) (Vice-Convener)</i>
<i>Lisa Kendall</i>	<i>Representative of CAHSS (Learning and Teaching)</i>
<i>Laura Bradley</i>	<i>Representative of CAHSS (Postgraduate Research)</i>
<i>Patrick Walsh</i>	<i>Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching)</i>
<i>Tim Stratford</i>	<i>Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching)</i>
<i>Antony Maciocia</i>	<i>Representative of CSE (Postgraduate Research)</i>
<i>Sarah Henderson</i>	<i>Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching, PGT)</i>
<i>Paddy Hadoke</i>	<i>Representative of CMVM (Postgraduate Research)</i>
<i>Jo Shaw</i>	<i>Head of School, CAHSS</i>
<i>Jamie Davies</i>	<i>Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching, UG)</i>
<i>Jason Love</i>	<i>Head of School, CSE</i>
<i>Shelagh Green</i>	<i>Director for Careers & Employability</i>
<i>Velda McCune</i>	<i>Representing Director of Institute for Academic Development</i>
<i>Nichola Kett</i>	<i>Director of Academic Services</i>
<i>Sian Bayne</i>	<i>Assistant Principal Digital Education</i>
<i>Lucy Evans</i>	<i>Deputy Secretary, Students</i>
<i>Marianne Brown</i>	<i>Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling</i>
<i>Susan Morrow</i>	<i>Senate Representative</i>
<i>Tamara Trodd</i>	<i>Senate Representative</i>
<i>James Hopgood</i>	<i>Senate Representative</i>
<i>Carl Harper</i>	<i>Vice- President Education, Edinburgh University Students' Association</i>
<i>Callum Paterson</i>	<i>EUSA Academic Engagement and Policy Coordinator</i>
<i>Sinéad Docherty</i>	<i>Academic Services</i>
In Attendance	
<i>Alistair Fenemore</i>	<i>Chief Information Security Officer (CISO), Information Security Directorate</i>
<i>Jon Turner</i>	<i>Director of Institute for Academic Development (Curriculum Transformation Lead)</i>
Apologies	
<i>Mary Brennan</i>	<i>Representative of CAHSS (Learning and Teaching)</i>
<i>Melissa Highton</i>	<i>Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Division of Information Services; Assistant Principal (Online and Open Learning)</i>
<i>Mike Shipston</i>	<i>Head of Deanery, CMVM</i>
<i>Laura Cattell</i>	<i>Representing Student Recruitment and Admissions</i>

2. Minutes of Meeting held on 11th May 2023

One amendment was required of the minutes, in relation to item 5.3 (T&D contracts within CAHSS). The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 11th May 2023.

3. Matters Arising

Convener's Communications:

- Concern Scheme Update

The Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) informed the Committee that a concern had been raised through the Scottish Concern Scheme in the summer of 2023. The Scheme investigates concerns which are systematic in nature. The investigation undertaken by QAA found that appropriate action had been taken in relation to the mitigations that had been put in place around the marking and assessment boycott (MAB). The QAA investigated the University and found that the approach had been appropriate and standards were not adversely affected.

Action: Committee Secretary to share the QAA Concern Scheme outcome letter with SEC members.

- Upcoming Quality Enhancement & Standards Review (QESR)

The Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) explained that the upcoming QESR is phase one of the new QAA approach for institutional reviews within sector. It was noted that Academic Services are leading the preparations for the QESR visit which will take place on 16th November 2023. A focus of the QESR will be to follow up on the progress made against recommendations from the 2021 Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR).

- Marking and Assessment Boycott

The Convener informed the Committee that work is ongoing to resolve delayed and missing marks. The mitigations that were put in to place have highlighted some inconsistencies in practice and action by exam boards; the application of the approved Taught Assessment Regulations (TAR) by boards should have meant smaller numbers of students without awards in the summer period. The Convener confirmed that boards are expected to apply mitigations when there is sufficient evidence of learning objectives having been met.

The Committee were reminded that there remains a significant number of student who have not yet had marks awarded. The Convener noted thanks to all colleagues who are working to rectify and resolve the outstanding cases.

4. Substantive Items

4.1 University Firewall Website Controls (Paper E)

This paper was brought forward in the agenda due to the availability of the presenter. Alistair Fenemore presented this paper which proposed introducing controls to limit access to websites relating to plagiarism and essay mills.

The Committee discussed the limitations which were proposed, and the mechanisms which could be utilised. Some concerns were raised around proposing technology-enabled modifications to staff and student behaviour, the lack of consistent approach across the sector and restricting the freedom of access to internet sources. The point was made that the firewall would not prevent all plagiarism, and the best protection against plagiarism is thoughtful assessment design and supportive teaching practices.

There was some support for the paper from the perspective of student protection; there have been known cases of students being targeted by certain sites, and harassed or blackmailed after using essay mill sites. There was also support for the University taking a position against access to sites which promote academic misconduct.

The Committee discussed the equality implications for student who are online and would not, therefore, be using the University networks to access such sites, and the implications for student impacted by digital poverty. The Committee noted that the paper stated there are no EDI issues; the Committee asked for clarification on EDI after raising the concerns previously noted.

Overall, there was not strong consensus on the proposal amongst the Committee members.

<p>Action: Comments from the Committee to be shared with the University Executive for their decision on the item.</p>
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4.2 Student Online Information Security Awareness Training (Paper F)

As with the item above, this paper was brought forward in the agenda due to the availability of the presenter. Alistair Fenemore presented this paper which proposed online information security awareness training for students via LEARN Ultra.

The Committee discussed the importance of this training and its value to students as they study and as they go in to the job market. The Committee agreed that this training be included in an essential training suite that students should undertake as part of their matriculation. Discussion included the mechanisms for mandating this training, and the consideration which must be given to actions taken/sanctions if the training is not taken. It was highlighted that the participation (and non-participation) of this training would need to be managed in line with the Code of Student Conduct.

The Committee were not satisfied that all implications of the mandatory aspect had been considered, and required further work to be undertaken to ensure the correct mechanisms are in place to mandate the training. Therefore, the Committee approved that this training be included in the essential training suite with the references to “mandatory” removed. The

Committee were supportive of the ultimate objective to make the training mandatory, but once the correct mechanisms are in place.

Action: Information Security Team to arrange for the Information Security Essentials training course be available for students as part of their training portfolio in LEARN Ultra.

Action: Deputy Secretary, Students to lead on the work needed to make the Information Security Essentials training mandatory.

Action: Deputy Secretary, Students to explore what is standard practice in the sector around mandatory courses and action taken in the event of non-compliance.

4.3 Curriculum Transformation Update (Verbal)

Dr Jon Turner provided a verbal update Curriculum Transformation Project (CTP) and the work undertaken since the last paper was presented to the Committee. Key activities have been preparation for the investment case and engagement with Schools. It was highlighted that engagement with Schools had been slower than hoped, due to the impact of the MAB and its associated pressures.

The UG curriculum framework has been a key development and is available in the CT Hub. The PGT curriculum framework will be addressed in the second phase of development. The Committee were informed that Dr Paul Norris has joined the CTP to lead on applying the University's regulations to the project. An update will be provided to full Senate in 2024.

The Committee discussed the need for the project to align with School and College priorities around assessment, and the resource implications across the institution as the project is implemented. Challenge courses were also discussed, with more detail requested as to how these will be adopted into the framework. It was agreed that examples of this will be shared in the forthcoming paper.

Action: CTP paper to be circulated ahead of the next meeting, authored by Dr Jon Turner and Professor Colm Harmon.

4.4 Draft Learning and Teaching Strategy Update (Verbal)

The Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) provided a verbal update on this item. A Learning & Teaching Strategy draft is in progress; its creation was prompted by the ELIR visit which referred to an active L&T strategy. Those working on the strategy are looking for the views of the Committee members to ensure that all relevant aspects are included.

Items noted for inclusion were: Curriculum Transformation Project; Assessment & Feedback Principles & Priorities; Student Support model and the Continuous Service Improvement plan. There were also suggestions to include EDI and reference to the University's Strategy

2023. It was also highlighted that some Schools and Colleges may have their own strategies, but there is value in an institution-wide strategy.

There was some discussion of the effects of the growing student population on teaching, assessment and feedback. Whilst the strategy will need to consider how to deliver L&T to growing student numbers, it was noted that Recruitment & Admissions is not within the scope of the strategy.

Action: Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) and Barry Neilson to present paper on this at November meeting and ask for further views from the Committee.

4.5 Students' Association Sabbatical Officer Priorities 2023-24 (Paper B)

The Vice President Education (Students' Association) presented their priorities for 2023/24, which focus on an inclusive and accessible learning environment for all students, improved student engagement (especially in relation to strategic projects) and developing the academic community with students. Emphasis was given to the impact of the cost of living crisis on students, with concerns ranging from hidden course costs, the costs of attending resit assessments and the needs of working students.

The Committee were supportive of the priorities and recognised the importance of the relationship between students and the University, and the role of EUSA in the senior team. Particular support was expressed for the work on promoting student engagement.

4.6 Student Experience Update – NSS Paper - Closed

The Deputy Secretary (Students) presented the paper. The Committee was informed that results reflect similar challenges across the sector, although the University is at the bottom of the sector in relation to feedback. Particular issues with feedback relate to assessment feedback and students not hearing back on outcomes after they have given input. The Committee noted the high scores in relation to teaching and course content, and recognised that there may be the need for greater discussion of the role of teaching teams within the student support model.

In relation to Assessment & Feedback, the Committee discussed the need for consistency across the University. There is a standard for Assessment & Feedback which is set out in the Principles and Priorities, and Schools must adhere to this guidance. The Committee also recognised that standards may be driven by external accreditation within some Schools, and this can help set the standard which must be adhered to. Schools do have control of how to set assessments, informed by the guidance, and there are many examples of innovative practices across the institution.

The Committee also considered the relationship between student numbers and student satisfaction, and the challenge of developing a sense of student responsibility for future students. The Committee recognised that lots of work is taking place across the institution to understand the NSS results and to improve the student experience; focus and consistency were felt to be critical aspects in ensuring positive and significant changes are made.

Action: Deputy Secretary, Students to provide a version of the NSS report which can be shared amongst Schools for their information.

Action: Committee Secretary to circulate the recommendations made by the Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) during the discussion.

5. For information/noting

5.1 Doctoral College

The Representative of CSE (PGR) provided an update on behalf of the Doctoral College. The Committee were informed that the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) should come into effect for PGR students in January 2024.

The Committee were also informed of the ongoing work to clarify the length of PGR study, informed by benchmarking with the Russell Group.

5.2 Assessment & Feedback Groups

The Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) provided a verbal update on the ongoing work in this area. The groups are exploring options for the summer resit diet in 23/24, with a range of options set to be in place to facilitate resits that may not require in-person attendance.

5.3 Generative Artificial Intelligence

The Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) provided a verbal update on this matter. Colleagues are reviewing the published guidance around Generative AI, and are looking for ways to improve student understanding of AI and its place in their studies. It was highlighted that particular queries had been received from PGR supervisors and External Examiners and that guidance must also be relevant for PGR students.

There was a question as to whether the University is looking to secure licenses for generative AI platforms (for staff and students), so that staff can utilise it in either making their assessments more robust or using it in their teaching.

Action: Convener Colm Harmon to take this forward for an update and report back at the next SEC meeting.

5.4 Senate Committees' Internal Effectiveness Review 2022/23

The Interim Director of Academic Services presented this item to be noted by the Committee. The Committee were supportive of the proposed actions for improvement, as detailed in the paper.

5.5 Support for Curriculum Development Group: ELDeR Requests 2022/23 and Closure of Group

The Committee approved the request to formally close the group.

5.6 Committee Administration

The Committee noted the updated Terms of Reference and Committee Membership for 2023/24.

6. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

Sinéad Docherty
Academic Services
October 2023