

H/02/25/02

The University of Edinburgh

**Meeting of Senate Learning and Teaching Committee  
to be held at 2.00pm on Wednesday 15 November 2017  
in the Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House**

**A G E N D A**

- 1. Welcome and Apologies**
- 2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 September 2017** LTC 17/18 2 A
- 3. Matters Arising**
- 4. Convener's Communications**
- 5. For Discussion**
  - 5.1 Global Offline Timetable Modelling Project Presentation
  - 5.2 Course and Programme Design: Update and Proposal LTC 17/18 2 B
  - 5.3 Class Representatives System LTC 17/18 2 C
  - 5.4 Draft Lecture Recording Policy LTC 17/18 2 D  
CLOSED
  - 5.5 Report from University-Wide Courses Task Group LTC 17/18 2 E
  - 5.6 Virtual Learning Environment Minimum Standards Project: Information LTC 17/18 2 F
  - 5.7 Computer Aided Assessment - Service Overview and Governance LTC 17/18 2 G
  - 5.8 Planning Issues:
    - 5.8.1 Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Plan LTC 17/18 2 H
    - 5.8.2 Senate Committee Planning LTC 17/18 2 I  
(also circulated  
25/10/2017)
  - 5.9 Widening Participation Strategy LTC 17/18 2 J  
CLOSED
  - 5.10 Student Mental Health and Academic Policy LTC 17/18 2 P
- 6. For Approval**
  - 6.1 NSS Institutional Questions LTC 17/18 2 K

Date of next meeting: 24 January 2018, Board Room, Chancellor's Building, Little France

- |           |  |                |
|-----------|--|----------------|
| 6.2       | Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR): Proposals for New and Amended Categories of Achievement: | LTC 17/18 2 L  |
| 6.2.1     | Proposal 1 - Nightline Committee Member  | LTC 17/18 2 L1 |
| 6.2.2     | Proposal 2 - International Student Centre Committee Member   | LTC 17/18 2 L2 |
| <b>7.</b> | <b>For Information and Noting</b>  |                |
| 7.1       | Leading Enhancement in Assessment and Feedback (LEAF) Themes   | LTC 17/18 2 M  |
| 7.2       | Update on Student Administration and Support Strand of the Service Excellence Programme              | LTC 17/18 2 N  |
| 7.3       | Report from Learning and Teaching Policy Group (LTPG)  | LTC 17/18 2 O  |
| <b>8.</b> | <b>Any Other Business</b>  |                |

Philippa Ward, Academic Services, November 2017

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Senatus Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC)  
held at 2pm on Wednesday 20 September 2017  
in the Board Room, Edinburgh College of Art Main Building**

## 1. Attendance

### Present:

Ms Bobi Archer	Vice President (Education), Edinburgh University Students' Association (Ex officio)
Professor Sarah Cunningham-Burley	Assistant Principal (Research-Led Learning), Dean (CMVM)
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	Assistant Principal (Academic Standards and Quality Assurance)
Ms Melissa Highton	Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Services Division (Ex officio)
Professor Charlie Jeffery (Convener)	Senior Vice-Principal
Ms Tanya Lubicz-Nawrocka	Edinburgh University Students' Association, Academic Engagement Co-ordinator (Ex officio)
Dr Velda McCune	Deputy Director, Institute for Academic Development (Director's nominee) (Ex officio)
Professor Neil Mulholland	Dean of Postgraduate Studies (CAHSS)
Professor Graeme Reid	Dean of Learning and Teaching, CSE
Ms 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 Rebecca Gaukroger	Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions (Ex officio)
Ms Nichola Kett	Academic Governance Representative, Academic Services
Professor Anna Meredith	Director for Postgraduate Taught, CMVM

### In attendance:

Ms Laura Cattell	Head of Widening Participation, representing Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions
Mr Barry Neilson	Director of Student Systems

## 2. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2017 were approved.

## 3. Matters Arising

### 3.1 Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Plan (item 3.4)

A first draft had been produced, but further work was required on prioritisation. It was hoped that the document would come to the November 2017 meeting of the Committee.

### 3.2 Task Group to Review the Code of Practice for Tutors and Demonstrators (item 10.3)

Members were advised that, in relation to discussions around the number of hours of University work to be undertaken by postgraduate research students, a mandatory cap of nine hours on average per week across the academic year had been agreed and included in the final policy.

## For Discussion

## 4. Student Survey Results

### 4.1 National Student Survey (NSS) 2017

#### 4.1.1 Initial Analysis and Suggested Follow-Up Actions

Members noted the paper.

#### 4.1.2 Results

The Director of Student Systems outlined the key points in relation to the results, namely that:

- new methodologies had been used this year;
- overall satisfaction was up 3% this year as compared with last, but was broadly flat over a five year period;
- assessment and feedback scores had continued to improve, but remained low in comparison with sector figures;
- scores for academic support and organisation and management were poor in comparison to sector results;
- the University had not performed well in the newly introduced themes.

### 4.2 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)

Key points were as follows:

- Results were broadly similar to those for 2016.
- The University was performing well and was in or close to the upper quartile for most benchmark-able measures.

- Scores for Personal Tutor measures had dropped, but this was an internal measure only.

#### 4.3 Course Enhancement Questionnaires (CEQ) 2016/17 Results

- There was significant variation across Schools, both in terms of the way in which the questionnaires were run and response rates.
- Staff-related questions generally scored more highly than course-related questions.

In relation to the 3 surveys, members were advised that the Student Surveys Team was using free text comments to add deeper context to the quantitative data. Further work was also being done to better understand results around the student voice. Planned work for the future included the development of an improved standard survey reporting suite incorporating common requests received from Schools, improved use of free text comments, and increased exploration of CEQ data. It was agreed that best practice and case studies would be gathered from Schools achieving high CEQ response rates. The Committee thanked the Student Surveys Team for the high volume and quality of work it had produced on the survey results in a short period of time.

Schools would continue to be supported as they reviewed practice in areas where improvement was required. It was agreed that more needed to be done to feed back to students on ways in which their feedback was being used by the University. This would be achieved in part through work being undertaken by the Deputy Secretary Student Experience on student communications and through the mid-semester feedback exercise.

#### **Actions:**

- 1) Student Surveys Team to gather best practice and case studies from Schools achieving high CEQ response rates.
- 2) Deputy Secretary Student Experience to consider ways in which the University might feed back to students on ways in which their feedback was being used as part of broader work on student communications.

#### 5. Teaching Excellence Framework: Learning From the First Year

Members were advised that the paper provided background information on the first year of operation of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). Whilst the University's current position was not to participate in the TEF, the information would become of relevance to the University if, in the future, it changed its position. Those institutions that had performed particularly well in the TEF had been able to demonstrate:

- a clear sense of institutional purpose
- a link between policies, practice and outcomes.
- an ability to explain core metrics
- investment in the physical learning environment and digital learning resource, with a clear rationale for the investment
- that they were delivering stretch and challenge
- involvement of students in research activity
- engagement of teaching staff in Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

It was noted that the Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance would be happy to discuss these issues further with individual Schools and would attend a meeting of the Directors of Teaching Network.

The importance of ensuring that any new University initiatives demonstrated a clear sense of institutional purpose, and a link between policy, practice and outcomes was recognised.

## **6. Reducing the Pressure on Students in Semester 1**

Members noted that LTC had agreed in July 2016 not to change the structure of the academic year. In this context, the Committee considered the proposals outlined in the paper to provide sensible approaches to reducing the pressure on students in Semester 1. The following points were raised:

- Given that Semester 1 is a week shorter than Semester 2, it will always be difficult to find solutions that resolve all of the issues regarding pressure in Semester 1.
- Schools have previously been asked to keep the Thursday and Friday of Week 11 clear of new material. The extent to which this has been implemented is not known.
- It would be important to ensure that there was no overall reduction in the number of teaching weeks during the year. Week 11 would therefore need to become a structured revision as opposed to a reading week, were it to be kept free of new examinable material.
- If Weeks 6 or 7 were kept free of regular assignments, it may be viewed by some as a reading week. Weeks 6 or 7 may not be the most appropriate weeks to keep free of assignments in all areas. As such, it was proposed that Schools be asked to set assignments in only 9 of the 11 available weeks, rather than proposing that weeks 6 or 7 in particular be kept clear of regular assignments.
- There could be benefit in gathering feedback from students in Weeks 9 and 10 on topics they found particularly challenging, and offering structured revision of these topics in Week 11.
- As not all Semester 1 courses have exams, it may not be necessary to keep Week 11 clear of new material for all courses.
- The University already permits students to arrive up to two weeks late, and may extend this to accommodate issues with visas. In this context, reducing the number of weeks in which new material is taught during Semester 1 could make it challenging for such students to achieve the learning outcomes for their courses.
- A broad move towards introducing more 20 credit and reducing the number of 10 credit courses will reduce the number of exams in Semester 1, and may in some areas be the optimal solution to reducing pressure during Semester 1. However, some students prefer 10 credit courses.

Although it was broadly supportive of the paper, the Committee agreed that it would be difficult to introduce University-level measures that were appropriate for all areas. As such, it was agreed that the paper would be taken to College Learning and Teaching Committees for consideration at College level and local implementation.

<b>Action:</b>
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Edinburgh University Students' Association Vice-President Education to take the paper to College Learning and Teaching Committees for consideration at College level, with assistance from the Director of Academic Services.

## 7. Strategic Issues Regarding the University's Undergraduate Degree Programmes

LTC welcomed the paper, which aimed to summarize current and proposed developments relating to the University's undergraduate degree programmes, and to open up discussion regarding the merits of taking a more coordinated and strategic approach to these developments. Members discussed:

- the balance between maintaining flexibility within the curriculum and ensuring that programmes include sufficient subject-specific content;
- the distinctive 'Edinburgh offer', and the importance of ensuring that the University makes best use of its 4 year undergraduate degree structure;
- the definition of an 'outside subject';
- whether the University should be aiming to develop fully integrated, interdisciplinary programmes, or whether students should be expected to take a range of subjects and be the agents of the integration;
- the importance of adopting a cautious approach to offering additional credit, particularly in Semester 1 where the timetable is already very full, and when some students find the transition to University study challenging in year one;
- the constraints of the teaching estate;
- the additional student support that would be required if the University were to offer additional flexibility;
- the importance of agreeing the University's overall strategic aims for the curriculum, in discussion with Schools and the incoming Principal, before opening up wide discussion regarding any possible changes.

The Committee agreed that Learning and Teaching Policy Group (LTPG) would discuss the matter further before undertaking consultation with the incoming Principal and Schools.

### **Actions:**

1. Matter to be discussed further by LTPG – Director of Academic Services
2. Incoming Principal to be consulted – Senior Vice-Principal

## 8. Draft University of Edinburgh Widening Participation Strategy

The Committee welcomed the paper, noting that, since circulating the document, amendments had been agreed by the Widening Participation Strategy Group. Learning and Teaching Committee's input was being sought on the principal ideas and direction outlined in the paper. The following was discussed:

- The importance of being bold when thinking about widening participation. The University had been pioneering in this area, and was keen for this to continue.
- There was potential to make better use of the 4 year degree structure and to offer greater transition support in first year.
- The value of starting widening participation-related activity at primary school level.

- The importance of the University working cooperatively with other institutions and organisations in Scotland.
- The importance of using all external engagement, including City Deal, to further the widening participation agenda.

It was agreed that the paper would be revised and circulated to the Committee electronically for further comment.

**Action:**

Head of Widening Participation to revise the paper and circulate to members electronically for comment.

## **9. Supporting Personal, Professional and Career Development**

The Committee considered the paper, which outlined the high level actions proposed to support enhanced personal, professional and career development and positive destinations outcomes for the University's graduates. The links between this paper and those already discussed during the meeting, particularly those relating to metrics used in the TEF, the National Student Survey, and strategic issues around the University's undergraduate degree programmes were noted.

There was scope to improve the University's performance in this area, particularly in the extent to which students are aware of how employable they are. It was agreed that employability should be viewed as an intentional by-product of our high quality learning and teaching and that it required a subject-specific approach. The Director for Careers and Employability would be meeting with some individual Schools to define and discuss their approaches to employability.

## **10. Lecture Recording**

### **10.1 Lecture Recording Update**

Members were advised that, 3 days into the Semester, lecture recording was working extremely well: 280 items had been recorded, and around 2000 hours of content – mainly video - had been watched by students. Microphone use had increased significantly. It was hoped that it would be possible to complete roll-out in less than three years as originally planned.

The positive start to the initiative would be communicated to students, whilst reminding them that rooms with being equipped for lecture capture in phases.

### **10.2 Lecture Recording Policy Development Update**

Good progress was being made with development of the Lecture Recording Policy, although uncertainty around the University's status under new data protection legislation was causing delays.

## **11. Senate Committee Planning**

Members noted that the paper outlined the way in which the 2018-21 Planning Round would operate and some initial thoughts on priorities for the student experience, learning



and teaching. A more substantive paper would be brought to the November meeting of the Committee.

The Committee was content with the list of priorities, though noted that it was primarily focussed at School-level. Members discussed the importance of developing high quality learning and teaching spaces, and the potential resource implications of emerging work around the undergraduate curriculum, employability and widening participation. Developing employability skills through the curriculum would be added to the list of priorities.

**Action:**

Director of Academic Services to add developing employability through the curriculum to the list of priorities.

**For Approval****12. Learning Analytics – Proposals**

Noting that it had not been possible to develop a detailed policy on learning analytics at this stage due to uncertainty around the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation, the Committee approved the proposals to delay developing the detailed policy until later in 2017/18 and to introduce interim governance arrangements with immediate effect. In particular, it agreed that a review group would be established to scrutinise plans for new, substantial learning analytics activity.

**Action:**

Director of Academic Services to establish a review group to scrutinise plans for new, substantial learning analytics activity.

**For Information and Noting****13. Edinburgh University Students' Association Priorities 2017/18**

The Students' Association Vice President Education outlined her key priorities around reducing the pressures of Semester 1, improving support for those undertaking joint degrees, and establishing clearer representative structures and transparency in communications to amplify the student voice within the University and the Students' Association.

Members discussed timetabling issues experienced by joint degree students, and the student population more generally. There were currently some issues with both timetabling and availability of rooms. Members were asked to refer specific issues to the Convener of the Space Strategy Group for further consideration.

**Action:**

Members to refer specific issues around availability of rooms to the Convener of the Space Strategy Group for further consideration.

**14. Student Partnership Agreement**

The document had now been finalised, with key priorities being the student voice, academic support – developing a transparent system to ensure that it is clear to students what support is available – and positive mental health and wellbeing. Further thought would be given to ways in which Schools might be encouraged to engage with the Agreement and ensure that they were working in partnership with students at a local level.

The document would now be taken to Senate for final approval and published. An implementation plan would be developed incorporating means of measuring impact. It was agreed that implementation should become a standing item on the LTC agenda.

**Action:**

Secretary to make implementation of the Student Partnership Agreement a standing item on the LTC agenda, once the Agreement has been approved and an implementation plan developed.

**15. Reports**

The Committee received reports from Knowledge Strategy Committee (meeting held on 2 June 2017) and Learning and Teaching Policy Group (meeting held on 17 August 2017).

**16. Guidance for Committee Members 2017/18**

Members noted the guidance and the Committees' agreed priorities for 2017/18.

**17. Any Other Business**

Members thanked the Edinburgh University Students' Association Academic Engagement Coordinator for her valuable contribution to the work of the Committee and wished her well in her new position.

Philippa Ward  
Academic Services  
4 October 2017

The University of Edinburgh  
Senate Learning & Teaching Committee  
15 November 2017

## **Course and Programme Design: Update and Proposal**

### **Executive Summary**

In this paper we provide an update on the current status of course and programme design resources offered through IAD and ISG with proposals to expand these offerings and embed them in the process of new programme approval, and to enhance support for Conveners of Boards of Studies.

### **How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?**

The proposals support the University's Strategic Plan in Leadership in Learning.

### **Action requested**

LTC is invited to consider and discuss the proposals

### **How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?**

If the Committee supports the proposal to develop support for Boards of Studies Conveners, IAD and Academic Services will work with Colleges and Conveners to develop a shared vision for what this support would involve.

### **Resource / Risk / Compliance**

- 1. Resource implications (including staffing).** The proposal has implications for staff time – at IS, IAD, Academic Services and school level.
- 2. Risk assessment.** No risk assessment is included in the paper, however the proposals are intended to enhance course and programme design and as such enhance the student learning experience.
- 3. Equality and Diversity**  
No adverse equality and diversity impacts are anticipated for the proposed support for Boards of Studies Conveners. Indeed, the proposed support may provide an opportunity to raise awareness among Boards of Studies regarding the potential ways in which the curriculum can promote positive equality and diversity. If the Committee were to support the concept of requiring academic staff to undertake relevant continuing and professional development activities prior to undertaken programme or course development, it would however be important to explore the potential equality implications (for example, in the event that current levels of participation in relevant CPD vary between protected characteristics).
- 4. Freedom of information**

LTC: 15.11.2017  
H/02/25/02

**LTC 17/18 2 B**

The paper is **open**.

**Key words**

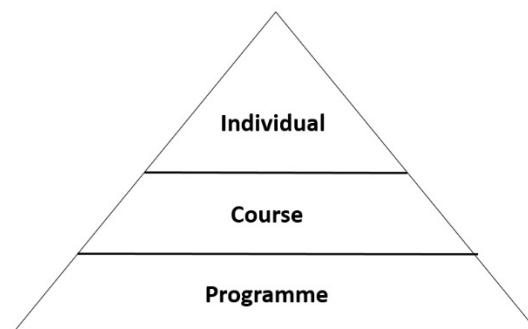
**Originator of the paper**

*Susan Rhind*  
*Velda McCune*  
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*Jo Spiller*  
*Tina Harrison*  
*Tom Ward*

*September 2017*

## **Background**

In 2016, paper LTC 15/16 5 G1 'Assessment and Feedback: Update and Focus on Feedback Quality' highlighted the importance of sound course and programme design in relation to assessment and feedback quality, notwithstanding the need to continue to monitor and support individual feedback of good quality. The paper envisaged assessment and feedback quality as a pyramid underpinning course and programme design features in effect 'supporting' individual feedback.



At present there are a range of opportunities for academic and professional services staff to gain support for course and programme design but none of these are compulsory or embedded in the University's wider course and programme approval procedures.

## **Course and Programme Design Support Options**

**Edinburgh Learning Design Roadmap (ELDeR).** Funding was secured in October 2015 from Information Services Group to adapt and develop a framework called CAIeRO into a University of Edinburgh framework for learning design. The framework was evaluated and adjusted across a series of workshops resulting in the Edinburgh Learning Design Roadmap (ELDeR) process being developed. ELDeR is a two-day event that has been available to schools since June 2016 [<http://www.ed.ac.uk/is/learning-design>]. The development process also allowed for training of five facilitators from Information Services, IAD and school based learning technologists.

### Examples of Course and Programmes which have been through an ELDeR Process

- Programme level review and redevelopment of all PG-T in School of Art (PG, on campus).
- Programme level development of the BSc in Agri-Science (UG, on campus).
- Course level review of "Quantitating Drug Binding" (PG, on campus).
- Course level development of "Online Sustainability and Social Responsibility" (UG, online).
- Course level development of "Politics of Accounting" (PG, online).

At the heart of the ELDeR process is the design of student learning experiences, where student feedback and assessment literacies are given top priority and a shared vision of the

course/ programme is developed between team members. The design and development of learning outcomes, feedback opportunities, and assessment points merge together, forming an iterative process where there is congruence (see McCune & Hounsell, 2005) between all three, rather than one driving the others. By considering what students should be able to do by the end of the course and how they will know that they are getting there, a foundation is set for authentic assessment that aligns with learning outcomes.

The IAD offers two-hour workshops giving an **introduction to course design** once in each semester.

Participants in the **Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice**, offered by the Institute for Academic Development (IAD) and the School of Education, gain a strong grounding in course and programme design as this is embedded in a new core course for the programme.

Participants working toward **Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy** through the **Edinburgh Teaching Award (EdTA)** offered by the IAD can elect to focus some of their blog posts and work with their mentor on the areas of course and programme design.

The IAD also offers consultancy to course and programme teams although there is a limit to how many teams that can be accommodated at the same time. Both the IAD and IS are involved in offering a range of short workshops on aspects of teaching and assessment which are relevant for course design.

All of these diverse forms of support for course and programme design across the IAD and IS have received positive feedback from participants and a refreshed joined up set of resources has been developed for the IAD website. These pages will also signpost colleagues to all of the support offered for course design by the IAD and IS.

### **Options for Discussion**

The process for the development of programmes and portfolios is currently being considered as part of the recommendations arising from the development of the University's Student Recruitment Strategy currently being taken forward as part of the Portfolio Innovation and Review Implementation Group (and links to the parallel paper on Strategic Issues regarding the University's Undergraduate Degree Programmes, as well as to proposals anticipated to be brought forward to a future Senate Curriculum and Student Progression Committee meeting to strengthen the business case for new programme development).

#### **Option 1**

Consider moving to a position where for new programmes (and ideally courses), engagement with the relevant continuing professional development opportunities discussed above, or an alternative - such as mentoring by an experienced and successful course and programme designer is built into the project planning. Recognising the number of new programmes established each year (estimated at 40) and the resulting resource implications for learning design support (IAD and ISG), this may be unachievable in the short term.

**Option 2**

Less resource intensive is a scenario where support for Boards of Studies Conveners is strengthened to ensure all in these key positions had necessary training not only in the mechanistic aspects of course and programme approval but in the underlying pedagogy. Achieving a shared vision of the nature of this support (that captures current priorities such as research –led teaching, equality and diversity and sound assessment and feedback design) would be a necessary prerequisite for this approach.

The University of Edinburgh

Senatus Learning Teaching Committee

15<sup>th</sup> November 2017

## **Enhancing the Student Voice through the development of the Class Representative System**

### **Executive Summary**

This paper seeks to provide an introduction to the Vice President Education's manifesto pledge concerning improvements to the Class Representative System.

### **How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?**

### **Action requested**

This paper is for discussion and to consider the implementations outlined for the committee.

### **Resource / Risk / Compliance**

#### **1. Resource implications (including staffing)**

It is unlikely that the proposal would require any additional resource than the current representative system, however depending on school systems it could require more administrative support.

#### **2. Risk assessment**

N/A

#### **3. Equality and Diversity**

A formal Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment is not required as the paper has been submitted for discussion. The author can verbally discuss any issues in relation to this at the meeting.

#### **4. Freedom of information**

Open

### **Key words**

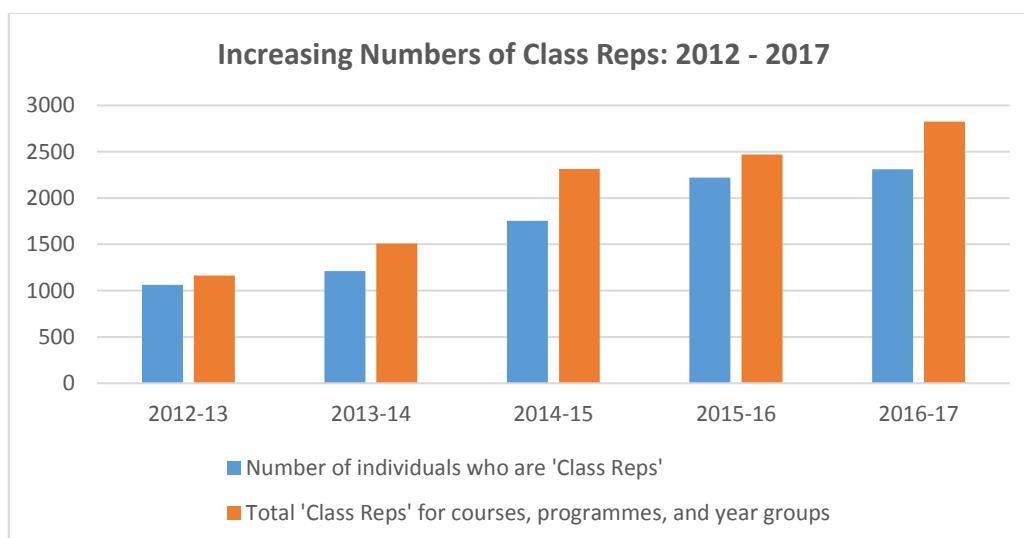
### **Originator of the paper**

Bobi Archer, Students' Association Vice President Education



## 1. Proposed System

The number of class representatives has increased by 143% since 2012-13, taking us from 1163 to 2808, whilst the student population has only increased by 20%. Additionally representatives are recruited with inconsistent duties across the institution at tutorial, class, programme and degree level. The ratios of reps to students are also inconsistent which has resulted in some schools having low levels of engagement but more support from the Students' Association because of their large numbers.



If a student has not completed the online training then they do not receive recognition on their HEAR record, so it is unlikely that the student is up taking any of the duties including student outreach, consultation and representation. The consequence of this is that students may be voicing their feedback to inactive class reps, whom are not forwarding these responses. Additionally, they are not relaying any of the feedback from staff-student meetings to students because of their absence.

With the proposed model, we would have a system that prioritises quality over quantity in-line with other Russell Group institutions, in particular ones that have high levels of student voice satisfaction in NSS. By reducing the numbers, student representatives would receive more personal and relevant support clarifying the expectations of their role and empower them to be as engaging as possible with the student body.

### a. **Reducing the number of class representatives, for a quality over quantity system.**

The proposal is for a system in which the ratios of one representative to forty students (1:40), are applied across the institution, whether at course or degree programme level. Currently the School of Divinity has a ratio of 1:3 (184 reps for 480 students), whereas the School of Chemistry has a ratio of 1:36 (25 reps for 901 students). For comparison, Divinity had 36% of their reps uptake online training as opposed to 96% of students in Chemistry (appendix A).

Additionally, it is disproportionate and unfair on students for some schools to have such a large discrepancy in their numbers, for the impact of student voice in the wider institutional context. The level of support provided by the Students' Association is also disproportionate and would be of much greater use when used for engaging and supporting active reps to improve communications regarding the student voice.

The model would provide us with a system of approx. 1000 degree-programme level representatives which brings is in line with St Andrews with 350 (approx. 10k students), Leeds University at 880 (approx. 40k students) and Manchester University with 1200 (approx. 40k students).

Additionally, the smaller cohort of reps would be easier to manage and form streamlined communications between staff, reps and students. All around providing a quality and effective representative system that's easy for **all** to use and manage.

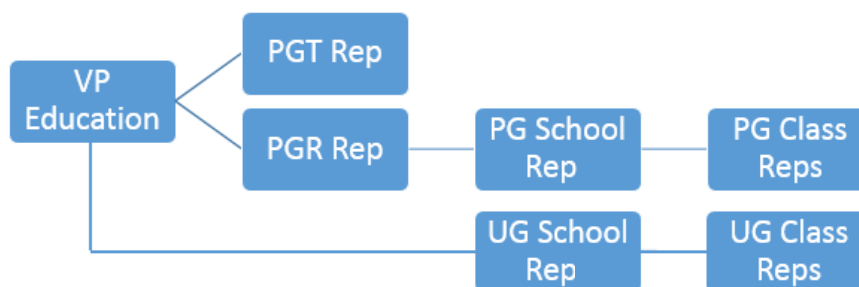
#### b. Degree-programme level representatives

With the inconsistency of appointments based upon tutorials, courses and degree-programmes it can be difficult for students to understand the purpose of each role. The proposal would be for degree-programme representatives, proportional to the number of students enrolled on the course and for each year of study.

The degree-programme representative would collate all information regarding to students on that degree. This would include specific tutorial and course issues but also the wider concepts regarding the quality of teaching and learning, curriculum and belonging. The training for the position would be enhanced so that reps are able to correctly signpost the information to the correct committee or staff member.

There were concerns within some schools of adopting this model as the representative may not have experienced the course they are providing feedback on behalf of. However, I would highlight this as a positive because the feedback will neither be personal or biased, but actually representative of the student body – something which we sometimes struggle to distinguish with our current representative system.

This mode of practise originated from the School of Mathematics and has expanded to the Business and Veterinary Schools for the 17/18 academic year.



**c. A minimum of 1 joint-degree representative per year**

Edinburgh University offers great flexibility within its degree programmes, offering wide ranges of elective course opportunities. Additionally, 14% are formally on joint-degree programmes but can often be overlooked in many implementations across the institution. This cohort also tends to rate the university lower than students reading one subject in the NSS (HCA and SPS confirmed) and it is important that we are hearing the voices of these students and building belonging at both school and university level.

Furthermore, with the implementation of degree-programme representatives, the joint-degree representatives would also represent students taking the course as an elective and this would be made clear for students at the beginning of the course.

**d. Discourage the recruitment of tutorial representatives**

Currently there are two schools which operate using tutorial representatives; Social and Political Sciences (SPS) and the School of Divinity. Whilst it is important that there is a mechanism in place for students to be represented in all aspects of their university experience, tutorial representatives can be limited as to the networks they can form within the institution. Furthermore, due to the nature of a representative role, students provide feedback which relate to a course or degree programme. Hence, there is a danger that the feedback given to these students will be lost, as tutorial representatives may not hold the power to take things further as their purpose is to represent an individual tutorial. Additionally, with the introduction of mid-semester feedback, students are able to report on tutorial related issues through an alternative platform.

**e. Student-staff liaison committees**

Due to the nature of our current representative system, the SSLC's have different formats and agendas depending on the model adopted by the school. A few examples are:

- Divinity: Tutorial based SSLC for Y1-2. Course based SSLC for Y3-4
- LLC: Course based SSLC for Y1-4
- Chemistry: Course based SSLC for Y1-4
- Vet Med: Year based SSLC for Y1-4
- Mathematics: School based SSLC for Y1-5

A *tutorial* based SSLC contains the staff member who facilitates the tutorial, and the corresponding representatives. This may result in approximately 5+ SSLC's, **per course**, per year group, where discussions will be formed around the tutorial a student is allocated.

A *course* based SSLC contains the staff members who facilitate the course, with any programme administrators etc. This may result in 10+ SSLC's per year group, **per department**. The discussions are usually formed around the course in which a student takes, which will include their tutorials and the effectiveness of this system is dependent on the number of courses offered by a school.

A *degree-programme* based SSLC contains the staff members who facilitate the course, with any programme administrators, senior tutors, directors of teaching and the Head of Schools. This may result in approximately 5 SSLC's per year group, depending on the number of programmes offered by a school. The discussions here are usually formed around the nature of a student's degree programme, and their university experience. This includes both course and tutorial discussions, if students raise concerns.

*Benefits of a degree-programme based SSLC:*

### Students

- Prevents feedback fatigue, where students are asked to report back on each of their individual tutorials and courses – but only once per semester for any feedback relating to their degree
- Ability to build a relationship between the School Representatives and the Class Representatives, as all in one room. Additionally, the ability to discuss things at a higher level through the School Representative or Vice President Education if not achievable through the SSLC mechanism. (e.g. transport)
- Allows for a broader discussion, relating to tutorials, courses, degree-programmes and the general university experience
- Easier to discuss survey results, such as NSS, PTES and PRES

### Staff

- Ability to have a more meaningful dialogue with students and to gain a range of perspectives. Particularly useful for NSS, PTES and PRES results
- A wider range of academics to attend the meetings, as there are fewer SSLC's to facilitate
- A more streamlined and efficient system to collect feedback, discuss and report back to students the action points
- Fewer resources required to support and facilitate SSLC's

#### **f. More personalised training and support to outline the expectations of the role**

In 2016/17 65% of representatives completed the online training provided by the students' association which seeks to inform them how to act as a representative for their peers. However, even after completing the training there remain some representatives who don't fully engage with the role. The Students' Association should work in collaboration with the university to provide clear guidance on **three key areas** that will contribute to a greater standard of representation; the collection of feedback, committee structures and signposting and how to effectively report back action points to their peers. There must also be greater emphasis on closing the feedback loop and demonstrating where student voice is being acted upon, in order for students to know they are represented.

### Training

- How to collect student feedback
- The purpose, function and variety of SSLC, School and Student Council and how to signpost (not everything is relevant to the SSLC and can be dealt with beforehand)
- How to feedback actions and outcomes to students

### Support

- Transparency of representational process in communication between the Class Reps, School Reps and the Vice President Education
- Greater incentives and more informal events for reps to form a communities within Schools and the wider university.
- Outlining other opportunities including School and College level committees and TPR's

## **2. Proposed action required from the University**

As the university has expanded, the number of student representatives on courses has increased in order to gather more feedback. However, whilst this has been done for good intention, to ensure that students are given the opportunity to shape their tutorials and courses, it has furthered the feedback fatigue. The representative system sometimes loses it's democratic feel for the student voice to create positive change, but otherwise works as a mechanism for academics to gather feedback. With the introduction of mid-semester feedback, I feel there is a more appropriate mechanism to gather *some* of these views.. This was a viewpoint that became apparent in the 2016/17 NSS, where students expressed that they were aware of the platforms to gather feedback, but they did not feel it was valued nor acted upon. Redesigning our representative system, in accordance to other high performing institutions such as St Andrew's, I feel will lay the foundations to achieving a positive outcome in this question.

I'd recommend that the Students' Association works in partnership with the University on the following items;

1. Endorsing the new representative system. Possibly by imposing a cap on representative numbers per department – proportionate to the number of students enrolled.
2. Signposting a specific member of staff within each school to facilitate the representatives and SSLC's (e.g. take minutes, whilst the school rep chairs)
3. Help to close the feedback loop by distributing the minutes and action points from student-staff meetings to website and LEARN
4. Creating a section on LEARN for each programme, so that the reps have an online platform to gather and distribute feedback
5. Providing reps with NSS and CEQ information, to help shape their discussions at SSLC and School-wide meetings

**Appendix A**

School	Number trained	Number of class reps	% trained
Biological Sciences	146	187	78%
Biomedical Sciences	111	154	72%
Business School	166	223	74%
Chemistry	24	25	96%
Divinity	69	184	38%
Economics	41	58	71%
ECA	80	140	57%
Engineering	46	72	64%
Geosciences	68	108	63%
Health in Social Science	41	62	66%
HCA	114	160	71%
Informatics	30	38	79%
Law	177	352	50%
LLC	162	249	65%
Mathematics	21	23	91%
Medical school	28	50	56%
Moray House	92	163	56%
PPLS	44	67	66%
Physics	26	43	60%
SPS	193	413	47%
Veterinary Studies	13	37	35%
	<b>1692</b>	<b>2808</b>	<b>65%</b>

Group 1 - 70% and over

Group 2 - 60% - 69.9%

Group 3 - 50% - 59.9%

Group 4 - 49.9 and under

## **Appendix B**

### **St Andrew's (10,000 student population)**

There are just over 350 UG and PG Rep positions at St Andrews, all of which are elected by their fellow peers.

Each of their Schools has a Class Rep Composition which vary between Schools. The Rep positions are typically divided into years for UG (1st Year, 2nd Year, 3rd Year, 4th Year, and Integrated Masters). Larger Schools will opt for 3 or 4 Reps for each year, smaller ones have 1 or 2. Some of the UG Reps are designated to a particular discipline within the School. Masters Reps are elected for a given programme within the School, and finally PGR Reps are typically one per School (or for larger Schools one per discipline such as Chemistry where we have an Organic, Inorganic, Physical, and BioChem PGR Rep). In addition, some Schools opt to have specialist positions for evening degree, mature, direct entry, or Joint-Honours students. It can be quite complex but each School opts for a system that works best for themselves, with minor tweaks being made each election cycle.

Students can log in online to an elections portal to check what positions they are eligible to run for, and submit their nomination which includes a personal statement. Nominations are typically open for a week. The voting is also done through the online system in which students vote for the Reps that will directly represent them, which is over two days following the nominations period.

The University of Edinburgh

Learning and Teaching Committee  
15 November 2017

**Report of University-Wide Courses Task Group**

**Executive Summary**

In November 2016, LTC agreed to establish a University-Wide Courses Task Group to:

- map current University-wide courses;
- identify gaps in provision, seeking feedback regarding the types of courses students may wish to take, and benchmarking provision at other institutions;
- produce a framework for how new courses would be developed, organised and taken up;
- and explore how to manage resourcing the courses.

The Task Group met three times between March and September 2017. This paper is the Task Group's final report.

**How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?**

Providing the highest-quality research-led teaching and learning; enabling our graduates to be exceptional individuals equipped to address global challenges; leadership in learning.

**Action requested**

LTC is invited to discuss the paper and consider the Task Group's recommendations.

**How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?**

Should the Task Group's recommendations be approved, they will be taken forward by a sub-group or referred to the bodies named for further consideration. It should be noted that there are currently a number of ongoing discussions around the University's undergraduate curriculum, and the recommendations in this paper will need to be considered within the broader context.

**Resource / Risk / Compliance**

**1. Resource implications (including staffing)**

Resource is not discussed in the paper. However, introduction of new University-wide courses of the types proposed is likely to have significant resource implications, which should be assessed when considering specific proposals.

**2. Risk assessment**

The paper does not include a risk assessment. Potential risks should be assessed when considering specific proposals.

**3. Equality and Diversity**



The issues highlighted in the paper raise potential equality and diversity issues. For example, if the University were to widen its choice of University-wide courses, certain topics may be of more interest to students from some backgrounds than others, and some topics (eg. gender studies) would have the potential to make a positive contribution to equality and diversity. At this stage, the Committee is not being asked to make a final decision on any of these recommendations. However if the Committee does support the broad recommendations, potential equality issues should be considered when developing specific proposals.

#### **4. Freedom of information**

The paper is **open**.

#### **Originator of the paper**

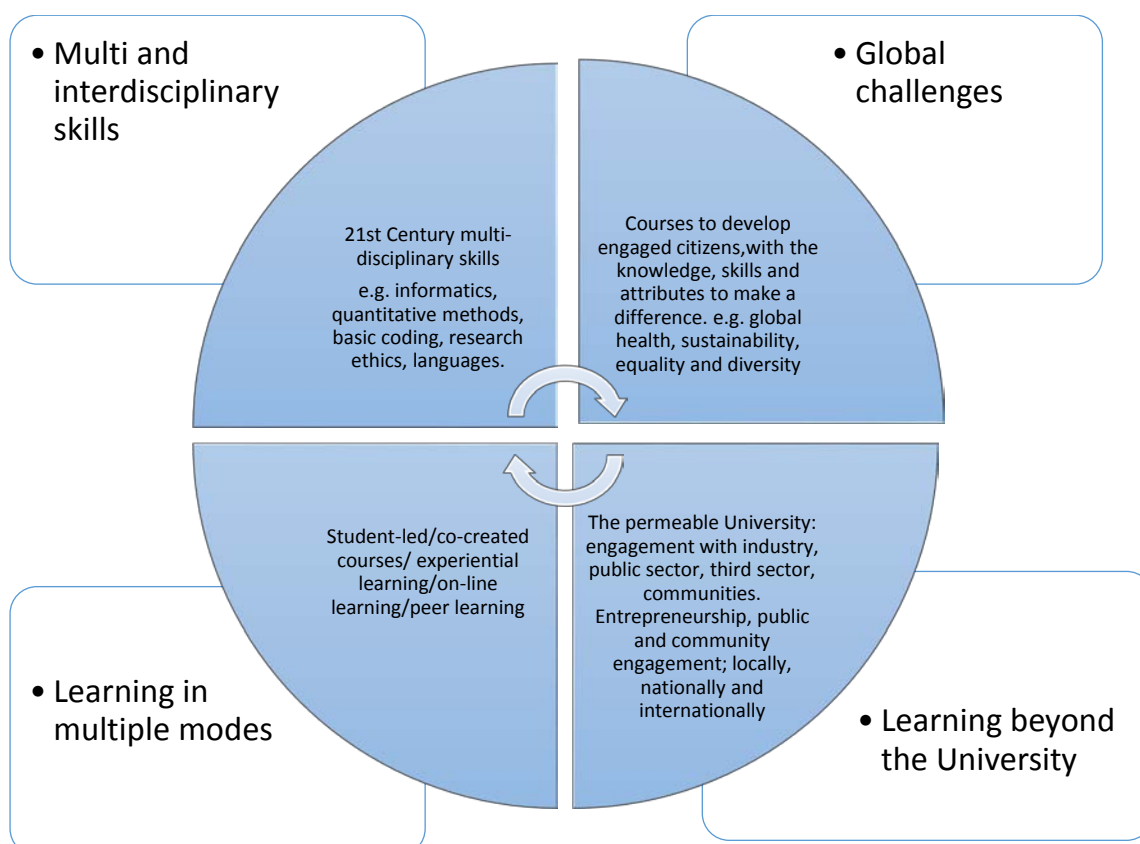
Professor Sarah Cunningham-Burley, Assistant Principal Research-Led Learning  
November 2017

## Developing an Enhanced Portfolio of University-Wide Courses

### 1. Background

The University's Learning and Teaching Strategy commits to providing '*University-wide courses in a broader range of skills, for example quantitative methods, digital skills and languages*' and '*the opportunity to participate in courses and modes of learning outside of a student's core discipline(s), and to develop academic skills alongside students from all parts of the University*'. The Strategic Plan 2016 refers to the development of '*flexible study pathways*'. University-wide courses may be of relevance to both the 'Portfolio Development, Innovation and Review' strand of the implementation of the University's Student Recruitment Strategy (which aims to develop and articulate the distinctive Edinburgh offer) and ongoing sector-wide discussions about the value of the Scottish four-year degree programme.

An Innovation in Teaching and Learning Working Group of Senate Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC), which met during Semester 2 of 2015/16, initiated work on the development of an extended portfolio of University-wide courses. It proposed a four-fold approach to student learning which incorporated University-wide courses and established an expectation that all students would learn in multiple modes, develop multi and interdisciplinary skills, engage with global challenges, and learn in and beyond the University.



## University-Wide Courses Task Group

A second LTC group – the University-Wide Courses Task Group - was established in November 2016 to look more specifically at University-wide courses. The remit and membership of the Group were as follows:

### *Remit*

- Map current University-wide courses;
- Identify gaps in provision, seeking feedback regarding the types of courses students may wish to take, and benchmarking provision at other institutions;
- Produce a framework for how new courses would be developed, organised and taken up; and
- Explore how to manage the resourcing of the courses.

### *Membership*

Assistant Principal Research-Led Learning (Convener)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Professor Sarah Cunningham-Burley</li></ul>
Other Assistant Principals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Professor Lesley McAra – Community Relations</li><li>• Professor Sian Bayne – Digital Education</li></ul>
Director of Postgraduate Taught Programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Professor Mayank Dutia (CMVM)</li></ul>
College Reps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dr Stuart King (Mathematics, CSE)</li><li>• Professor Neil Turner (CMVM)</li><li>• John Lowrey (CAHSS)</li></ul>
School Director of Learning and Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dr Peter Moles (Director of UG, Business School, CAHSS)</li></ul>
Academic Services Rep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tom Ward</li></ul>
Students' Association Rep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Patrick Garratt (VPAA)</li></ul>
Administrator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pippa Ward</li></ul>

The Task group met three times between March and September 2017. This report summarizes the Task Group's discussions and identifies a number of ways in which the University's portfolio of University-wide courses might be extended.

## **2. Benchmarking**

The Task Group undertook sector benchmarking and found that a number of other UK and overseas higher education institutions are developing university-wide courses using a variety of models. The following models were considered to be of particular interest:

### University of Aberdeen

The University of Aberdeen requires all students, with the exception of Medicine and Dentistry students, to undertake 'Enhanced Study'. The rationale provided is that, in order to meet the current challenges of life and work, graduates will require an appreciation of disciplines other than their

own, and a deeper understanding of the context of their own core discipline. As such, three types of Enhanced Study are offered:

- Discipline Breadth Courses – optional courses outside the main degree discipline
- Sustained Study – continual exposure throughout the first two years to an area of study separate from the core discipline
- Sixth Century Courses – interdisciplinary courses

Students are required to take 30 credits of Enhanced Study in Years 1 and 2, and an additional 30 credits across Years 3 and 4.

### University of Hong Kong

The University of Hong Kong approved a new curriculum in 2012 with the following distinctive features:

- (Inter)disciplinary inquiry
- Multidisciplinary collaboration
- Enquiry in multiple contexts
- Diverse learning experiences
- Multiple forms of learning and assessment
- Engagement with local and global communities
- Development of civic and moral values

Each degree comprises 240 credits made up as follows:

- 45% to 60% of the total credit allocated to specialization (incorporating a Major and Minor discipline)
- 22.5% allocated to compulsory courses:
  - A small amount of Chinese and English
  - Six Common Core courses from a choice of around 180 across four Areas of Inquiry (Scientific and Technological Literacy; Humanities; Global Issues; China: Culture, State and Society)All Common Core courses are broadly scheduled for the same time in the week.
- 17.5% to 32.5% electives – outside courses from within or outside the home faculty.

Students are also permitted to take up to 6 additional credits per semester, allowing them to graduate with up to 288 credits.

### University of Leeds

The University of Leeds introduced the 'Leeds Curriculum' in 2015 following a major, 4 to 5 year, curriculum enhancement project. The Curriculum aims to 'produce graduates who stand out as a result of the knowledge, skills and attributes they have gained'.

'Broadening through Discovery Themes' forms one component of the revised Curriculum: students are provided with the opportunity to broaden their intellectual horizons, within or outside their degree programme, by studying modules within ten interdisciplinary Discovery Themes, with subthemes within them:

- Creating Sustainable Futures
- Enterprise and Innovation
- Ethics, Religion and Law
- Exploring the Sciences
- Languages and Intercultural Understanding
- Media, Culture and Creativity
- Mind and Body
- Personal and Professional Development
- Power and Conflict
- Technology and its Impacts

There are hundreds of Discovery Modules available, for example, the Ethics, Religion and Law theme has 250. The themes bring together related teaching from across University; modules are approved as a discovery module and there are on-line offerings. Many are integrated into programmes of study as compulsory or optional modules. Students are also able to create pathways through the Discovery modules.

### London School of Economics

LSE has a 'flagship' interdisciplinary course for all undergraduate students – LSE100: The LSE Course. It is designed to broaden and deepen students' engagement with social scientific analysis through case studies of pressing social issues. It comprises lectures from leading researchers, on-line content and small, interactive classes that aim to introduce core elements of social scientific reasoning as well as critical research and communication skills. It is taken in the second term and involves two five week modules; it brings students together from different departments and includes 80 minute MSc style seminars and team teaching. Students have the opportunity to interact with academic staff and the policy community.

### University of Manchester

The University of Manchester has established the University College of Interdisciplinary Learning (UCIL) to broaden learning, increase employability and provide opportunities to mix with a wider group of students. UCIL offers credit-bearing, undergraduate-level, interdisciplinary courses, grouped under 6 themes:

- Culture and Community
- Global Challenges
- Languages and Global Citizenship
- Professional Skills and Business Enterprise
- Science and Society
- Sustainability

Around 35 courses are available to all students as optional units, and are currently taken by around 1,000 of the university's 27,000 undergraduate students. This number is expected to continue to grow exponentially as the programme becomes better known and supported. The vision is to promote learning without boundaries. Students can apply to do a Programme or Challenge, which gives an award recorded on HEAR. These combine a UCIL unit with related extra curricular activity.

UCIL operates in line with university regulations, policies and procedures but has its own Academic Board, Teaching and Learning Panel and Examinations Board. All university faculties are represented on each group.

## University of Melbourne

The University of Melbourne introduced the 'Melbourne Curriculum' in 2008 with the aim of developing disciplinary depth and academic breadth. The Curriculum offers 13 broad, non-specialist UG programmes (eg. Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Commerce, Bachelor of Science), and students are then provided with a wide range of 'Major' options to specialise in.

In addition, all students are required to take at least 50 points (out of the 300 points required for the degree) of 'Breadth' subjects – those taken from outside their Major. Breadth aims to provide students with a greater understanding of the world around them, and allows them to tailor their course to fit their individual passions and career ambitions. Most subjects outside of the main field of study are available as breadth. In addition, specially-developed 'University Breadth Subjects', which examine current critical issues using techniques and approaches from multiple disciplines, are offered. All University Breadth Subjects are scheduled simultaneously and to avoid clashes with most other subjects of that year level.

Students are provided with further opportunities to undertake 'Concurrent Diplomas' (eg. Diploma in Languages, Diploma in Music), allowing them to obtain an additional qualification alongside their undergraduate degree.

## University of Southampton

Southampton has introduced 'Flexible Learning' to offer students greater choice. Five options are available:

- A range of interdisciplinary modules
- Studying a language
- Open disciplinary modules – subject-specific modules available to those from other disciplines
- Studying a minor subject alongside the main discipline
- Undertaking more modules in the home discipline

All modules are credit-bearing and are set at second year level to allow first and third year students to forward or backtrack where appropriate.

## Stanford University

Stanford continues its tradition of required courses for first years through its Thinking Matters programme. These promote critical inquiry with students actively engaging in diverse topics and approaches to answering fundamental questions and solving real-world problems. There are 22 courses and the process of choosing is itself portrayed as a skill demanding inquiry and self-reflection. The programme provides a transition from school and a transformation in thinking.

## University of Warwick

The University of Warwick, like Manchester, has established a separate unit – the Institute for Advanced Teaching and Learning (IALT) – to deliver interdisciplinary modules to undergraduate students. IALT has its own module approval and exam boards. Modules aim to help students

understand the symbiotic potential of traditionally distinct disciplines and stimulate collaboration through group work and embodied learning. They can be taken for credit, or on a not for credit basis.

Whilst the Task Group considered the models discussed above to be of interest, it recognised that further work will need to be done to gather information on the success of the models, particularly in those institutions where major curricular reform projects have been undertaken in order to introduce the current structure.

### 3. Potential Models for University-Wide Courses at Edinburgh

In light of the information gathered through the benchmarking exercise and our own discussions, the Task Group discussed what might constitute an Edinburgh University-wide course. It posited four underlying principles, agreeing that any University-wide course should:

- be available to all students;
- be at undergraduate level (probably Level 7 or 8) at this stage;
- be for credit;
- aim to develop Edinburgh's distinctive graduate attributes (Appendix A)

Beyond this, the Group identified three possible types of University-wide course:

- existing subject-based courses with broad appeal;
- themed, interdisciplinary courses;
- a single course to be taken by all students – an 'Edinburgh Experience' course.

#### a) Existing, Subject-Based Courses

One of the distinctive features of the Edinburgh degree is its flexibility and the opportunity it provides to study optional courses outside of the core discipline. The majority of the University's courses, whilst compulsory for a small number of students, are open to all students, thus providing huge breadth. However, students rarely take full advantage of this breadth, and the Task Group identified a number of reasons for this including:

- a risk-averse culture amongst students (an increasing problem with increasing fees);
- lack of understanding of the long-term benefits of a broader education;
- lack of encouragement by some academic staff to move away from the home discipline;
- degree models, which often encourage large numbers of credits in the home discipline/s;
- increasing numbers of course prerequisites, which can serve as barriers to diversity;
- a particular lack of flexibility in the curriculum for Joint Honours students;
- lack of awareness (on the part of both students and Personal Tutors) of the range of options available, primarily because of the way in which the University publishes its course information – grouped by School and then subject – via the Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study (DRPS) and PATH.

The Task Group recognised that there would always be a degree of tension between breadth and subject depth, and different subjects would require different levels of flexibility within their programmes. However, subjects should always be able to justify any reduction in curricular flexibility.

In light of the above, the Task Group agreed that important components of any work towards developing more University-wide courses may be:

- promoting culture change - tackling student and staff reluctance to move outside of the core discipline through clear communication about the long-term benefits of a broad education;
- better publicising the University's existing courses, probably by grouping them by theme or subject as opposed to by School. This could include making more explicit ways in which students might use outside courses e.g. for ongoing language acquisition, to develop a second or 'minor' subject. The major strand of work being undertaken as part of the Service Excellence Programme on Programme and Course Information may be of benefit in this context.
- enhancing the support available to students around course choice, potentially by providing additional training for Personal Tutors and by offering improved information on course choice pre-arrival, as part of induction processes and at other points during their programme.
- potentially looking again at the University's degree models and the use of prerequisites to ascertain whether or not there is scope to encourage greater flexibility in the curriculum. This work would be particularly beneficial for Joint Honours students.

## b) Themed, Interdisciplinary Courses

The Task Group considered there to be significant merit in offering a range of University-wide, interdisciplinary courses, as is being done by the Universities of Aberdeen, Manchester, Melbourne and Southampton, amongst others. This would support the implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy and align us with comparable institutions, although as discussed in relation to existing, subject-based courses, some reconsideration of the University's degree models may be necessary to give students the flexibility to choose courses of this type.

The development of a suite of such courses would require further work in a number of areas:

- i. *Expansion of provision* – the Task Group has identified four existing courses that could be categorised as University-wide and interdisciplinary: 'Our Changing World'; 'Sustainability and Social Responsibility'; 'Sustainability, Society and Environment'; and 'Understanding Gender in the Contemporary World: Key Concepts, Controversies and Challenges'. Whilst more courses of this type may already exist and be identified as consultation with the wider community is undertaken, it is likely that a number of new courses would need to be developed in order to provide the envisaged suite.

The Task Group did not consider it within their remit to be specific about the content of these new courses, but did begin to identify a list of potential course themes:

1. Data Science and Digital Literacy
2. Entrepreneurship
3. Global Challenges
4. Critical Thinking
5. Innovation, Creativity and Design

Some input on these themes has been sought, but broader consultation would be required to finalise the list and possible courses within the themes. It would be essential to define themes



carefully to ensure that there was a shared understanding . Once the list has been finalised, it would be necessary to undertake a mapping exercise to establish the extent to which they could be populated with existing courses, with a process of assessing that they would meet the requirements for a University-wide, interdisciplinary course and consider ways in which teaching staff might be incentivised to develop the additional courses required. Possible incentivization mechanisms considered by the Group included:

- offering project funding for the development of new courses;
- offering teaching sabbaticals;
- appointing Theme Leads with responsibility for overseeing the development of the portfolio in the theme area (Schools would be discouraged from creating overlapping courses);
- and co-creation (it being noted that students were already expressing an interest in developing additional courses along the same lines as the existing 'Understanding Gender in the Contemporary World' course).

As discussed in relation to existing courses, any new courses developed would need to be publicised in a way that made them visible to students.

- ii. *Governance* – the Task Group discussed ways in which a suite of new, interdisciplinary courses might be managed. It considered a model, used for example by the Universities of Manchester and Warwick, whereby a separate, central unit is responsible for approving and examining courses. Whilst a model of this type may have some advantages, it would require a new, 'School-like' infrastructure to be put in place, and would therefore only be financially viable for a large-scale operation.

As such, the Group concluded that it would be preferable, at least at the outset, to operate any new courses within extant University structures, and therefore for individual courses to be owned by and the responsibility of individual Schools. Feedback from the elective Student-Led Individually-Created Courses (SLICCs) project suggests that the University's existing School-focussed approach to curriculum approval, programme and course management, quality assurance, budgeting and staff management makes it challenging to develop and run courses that involve significant input from teaching staff in multiple Schools. However, the Task Group concluded that pragmatic solutions could be put in place to overcome the challenges. (Learning from the recently introduced 'Sustainability and Social Responsibility' course may be useful in this respect.)

Notwithstanding this, the Group also agreed that there may be benefit in establishing a University-Wide Courses Steering Group to ensure that all provision falling into this category was fit for purpose. It was proposed that the Edinburgh Futures Institute (EFI) may provide a suitable 'home' for such a Steering Group, and be able to offer the 'Theme Leads' discussed under point i.

- iii. *Modes of delivery and assessment* – Diverse modes of delivery and assessment should be developed, with an emphasis on innovation and student engagement. The Task Group considered the potential for the University to offer short, fat courses, community engagement

experiences, and online, independent learning, noting that online learning may help to overcome timetabling and estates constraints, but may not be popular with all on-campus students. The Group also noted that other institutions offering courses of this type (Aberdeen, Hong Kong, Melbourne) timetable them to ensure that they do not clash with other courses and are therefore accessible to all students.

c) A Single, Common Course – The Edinburgh Experience

The opportunities for interaction between disciplines and the City itself are central to Edinburgh's distinctive offer and history. In recognition of this, the Task Group identified the potential to introduce a common course for all students to introduce them to the City, the Enlightenment, contemporary issues and the University's pedagogical approaches. Such a course could serve multiple aims:

- Support the transition to University and develop critical engagement and thinking
- Build a sense of community and belonging across the student body and with the City
- Encourage collaborative working and active learning
- Introduce the diverse disciplines that developed from the Enlightenment and their positions in the contemporary academic landscape
- Introduce on-line learning as well as face to face, student to student interaction, supported by personal tutors

It would fit with wider strategic aims such as distance learning at scale, and could link with the City Deal.

The final assessment for the course could take the form of an interdisciplinary, Edinburgh-specific project. It may be possible to add subject-specific content to a common core.

Given the size of the initiative, the most likely mode of delivery would primarily be online. This would require resource and careful development and piloting, but would provide the University with an opportunity to test its ability to deliver online distance learning at scale.

Part of the course could be delivered pre-arrival but with most being taken during the first year and not necessarily by all students at the same time. It could potentially be two separate ten credit elements, across one or two years, with a more subject specific component added on. The possibility of permitting students to take the course for additional credit was considered, but it was concluded that this may disadvantage widening participation students and induce workload stress. Having a required course, for credit, was the preferred option, although there may need to be some exceptions.

The governance arrangements for such a course would require further consideration: it is likely that a University-wide project board would be required to develop the course and a steering group to monitor progress and outcomes once the course was established.

Initial consultation on this proposal suggests that there may be significant resistance to introducing a course of this type. Those consulted were not clear that there was demand for such a course – the concept of an 'Edinburgh Experience' was questioned on the basis that students often identify primarily with their Subject Area and not with the City – and were unsure about its potential to deliver a positive experience for all students. A compulsory course in the first year would present

difficulties for direct entry students, and anything delivered pre-arrival would be problematic for those entering through clearing. In addition, given that a key driver for discussions around University-wide courses was a desire to make better use of the flexibility afforded by the Scottish 4-year degree, a proposal to introduce a single, compulsory course could appear contradictory.

In light of this feedback, members of the Task Group agreed that the potential value of an 'Edinburgh Experience' course would be best explored by piloting it as one of the new, themed interdisciplinary courses within the 'Innovation, Creativity and Design' theme before any expansion as a common core could be considered.

#### **4. Constraints**

##### Space

The Task Group considered the main barrier to introducing University-wide courses to be lack of space within the curriculum, timetable and estate. It will be for the University to decide whether or not there is an appetite to use the 4 year degree to create more space and flexibility, and if there is, how this will be achieved and the space filled. As previously noted, online provision may assist with overcoming timetable and estate constraints, but has not yet been tested at scale and is often not well received by all on-campus students. Blended learning is likely to be a more appropriate approach. Allocating a specific slot within the timetable to University-wide courses would provide an alternative solution and would allow more face to face teaching.

##### Culture

Students and, indeed, staff are frequently risk-averse, and a culture of remaining within the core discipline exists in many areas. Significant culture change, brought about through clear communication of the value of a broad education, will be necessary if the full potential of University-wide courses is to be realised.

##### Staff Development

Any changes to course choice mechanisms and the range of courses offered will require significant additional training for Personal Tutors to ensure that they are willing and able to assist students as they navigate the available options.

#### **5. Issues Requiring Further Consideration**

##### Compulsory versus optional

A decision will need to be taken on whether or not University-wide courses should be optional or compulsory. The Task Group held the view that if University-wide courses were high priority, a degree of requirement may be necessary, although it was recognised that introducing incentives may prove more effective for both staff and student engagement. If the four-fold approach to learning outlined in the background section of the paper, or something similar, were to be adopted, learning in all four quadrants – multi and interdisciplinary skills; global challenges; learning in multiple modes; and learning beyond the University – could be compulsory, with flexibility permitted in the way in which this was achieved. Regardless of whether University-wide courses were

compulsory or optional, it would be essential to offer a clear rationale for their introduction to overcome student and staff resistance to moving away from the core discipline.

#### The 'Edinburgh Offer'

A number of additional work streams and initiatives are currently being considered (research-led learning and teaching; the CAHSS Programme Pathways Project; Social Responsibility and Sustainability Pathways; SLICCs) in the context of discussions relating to Edinburgh's distinctive offer. It will be essential to consider the value of University-wide courses not only in their own right, but within this broader context.

#### **6. Recommendations**

In light of the above, the University-Wide Courses Task Group recommends that:

1. further consultation is undertaken with both staff and students to establish the demand for University-wide courses of the types discussed, including consulting on the possibility of introducing a single, common 'Edinburgh Experience' course. (Student views around flexibility in the curriculum in general have already been sought via focus groups arranged by Communications and Marketing in October 2017.)
2. the aims, content, and modes of delivery of a single, common course are scoped as a pilot.
3. steps are taken to better publicise and therefore make accessible to a broader range of students, the University's existing subject-based courses, potentially through the Service Excellence Programme, Programme and Course Information work stream.

Considering ongoing discussions around the 'Edinburgh Offer' and other current initiatives that may impact on the undergraduate curriculum, it is recommended that:

4. Senate considers whether more space and flexibility should be introduced into the undergraduate curriculum to enable students to broaden their studies.
5. Senate considers how any additional space and flexibility introduced into the undergraduate curriculum should be filled, and the place of University-wide courses within the broader context.

## Appendix A

# University of Edinburgh Graduate Attributes

## What does it mean to be a University of Edinburgh graduate?

Every student and graduate is unique. They each have their own experiences, learning and way of approaching life. The quality, depth and breadth of their experiences while at the University of Edinburgh develop characteristic attributes that set them apart.

University of Edinburgh graduates have:

- curiosity for learning that makes a positive difference
- courage to expand and fulfil their potential
- passion to engage locally and globally

University of Edinburgh graduates are:

- creative problem solvers and researchers
- critical and reflective thinkers
- effective and influential contributors
- skilled communicators

Shaped by our students' experiences, personalities and academic subjects, these graduate attributes evolve over time. They divide into two types: **mindsets** that influence our students' and graduates' behaviours, and groups of **skills** that empower their actions.

## Mindsets

### *Enquiry and lifelong learning*

University of Edinburgh graduates seek personal and academic learning that makes a positive difference to themselves and to the world around them. Inspired by their exposure to world-leading research, they are innovative and lifelong learners.

### *Aspiration and personal development*

University of Edinburgh graduates draw on their initiative and experience to expand and fulfil their potential. Making the most of a confident and reflective approach, they take personal responsibility for pursuing their goals and opportunities to grow.

### *Outlook and engagement*

University of Edinburgh graduates draw on the quality, depth and breadth of their experiences to engage with the communities and world around them. With an informed international perspective, they seek to contribute positively, ethically and respectfully.

## **Skills**

### *Research and enquiry*

University of Edinburgh graduates use their highly-developed skills in **research and enquiry** to identify and creatively tackle problems, and to seek out opportunities for learning.

### *Personal and intellectual autonomy*

University of Edinburgh graduates use their **personal and intellectual autonomy** to critically evaluate ideas, evidence and experiences from an open-minded and reasoned perspective.

### *Personal effectiveness*

University of Edinburgh graduates are **effective and proactive individuals**, skilled in influencing positively and adapting to new situations with sensitivity and integrity.

### *Communication*

University of Edinburgh graduates use skilled **communication** to enhance their understanding of a topic or context and to engage effectively with others.

The University of Edinburgh

Senate Learning & Teaching Committee

15<sup>th</sup> November 2017

**VLE Minimum Standards Project: Information**

**Executive Summary**

In this paper, we outline a new ISG project that will run 2017-19 to review the current use of the University's main virtual learning environment, Blackboard Learn, and support the adoption of a minimum standard course presentation across the institution.

**How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?**

The proposal supports the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy with the aim to improve NSS scores as a result of consistency in VLE course outlines. The project will benefit both the on campus and online distance learning student experience.

**Action requested**

LTC is invited to consider and discuss the proposal.

**How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?**

If the Committee supports the proposal, ISG will incorporate feedback into the project initiation. The Committee will be given interim reports on the project's progress.

**Resource / Risk / Compliance**

1. **Resource implications (including staffing).** ISG has approved 2 year resourcing for this project beginning with 2FTE in 2017/18.
2. **Risk assessment.** This project aims to ensure a consistent student experience within the VLE the risk of not undertaking this will be a continued inconsistent and variable student experience which may impact on NSS scores. This has been made more urgent with the recent change in the NSS questions to focus on how IT supports learning rather than just on access to IT.
3. **Equality and Diversity.** Consistent use of the VLE across all schools/colleges may provide an opportunity to address accessibility issues and promote positive equality and diversity. An Equality Impact Assessment will be completed at the start of this project.

LTC: 15.11.2017  
H/02/25/02

**LTC 17/18 2 F**

**4. Freedom of information**

The paper is **open**.

**Key words**

**Originator of the paper**

*Jo Spiller, Head of Educational Design and Engagement  
Josephine Kinsley, Team Manager, Digital Learning, Applications and Media  
Learning Teaching and Web Services  
Information Services Group*

*September 2017*



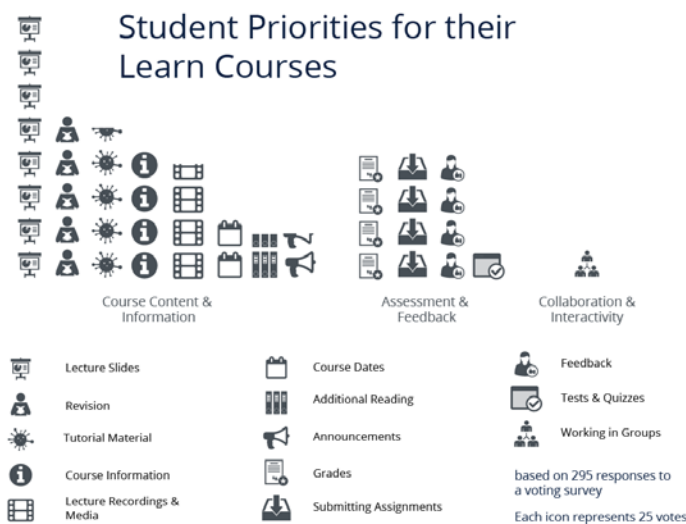
This paper seeks LTC support for a two-year ISG project to implement a set of minimum standards for the University's main virtual learning environment (VLE), Blackboard Learn. The project will also implement a programme of migration support for course and programme teams to adopt them over the same time period.

## Background

Inconsistency in the use of Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) has led to dissatisfaction amongst students across the HE sector and analysis of the NSS data indicates that the introduction of a minimum standard may address some areas of dissatisfaction (Reed et al, 2015).

The largest VLE in use at Edinburgh is Blackboard Learn, used by over 80% of our academic courses. Consultations in 2016-17 with staff and students by the Learn Service team and the commissioned Headscape review in 2016 indicate that inconsistencies across all our internal and external systems cause frustration and dissatisfaction for students.

A recent ISG innovation fund project looking at students' perceptions of Learn indicates that accessing course content and information in a clear and consistent way is a priority for students.



This is supported by wider research on students' negative experiences of digital technology in Higher Education (Selwyn, 2016) as well as the importance of 'hygiene factors'; the extrinsic factors that can impact on satisfaction and well-being in places of work and study.

The recent change in NSS questions to shift focus toward how IT 'supports students' learning' rather than on access alone means that addressing these inconsistencies in online student experience needs to be a priority.

Research indicates that minimal VLE standard is a hygiene factor that can address areas of dissatisfaction as well as provide the foundation upon which learning and teaching innovation may flourish (Reed et al, 2015).

Many other Universities have already implemented minimum standards or thresholds for VLE usage, including: Surrey, York, Oxford, Edge Hill, Swansea, Aston, Newcastle, Sheffield Hallam, York St John, Surrey, Aberystwyth, South Wales, Cardiff, Leicester, Northampton and Bedfordshire.

### **Project Aims**

This project aims to support two key priorities in the 2017 Learning and Teaching Strategy:

- 1) reviewing and enhancing 'the experience of students on joint Honours programmes'
- 2) reviewing the way our 'digital estates support high quality learning and teaching and interaction between staff and students'.

The project will evaluate current inconsistencies in the way that courses are presented and navigated in Blackboard Learn, assess the impact this has on the student experience and seek appropriate means to implement a consistent standard for all programmes of study, including Joint Honours programmes.

It is anticipated that the project will also offer the opportunity to highlight examples of high standards of course presentation currently in use across the institution and offer 'good practice' guidelines for course presentation in all disciplines.

The Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy (May 2016) already outlines the need for consistent student experience across all programmes of study, e.g.

- Course outlines and reading lists shall be made available at least four weeks before the start of the course
- Lecture outlines or PowerPoint presentation slides for lectures/seminars shall be made available to students at least 24 hours in advance of the class
- Reading lists to be provided at the start of the course in the course handbook or equivalent or on the VLE.
- Lecture notes will be preferably on the appropriate VLE, for all students to access as required.

The VLE Minimum Standards project will specifically situate these requirements within the VLE itself so that key learning and teaching resources, are consistently presented in the VLE.

This project will also work closely with the teams working on the new lecture recording and Resource Lists services, the leads of which will be part of the project steering group, to ensure that they are integrated into the minimum standard VLE course presentation.

*See Appendix 1 for Project timeline*

This paper seeks Learning and Teaching committee support for this two-year project and would invite committee representation and / or nominated reps from Schools and Colleges for the project governance and steering groups.

LTC can expect to be kept updated throughout the project.

### **References**

Neil Selwyn (2016) **Digital Downsides: exploring university students' negative engagements with digital technology**, Teaching in Higher Education, 21:8, 1006-1021

Reed P, Watmough S (2015) **Hygiene factors: Using VLE minimum standards to avoid student dissatisfaction**, E-learning and Digital Media, 12(1) 68-89

## Appendix 1 - Project timelines

### **Phase 1: 2017-18**

A project will be established with governance/steering group representation in Oct 2017. Key stakeholders from schools/colleges i.e. Directors of Learning and Teaching, student representatives, College IT and ISG stakeholders.

A landscaping exercise will be undertaken Oct 17-Mar-18 in order to benchmark current usage across the institution and identify the potential challenges in adopting a minimum standard course design across all schools/colleges.

A pilot project will run with one or two schools/programmes during the same time period to determine the feasibility and resourcing required to achieve a minimum standard course design for all courses represented in Blackboard Learn.

A review and report will be submitted to the steering group in July 2018 to recommend next steps for roll out to wider institution.

### **Phase 2: 2018-19**

Year two of this project will aim for adoption of an institution-wide VLE minimum standard. The proposed approach will be informed by the review undertaken in 2017/18 and will take into account the complexity of having over 4,500 courses per annum hosted on Blackboard Learn.

We anticipate this to be a significant challenge, especially given the limited windows of opportunity to implement VLE changes within the academic timetable.

The plan for rollout will be informed by the pilots run in 2017/18 and take into account annual course rollover timescales.

Support and training will be offered to staff to make the most effective use of the new minimum standard to support an enhanced student experience as well as explore potential support for innovation in learning and teaching.

The project will also take into account recent work that schools/programmes may have undertaken in this area and will ensure that the timetable for adoption does not have a negative impact on this.

LTC: 15.11.2017  
H/02/25/02

**LTC 17/18 2 F**

The University of Edinburgh  
Senate Learning & Teaching Committee  
15 November 2017

## **Computer Aided Assessment - Service Overview and Governance**

### **Executive Summary**

This paper provides detail of the specific feedback and assessment tools that are supported by ISG, how they align with assessment activities and lifecycle stages, how the service is developed, and how this area is governed to ensure that ongoing investment meets needs in a targeted, sustainable and efficient manner. This is a complex area with both institutional and sector challenges. Maintaining an appropriate balance between innovation and proliferation is an ongoing consideration.

### **How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?**

This paper outlines the portfolio of feedback and assessment tools provided centrally to support the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy; specifically, in supporting the development of assessment and feedback that delivers constructive and supportive dialogue between students and staff. At Edinburgh we have a diverse portfolio that is not well optimised for key processes.

### **Action requested**

LTC is invited to note the current service provision, and to comment on (a) the criteria for assessing whether new investment should be made or where new pilots should be supported, and (b) whether additional governance in the form of a service board would be useful.

### **How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?**

Service guidelines on running pilots will be updated to reflect feedback from LTC. If additional governance is recommended there will be a call for participation in a service board.

### **Resource / Risk / Compliance**

#### **1. Resource implications (including staffing).**

A small amount of resource from academic and professional colleagues would be required to support the formation of a service board. Otherwise there are no additional resource implications beyond those already identified within the remit of the Computer Aided Assessment service.

#### **2. Risk assessment.**

There is a risk of proliferation in what is already a diverse and rich portfolio which is inefficient and unsustainable. Each new piece of software introduced has a resourcing requirement, potentially introduces new administrative

complexity and has ongoing licensing costs, particularly where site-wide licenses are required.

**3. Equality and Diversity.**

A diverse portfolio of feedback and assessment tools provides institutional flexibility to meet equality and diversity requirements.

**4. Freedom of information**

The paper is **open**.

**Key words**

**Originator of the paper**

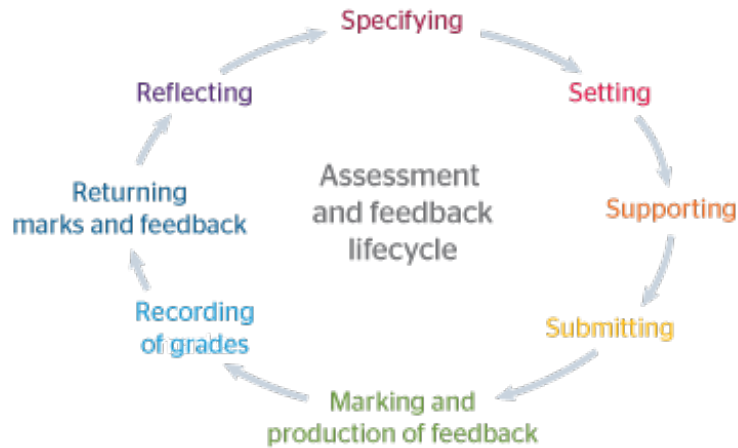
*Anne-Marie Scott, Head of Digital Learning Applications & Media  
Jo Spiller, Head of Educational Design & Engagement  
Learning, Teaching and Web Services  
Information Services Group*

*September 2017*





The portfolio of tools reflects the breadth of academic disciplines in which we teach and supports the full range of activities within the assessment and feedback lifecycle.



**Preparing for assessment – Specifying/Setting/Support**

Formative/Assessment Literacy Activity	Supporting Service
Peer Instruction and problem-solving	Top Hat for in-class voting
Low stakes (formative) quizzes	QMP, VLE Quiz tools
Student developed rubric writing	Learn, PeerMark
Academic integrity checking	TurnItIn
Peer/Self-Assessment	WebPA, PeerMark

**Supporting assessment delivery – Submitting / Marking / Feedback / Reflecting**

Assessment Type	Supporting Service
High Stakes Exams (auto-marked)	QuestionMark Perception (QMP)
Written Assignment - Short text	QMP, VLE
Written Assignment - Essay	Currently not supported *
Portfolio	PebblePad

\* Exam4 was piloted for 4 years but due to limited uptake across the institution this service was retired in 2016.

**Supporting online marking and feedback**

Online Marking and Feedback	Supporting Service
Marking Rubrics, quick comments, audio feedback	TurnItIn Grademark
Peer marking and Peer Feedback	TurnItIn, PeerMark, WebPA
Supports closing the 'feedback loop' and reflection, dialogic feedback, disaggregates feedback from marks	PebblePad ATLAS
Feedback Only	Supporting Service
Multimodal Feedback (Audio and Video)	Media Hopper

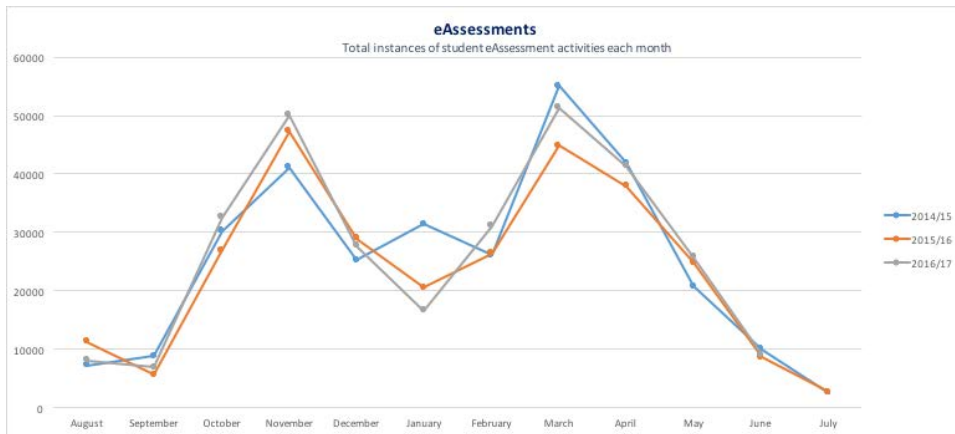
LTC: 15.11.2017  
H/02/25/02

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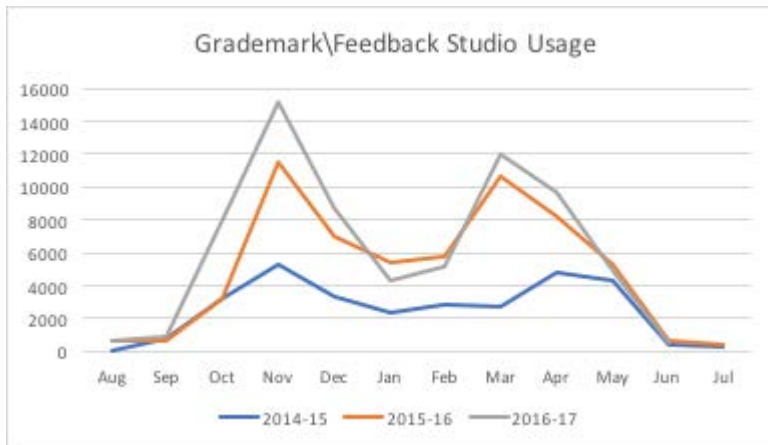
Group discussion and reflection	Blackboard Collaborate
---------------------------------	------------------------

### Service Usage

Online assessment and feedback is integral to learning and teaching across the institution and service usage reflects this. Each year over 300,000 individual student assessment activities are supported by the service. Activities are spread across the year with spikes around the end of Semester periods, driven by summative assessment activities.



Over the last 2 years the Computer Aided Assessment service has supported increases in the use of online marking and return of electronic feedback to students, driven particularly by a major initiative in CAHSS. Feedback from students has been largely positive, though there have been challenges around how well tools within the service support School workflows and the extent to which colleagues find marking online comfortable.



### Sector Perspective and Challenges

Our tools are benchmarked and consistent with those at other Universities though we have a more extensive portfolio than many other institutions. In part this reflects the diversity of subjects that we teach across and in part this reflects our policy landscape. The following high level summary from the 2016 UCISA Technology Enhanced Learning Survey gives some of this flavour (<https://www.ucisa.ac.uk/tel>).

Type of Tool	Number of Universities
--------------	------------------------

E-submission tools (assignment)	98/105
Text matching tools (e.g. SafeAssign, Turnitin, Urkund)	94/105
Formative e-assessment tool (e.g. quizzes)	91/105
Summative e-assessment tools (e.g. quizzes)	85/105
Personal response systems (including handsets or web-based apps)	71/105
WebPA (peer assessment)	4/20

A 2014-2016 JISC project evaluating Electronic Management of Assessment in the sector concluded that there are significant issues with technology and business processes. In large institutions many local interpretations of policy lead to many different ways of doing things. At Edinburgh this means that we have a diverse portfolio that is not well optimised for a few key processes. This was reflected in the Service Excellence project in one of the Student Administration outline business cases. Many of the main suppliers in this space are also not well focussed on the particular needs of the UK Education sector as compared to North America.

"Currently, interoperability between systems remains a key problem area. In practice the emphasis is still on creating a set of interfaces to move data around between systems on a point-to-point basis. This is complex to achieve and brings with it a maintenance overhead as whenever a particular system is changed, a series of interfaces must be rewritten to update the links to all of the other systems."  
(Electronic management of assessment (EMA) in higher education: processes and systems, JISC, 2016 <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/guides/electronic-management-of-assessment-processes-and-systems/systems>)

### Developing the Service for the Future

LTC are invited to consider the establishment of a Computer Aided Assessment service board. A service board could have representation from Colleges, EUSA, Student Systems, LTW and IAD. Such a board could convene around 3 times a year to consider requests for pilots, review business cases for new tools, and review reports on the extent to which the service is meeting business needs. Recommendations from a service board would directly inform processes such as the University planning round to ensure that ISG funding is in line with strategic learning and teaching needs.

Information Services Group aims to strike an appropriate balance between supporting innovation in digital education and ensuring that core needs are met in a reliable and efficient manner with a consistently good student experience. Activities such as course design or strategic reviews of assessment practices in a School may

identify specific administrative requirements or pedagogical approaches that are not met by centrally supported feedback and assessment tools. Where resources are available, a case can be made to ISG to run a small pilot project to evaluate a new tool.

In 2016/17 activity in this area has included:

- Implementation of Speedwell online exam system in UG Veterinary Medicine (CMVM funded)
- Procurement of online exam system for UG Medicine (CMVM funded)
- Integration of STACK / CodeRunner assessment tool in Maths with Learn VLE (ISG and CSE joint funded)
- Pilot of ExamOnline essay based exams in Biological Sciences (ISG funded)

Cases can also be made to pilot the use of existing services in new contexts.

Previous activity in this area has included:

- Use of Pebblepad to support online assessment and feedback in undergraduate Medicine.
- Use of TurnItIn and Grademark to support online assessment and feedback in a range of contexts in CAHSS.
- Use of Peermark tools to support peer assessment within the Edinburgh Award.

All pilot projects are supported by project managers, and require clear outcomes and success criteria to be defined up front. ISG carries out a significant number of projects in any year and pilot projects should be planned as far as possible in advance so that resources can be allocated and timescales agreed. Ideally projects would be identified in the previous year planning activity; however in any case a minimum of 3 months' notice will be required, particularly where additional resources might need to be recruited.

It is also important to strike an appropriate balance between innovation and proliferation. As the centrally supported portfolio is comprehensive and there are already challenges in meeting the diversity of business processes within the institution, ISG will use the following criteria to assess any requests:

- How has the need been identified? For example has the need been identified as the output of a course design activity or an external review?
- Is there substantial functional overlap (>80%) with existing ISG tools? Typically unless we are considering a case for wholesale replacement of an existing tool, pilots would be directed to evaluate the existing tool for this new need, rather than add another to the portfolio.
- What funding is required, and what sources and resources are available within ISG and the relevant School / College?
- Can success criteria be clearly defined?

Where a pilot project has a successful outcome and there is a good case for including a new tool in the Computer Aided Assessment service, sufficient funding to

cover licensing, training and ongoing resource costs will need to be secured via a fully costed 5-year business case. Such a business case would typically be one of the outputs of a pilot project and ISG will work with relevant Schools to develop this. Activities to secure resources thereafter might include repurposing existing resources by replacing an existing tool; repurposing cost savings from other internal efficiencies; or bidding for additional recurrent income through the University planning round based on the business case.

### Currently Planned Activities

In 2017/18

- In response to increasing interest across Schools in running eExams, we plan to review of eExams software to determine if Questionmark Perception remains best-fit for the majority of needs. This may result in a re-procurement in 2018/19.
- In advance of our existing TurnItIn contract ending in July 2018 we will review originality scoring / online marking tools. We will need to run a competitive procurement in 2017/18 before the end of our current contract. We can use a new Scottish sector procurement framework to reduce the complexity here however.
- Input from the service team into new projects such as 'VLE Minimum Standards'.

In 2018/19

- Potential re-procurement of eExams software, based on outcomes of review.
- We will develop a business case bid for funds to develop a large multifunctional space in which eExams could be held for large class sizes. Lack of a suitable space has been identified as one of the key barriers to take up of eExams.

### Service Governance

At present ISG advertises the portfolio of services available through the ISG website (<http://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/learning-technology>). Project activities in this area are reported to KSC, ITC and other committees for awareness and committee feedback via update papers outlining planned work in LTW.

The University of Edinburgh

Senate Learning and Teaching Committee

15 November 2017

## **Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Plan**

### **Executive Summary**

In Semester Two, 2016-17, the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) approved the University's new Learning and Teaching Strategy. The paper contains an implementation plan for the Strategy, which signals the main strategic priorities for institutional action in 2017-18 and 2018-19. The plan takes account of discussions with the Learning and Teaching Policy Group.

### **How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?**

The Strategy aligns with the strategic objective of Leadership in Learning.

### **Action requested**

The Committee is invited to approve the implementation plan.

### **How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?**

Academic Services will highlight the implementation plan in the Senate Committees' Newsletter. The staff with leadership responsibility for each of the priorities in the Strategy will be responsible for developing implementation and evaluation plans. In Autumn 2018 LTC will evaluate progress in relation to these priorities, and at that point will reflect on whether to add any new priorities or downgrade existing ones.

### **Resource / Risk / Compliance**

#### **1. Resource implications (including staffing)**

The implementation of the Strategy has resource implications. The plan sets out the strategic priorities for action over the next two years, and will therefore guide the University's use of resources. In general, the implementation plan relates to activities already underway. It will be necessary for the staff with leadership responsibility for each of the priorities to determine the resource implications (including those for Schools and Colleges, as well as support services) and ensure they are in place in order to give the activities the appropriate level of priority.

#### **2. Risk assessment**

The implementation plan will assist the University to manage risks associated with learning and teaching (for example, the risk of disappointing levels of student satisfaction), by providing the University with a clear and coherent framework for its learning and teaching activities.

#### **3. Equality and Diversity**

Some elements of the plan have the potential to contribute to advancing equality of opportunity (depending on the policies and practices associated with implementation), for example the work on enhancing the class representation system, and student support. There are no grounds for thinking that the plan would raise any adverse equality implementation (eg leading to discrimination, harassment, victimisation or barriers for people with particular protected characteristics), although the University will however need to be potential equality issues when developing policies and practices to implement the plan.

One strand of the Learning and Teaching Strategy with particular potential to advance equality of opportunity – “Using the curriculum to promote inclusion, equality and diversity” – is not highlighted as a strategic priority in the plan. There is already considerable activity at a local level to address this issue. At its January 2018 meeting, the Committee is scheduled to discuss what kind of institutional action would be appropriate.

EqlAs involve assessing the impact of policies and practices in terms of the University’s requirements under the general equality duty set out in the Equality Act. The implementation is not a policy or practice – it is a high-level document setting out broad aims and objectives for the University (which in many respects articulate aspects of the University’s Strategic Plan). It is therefore not necessary to undertake a formal EqlA for the plan. It will however be important for the University to undertake Equality Impact Assessments when developing specific policies and practices associated with implementing elements of the Strategy.

#### **4. Freedom of information**

Open

#### **Key words**

Learning, teaching, strategy

#### **Originator of the paper**

Tom Ward, Director of Academic Services  
7 November 2017



## **University of Edinburgh Learning and Teaching Strategy**

### **Draft Implementation plan**

#### **Overview**

In Semester Two, 2016-17, the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) approved the University's new Learning and Teaching Strategy.

The Strategy sets out the University's aims and objectives for Learning and Teaching. It is not possible to make progress on all of these at the same pace, particularly given the other change programmes that Schools, Colleges and support groups are engaging with, including the Service Excellence Programme. In this context, the purpose of the plan is to signal the main strategic priorities for institutional action in 2017-18 and 2018-19.

While the University may undertake some other change activities to support other aspects of the Strategy, along with a range of 'housekeeping' and 'business as usual' activities, and some specific actions to address recommendations from the Enhancement-led Institutional Review, these will not be given such high priority in terms of allocation of resources and expectation of engagement by Schools / Colleges. Schools and Colleges are of course free to supplement these institutional strategic priorities with actions in relation to other aspects of the Strategy where this assists them with their local priorities.

The plan focusses on key issues highlighted by the National Student Survey and other sources of evidence of student experience and outcomes, and recognises that effective implementation of the Strategy requires active partnership with students, combined with a strong focus on staff well-being.

In Autumn 2018 LTC will evaluate progress in relation to these priorities, and at that point will reflect on whether to add any new priorities or downgrade existing ones. To assist it with this, LTC will ask the leaders for each of these priorities to identify how they will evaluate progress.

***The Committee is invited to approve the following plan.***

#### **Priorities for implementation in 2017-18 to 2018-19**

##### ***Working in partnership with students***

- Working with the Students' Association to enhance the class representative system;
- Embedding mid-course feedback for all UG students;
- Implementing the 'Inspiring Students' student communications plan - including working with Schools to establish effective ways of demonstrating that they are listening to and acting on student feedback;
- Working with the Students' Association to promote and implement the Student Partnership Agreement.

***Nurturing a learning community that supports students***

- Reviewing and clarifying the academic and pastoral support available to students (including that provided by Personal Tutors and Student Support Teams), communicate this more effectively to students and encourage them to engage with it;
- Implementing Student Mental Health Strategy, and review of support for disabled students;
- Support for students on joint degree programmes (to be led by the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences);
- Developing high quality learning and teaching spaces for taught and research students;
- Piloting new approaches to providing additional support to those Schools whose NSS scores are weak.

***Recruiting and nurturing excellent teaching staff***

- Strengthening communications with staff regarding learning and teaching;
- Promoting staff engagement with formally accredited CPD, and developing an embedded culture of professional development around teaching;
- Consolidating the recent work to recognise student education as a key element in academic staff recruitment, promotion, annual review, and work allocation modelling;
- Building communities of practice, encouraging innovation, and diffusing good ideas regarding learning and teaching – new Teaching Conference, new University networks for student support teams and for staff interested in student engagement, strengthening Director of Teaching network and other existing staff networks;
- Continuing to implement the new Policy on the recruitment, support and development of tutors and demonstrators.

***Developing our curriculum***

- Enhancing the development of employability skills through the curriculum;
- Creative use of digital technologies – further roll-out of lecture recording, developing a vision for Digital Education (the ‘Future Teacher’ programme), Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) consolidation;
- Developing the University’s approach to research-led learning and teaching, including experiential learning in the community;
- Continuing to support staff to enhance assessment and feedback, including encouraging Schools to undertake Leading Enhancement in Assessment and Feedback (LEAF) audits, and considering the importance of curriculum design in facilitating quality assessment and feedback models.

The University of Edinburgh  
Learning and Teaching Committee

15 November 2017

**Senate Committee Planning**

**Executive Summary**

The paper invites the Committee to input into the planning round.

**How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?**

Aligns with the University's strategic objective of Leadership in Learning.

**Action requested**

The Committee is invited to identify:

- Any changes that it has initiated or plans to initiate which would require support groups, Colleges or Schools to allocate significant additional resources;
- Changes in the external environment (eg regulatory changes) which would result in significant additional work for the University; and
- Major institutional projects that the Committee would like to make a case for, which would require significant support from support services which could not be accommodated within existing resources.

**How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?**

Section 2 explains the arrangements.

**Resource / Risk / Compliance**

**1. Resource implications (including staffing)**

Yes. The paper will assist the University to use its resources strategically. If the Senate Committees identify any major developments with implications for the University Secretary's Group (USG), or other support groups, the Senior Vice-Principal will invite the relevant support group to consider including a bid for this in their planning round submissions.

**2. Risk assessment**

No. Since the paper aims to generate ideas rather than to recommend a specific course of action, it is not necessary to undertake a risk analysis.

**3. Equality and Diversity**

No. Since the paper aims to generate ideas rather than to recommend a specific course of action, it is not necessary to undertake an equality and diversity assessment.

**4. Freedom of information**

For inclusion in open business

Tom Ward, Director of Academic Services, 20 October 2017

## **Senate Committee Planning**

### **1 Introduction**

The Senate Committees' input into the planning round has three stages:

- At their meetings in September 2017 the Senate Committees had an initial discussion regarding student experience, learning and teaching issues that Schools / Colleges / support groups should take account of in the planning round. This informed the Senior Vice-Principal's input into Governance and Strategic Planning's initial guidance to Schools / Colleges / support groups regarding priorities for the planning round. In practice, the Committees made more suggestions than was possible to include in the planning guidance – and the Senior Vice-Principal prioritised those that were more strategic and had more significant resources implications. See attached Annex.
- For this meeting - the Committees are invited to have a fuller discussion of issues that should be taken account of in the planning round.
- In Semester Two, the Committees will undertake a broader discussion of their priorities for the coming session – and will submit their plans to the 30 May 2018 Senate meeting for approval.

### **2 For discussion**

The Committee is invited to identify:

- Any changes that it has initiated or plans to initiate which would require support groups, Colleges or Schools to allocate significant additional resources;
- Changes in the external environment (eg regulatory changes) which would result in significant additional work for the University; and
- Major institutional projects that the Committee would like to make a case for, which would require significant support from support services which could not be accommodated within existing resources.

In addition, the Committee is invited to identify any additional strategic priorities for student experience, learning and teaching with significant resource implications that Schools / Colleges and support groups should take account of in their plans, other than those already discussed at the Committee's meeting in September and considered for inclusion in the initial guidance (see Annex).

**Annex: Senior Vice-Principal's initial thematic input into 2017-18 planning round guidance**

- Enhancing the sense of shared community linking academic staff and students, and developing more effective ways of listening and responding to students' views;
- Enhancing the academic and pastoral support we give to students;
- Developing new and innovative approaches to online learning that can provide an excellent student experience to large numbers of students;
- Enhancing the development of employability skills through the curriculum;
- Developing high quality learning and teaching spaces for taught and research students.

The University of Edinburgh

Learning and Teaching Committee

15 November 2017

**National Student Survey (NSS) 2018:**

**Additional Questions**

**Executive Summary**

This paper presents the additional questions for NSS 2018. These questions will be specifically asked of students at the University of Edinburgh, will appear after the core questions and are optional.

**How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?**

Strategic Objective - Leadership in Learning

**Action requested**

For approval.

**How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?**

Not applicable.

**Resource / Risk / Compliance**

**1. Resource implications (including staffing)**

Not applicable.

**2. Risk assessment**

Not included.

**3. Equality and Diversity**

Not included.

**4. Freedom of information**

Open.

**Originator of the paper**

*Sarah-Jane Brown, Student Surveys Operations Lead*

**The following additional banks of questions will be asked of University of Edinburgh students:**

**B1. Personal Development (new for 2018)**

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

**B2. Students' Union (Association or Guild) (same as 2017)**

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

**B12. Learning Community (new for 2018)**

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

**B15. Employability and skills (new for 2018)**

1. My Higher Education experience has helped me plan for my future career.
2. My institution offered activities and resources designed to prepare me for the next step in my career.
3. The skills I have developed during my time in Higher Education will be useful for my future career.

**The following institutional question will be asked of University of Edinburgh students:**

I am satisfied with the support provided by my Personal Tutor (same as 2017).



The University of Edinburgh

Senate Learning and Teaching Committee

15 November 2017

**Report of Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) Recommendation Panel: Proposals to Introduce New Categories of Achievement and to Expand Existing Category of Achievement 10**

**Executive Summary**

This paper consists of:

- two proposals to introduce new HEAR categories of wider achievement: 'International Student Centre Committee Member' and 'Edinburgh Nightline Committee Member'.
- a proposal to expand existing category of wider achievement 10, 'Student membership of University Internal Review Team (TPR and PPR)'
- recommendations of LTC's HEAR Recommendation Panel concerning these proposals.

**How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?**

Providing the highest-quality research-led teaching and learning; enabling our graduates to be exceptional individuals equipped to address global challenges; leadership in learning.

**Action requested**

LTC is invited to approve the Recommendation Panel's recommendations concerning the proposals.

**How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?**

If the proposed categories are approved, they will be publicised via the University's HEAR website: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/student-administration/order-documents/hear>

**Resource / Risk / Compliance**

- 1. Resource implications (including staffing)**  
Student Systems' staff time to make required systems changes.
- 2. Risk assessment**  
The paper does not include a risk assessment.
- 3. Equality and Diversity**  
No implications.
- 4. Freedom of information**  
The paper is **open**.

**Originator of the paper**

Philippa Ward, Academic Services, 31 October 2017

**Report of Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) Recommendation Panel: Proposals to Introduce New Categories of Achievement and to Expand Existing Category of Achievement 10**

1. Proposals for New Categories of Achievement

LTC's HEAR Recommendation Panel considered two proposals to introduce new HEAR categories of wider achievement:

- International Student Centre Committee Member
- Edinburgh Nightline Committee Member

The proposal forms are attached.

**LTC is asked to consider and approve the Panel's recommendation that the new categories be accepted and added to the HEAR.**

2. Proposal to Expand Existing Category of Achievement 10

Category of wider achievement 10 is 'Student Membership of University Internal Review Team (TPR and PPR)'. It has been proposed that this category be expanded to also include membership of University Thematic Review teams. (Thematic Review was only introduced recently, and did not therefore exist when the original category of wider achievement was defined.)

**LTC is asked to consider and approve the Panel's recommendation that existing category of achievement 10 be expanded to give a revised category title of 'Student Membership of University Internal Review Team (TPR, PPR and Thematic Review)'.**

Philippa Ward  
Academic Services  
31 October 2017



# HEAR: Proposal for Adding Categories of Achievement to Section 6 / Amending Existing Categories

Section 6.1 of the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) covers achievements by students not directly related to the calculation of their degree result. These achievements must be verified by the University of Edinburgh.

This form should be completed if you wish to propose an additional category of achievement for Section 6 (or amend an existing category). The proposal will be considered by Senate Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC), which will ensure that the category is:

- equitable;
- available to a broad range of students;
- scaleable;
- and results in robust and validated data.

Categories that have already been approved for inclusion in HEAR section 6 by LTC are:

1. Academic prizes and awards
2. The Edinburgh Award
3. Student Representative
4. Peer Support – PALS Student Leader and Peer Support Leader
5. EUSA Activities Position
6. EUSA Elected Office Bearer
7. EUSU Representative or Office Bearer
8. EUSU Sports Clubs – Official Positions
9. Edinburgh Students' Charities Appeal Executive Committee Member
10. Student membership of internal University review teams (TPR, PPR)
11. Sports prizes awarded by EUSU

Further information on the University of Edinburgh's approach to the HEAR is available here:

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-administration/other-info/hear>



# HEAR: Proposal for Adding Categories of Achievement to Section 6 / Amending Existing Categories

## 1. What is the proposed category of achievement?\*

Edinburgh Nightline Committee Member

## 2. Please give a brief description of the category of achievement\*

Nightline is an entirely student-run support and information service, operating a phone line and instant messaging service every night of term from 8pm to 8am. Nightline volunteers are selected based on a multi-step recruitment process, beginning with a written application, continuing with interviews, and concluding in an intensive training weekend. From within this volunteer base, there are currently 15 committee members occupying 11 committee positions (4 of the 11 positions are shared between two volunteers). These committee members are elected every year at the AGM in March and are each responsible for a distinct and important part of the organisation's functions. Some also coordinate teams of volunteers to help them carry out certain events or responsibilities that form part of their role. Non-public face volunteers also simultaneously complete regular volunteering shifts for Nightline

## 3. Which students are eligible for this achievement?\*

(For example, is it open to all undergraduate and taught postgraduate students, or restricted to a specific group?)

Any student can apply to be a volunteer with Nightline. From within our volunteer group, anyone can run for any committee position with the exception of training coordinator and coordinator. The training coordinators must have reached a certain level within our peer training weekend program and the coordinators must have been Nightline volunteers for at least a year. This is only to ensure that the committee member chosen is knowledgeable enough about the position's responsibilities to succeed.



# HEAR: Proposal for Adding Categories of Achievement to Section 6 / Amending Existing Categories

## 4. What does the student need to do to gain this achievement?\*

(For example, if the achievement involves representation, is there a minimum number of meetings that must be attended or hours completed?)

Committee members must attend weekly organisation-wide (non-committee) meetings as well as bi-weekly committee meetings. Attendance is taken at the committee meetings. Dependent on the role, committee members are expected to spend an average of 5-10 hours per week on their responsibilities, sometimes more depending on scheduling of events. They must be elected to the position based on their fellow volunteers' votes at AGM. Some committee members are also responsible for running a 'team' and holding regular team meetings.

## 5. Verification\*

(Please describe **in detail** how the achievement will be verified.)

Committee meetings happen on an informal basis bi-weekly and on a formal basis approximately 3-4 times per semester. Attendance is taken at each of these meetings and committee members are not expected to miss any unless the coordinators have been notified of their absence prior to the meeting itself. Committee members will not receive HEAR recognition should they miss 3 or more of the formal meetings throughout the year. Minutes are taken at these meetings and all other weekly organisation-wide meetings. Additionally, recorded goal-setting is undertaken by all committee members during the first committee meeting of the year.

An Annual Report is submitted yearly in April/May to a Students' Association staff member and Advice Place contact (currently Sarah Purves and Charlotte McDonald). Each committee member is responsible for writing up their achievements from the year for this report, so the report itself could be used to verify overall achievements from throughout the year.

For more specific documentation of each committee member's responsibilities, a handover pack is created by the current committee member in each position to guide the next elected committee member for the position in their primary responsibilities in the role. These handover packs could be made available as further verification.

(Information provided by Students' Association: the Students' Association has a service level agreement with Nightline. Nightline reports to the Students' Association annually. They inform the Advice Place of their volunteers' names, but Nightline internally verifies their volunteer hours and activities at this time due to the special arrangements they have on account of not being a Students' Association Society.)



# HEAR: Proposal for Adding Categories of Achievement to Section 6 / Amending Existing Categories

## 6. When will the verification be complete each academic year?\*

End of March.



# HEAR: Proposal for Adding Categories of Achievement to Section 6 / Amending Existing Categories

## 7. Is there any other information you wish to supply in support of adding this achievement to Section 6 of the HEAR?

Nightline helps students at their most vulnerable and desperate times, last year taking over 1500 calls. The committee members are integral to the running of every aspect of the organisation; to put it simply without them there would be no Nightline. Through their various roles they gain skills in organisation, time management, teamwork, event planning, budgeting, leadership, and many more areas. Ultimately, becoming a committee member with Nightline is an invaluable opportunity that has the ability to transform a student's university experience. Their contributions to this organisation are never recognised externally due to anonymity and confidentiality principles, so we hope that this small recognition gives them the credit they deserve.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

### 8. Name of proposer\*

Josephine Steeghs

### 9. Email address of proposer\*

nightline@ed.ac.uk

### 10. Proposing School / Department\*

Edinburgh Nightline

### 11. Date\*

16/03/2017



THE UNIVERSITY  
of EDINBURGH

# HEAR: Proposal for Adding Categories of Achievement to Section 6 / Amending Existing Categories

Please return this form to the Secretary to Senate Learning and Teaching Committee  
[philippa.ward@ed.ac.uk](mailto:philippa.ward@ed.ac.uk) (telephone 0131 651 6083)

Once received, the form will be passed to Student Systems who will ensure that the proposing School or Department holds appropriate, robust data in a suitable format for uploading to the Student Record. Further information on the way in which data should be supplied for upload is available here:

[http://www.studentsystems.ed.ac.uk/staff/Data\\_Uploads/HEAR\\_data.htm](http://www.studentsystems.ed.ac.uk/staff/Data_Uploads/HEAR_data.htm)

Following vetting by Student Systems, the form will be passed to a Learning and Teaching Recommendation Panel for initial consideration and subsequently to Learning and Teaching Committee for final approval.

*The Learning and Teaching Committee Recommendation Panel meets annually in late October / early November each year, and proposals are signed off by Learning and Teaching Committee at its November meeting. (This schedule allows Student Systems sufficient time to make required Systems changes and to ensure that any changed categories can be included in the HEARs of students graduating the following summer.)*

**ALL PROPOSAL FORMS SHOULD THEREFORE BE SUBMITTED TO THE SECRETARY TO LEARNING AND TEACHING COMMITTEE BY 15 OCTOBER EACH YEAR.**

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For Student Systems use only:

I confirm that the data that will be provided for this category of achievement is relevant, robust and available in a suitable format for upload to the Student Record.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Role: \_\_\_\_\_





# HEAR: Proposal for Adding Categories of Achievement to Section 6 / Amending Existing Categories

Section 6.1 of the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) covers achievements by students not directly related to the calculation of their degree result. These achievements must be verified by the University of Edinburgh.

This form should be completed if you wish to propose an additional category of achievement for Section 6 (or amend an existing category). The proposal will be considered by Senate Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC), which will ensure that the category is:

- equitable;
- available to a broad range of students;
- scalable;
- and results in robust and validated data.

Categories that have already been approved for inclusion in HEAR section 6 by LTC are:

1. Academic prizes and awards
2. The Edinburgh Award
3. Student Representative
4. Peer Support – PALS Student Leader and Peer Support Leader
5. EUSA Activities Position
6. EUSA Elected Office Bearer
7. EUSU Representative or Office Bearer
8. EUSU Sports Clubs – Official Positions
9. Edinburgh Students' Charities Appeal Executive Committee Member
10. Student membership of internal University review teams (TPR, PPR)
11. Sports prizes awarded by EUSU

Further information on the University of Edinburgh's approach to the HEAR is available here:

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-administration/other-info/hear>



# HEAR: Proposal for Adding Categories of Achievement to Section 6 / Amending Existing Categories

## 1. What is the proposed category of achievement?

International Student Centre Committee Member

## 2. Please give a brief description of the category of achievement\*

This category of achievement would be open to voluntary student advisory services who come into an elected position of the International Student Centre (ISC). ISC committee members are a student elected committee which provide peer support open to any students seeking it, specifically international students. The committee runs daily lounge hours, weekly and monthly cultural and integration events, in addition to weekly trips around the UK. Executive members of the committee also reach out to other student societies and services, including Edinburgh University Student's Association and Edinburgh Global, to coordinate events and provide welcome talks and a variety of other tasks and collaborations, as the centre provides key services to international students. The specific positions are as follows:

President of Internal Affairs

President of External Affairs

Vice-President

Secretary

Treasurer

Trips Coordinator

Social Coordinator

Events Coordinator

Lounge Coordinator

## 3. Which students are eligible for this achievement?\*

(For example, is it open to all undergraduate and taught postgraduate students, or restricted to a specific group?)



# HEAR: Proposal for Adding Categories of Achievement to Section 6 / Amending Existing Categories

The category would be open to all students, both undergraduate and postgraduate, who are in an elected position through which they provide service to assist other international students in support services throughout the academic year on the committee of the ISC.

#### 4. What does the student need to do to gain this achievement?\*

(For example, if the achievement involves representation, is there a minimum number of meetings that must be attended or hours completed?)

The student will be an elected voluntary committee member of the International Student Centre. The role of the committee member should be similar to society office bearers, with a commitment to weekly committee meetings and weekly tasks and commitments throughout the academic year. Elected at an AGM in March open to all students, the ISC is headed by Co-presidents (internal and external), Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, as well as a Trips Coordinator and Lounge/Social/Events Coordinators. The roles are diverse but occur on a near daily basis throughout the semester. Administrative roles are in continual contact with university employees at the Student's Association and Edinburgh Global, as well as other relevant members of staff, such as the English Learning Students coordinator. Coordinators are undertaking daily tasks such as running a lounge and a volunteer rota, as well as weekly and monthly events and weekly trips outside of Edinburgh. This role requires 10-20+hours per week commitment, as well as the requirement to attend weekly 1-2 hour meetings in preparation for the upcoming week. The scope of events range from tours around Edinburgh in Welcome Week to ticket sales, weekly pub nights and coffee evenings and board game nights open to any students. We reach an audience of 11,000 during any given week on social media and our newsletter has 600+ recipients and growing. To fulfil the role of committee member, the student must participate from preparation in the Summer months through until the end of the academic year.

#### 5. Verification\*

(Please describe **in detail** how the achievement will be verified.)



# HEAR: Proposal for Adding Categories of Achievement to Section 6 / Amending Existing Categories

Edinburgh Global oversees the International Student Centre Committee. The office is in contact with the committee throughout the academic year and the Summer leading up, and they can verify along with senior members of the committee if each student has done their respective job to the best of their ability. As it is a branch of Edinburgh Global, the committee work alongside the Student's Association and the International Engagement Coordinator, who can also verify the achievement fulfilment.

## **6. When will the verification be complete each academic year?\***

At the end of the academic year, in March, when a new committee is elected at the Annual General Meeting and the events and commitments of the second semester come to a close.

## **7. Is there any other information you wish to supply in support of adding this achievement to Section 6 of the HEAR?**

The committee of the International Student Centre aims to function as a bridge between the greater University scheme and the entire student experience for students coming from diverse backgrounds. Office bearers are tasked with an immeasurable amount of variety in their jobs but mainly seek to provide organic, student-to-student support and facilitation for students who may not be familiar with British universities or the city of Edinburgh itself. Our outreach is both online through our website and Facebook page (which has reached around 26,000 people since Welcome Week) and in person. The Centre has been running since the 1980s.

The International Student Barometer consistently ranks the International Student Centre with 91% student satisfaction, ranking 7<sup>th</sup> out of 27 student support services. We believe this is due to the fact that our committee is comprised of fellow students who can relate to the experiences of other international students.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

### **8. Name of proposer\***

Rebecca Spross



# HEAR: Proposal for Adding Categories of Achievement to Section 6 / Amending Existing Categories

**9. Email address of proposer\***

[iscedi@googlemail.com](mailto:iscedi@googlemail.com) or

[s1454870@ed.ac.uk](mailto:s1454870@ed.ac.uk)

**10. Proposing School / Department\***

*Edinburgh Global*

**11. Date\***

27 September 2017

Please return this form to the Secretary to Senate Learning and Teaching Committee  
[philippa.ward@ed.ac.uk](mailto:philippa.ward@ed.ac.uk) (telephone 0131 651 6083)

Once received, the form will be passed to Student Systems who will ensure that the proposing School or Department holds appropriate, robust data in a suitable format for uploading to the Student Record. Further information on the way in which data should be supplied for upload is available here:

[http://www.studentsystems.ed.ac.uk/staff/Data\\_Uploads/HEAR\\_data.htm](http://www.studentsystems.ed.ac.uk/staff/Data_Uploads/HEAR_data.htm)

Following vetting by Student Systems, the form will be passed to a Learning and Teaching Recommendation Panel for initial consideration and subsequently to Learning and Teaching Committee for final approval.

***The Learning and Teaching Committee Recommendation Panel meets annually in late October / early November each year, and proposals are signed off by Learning and Teaching Committee at its November meeting. (This schedule allows Student Systems***



# HEAR: Proposal for Adding Categories of Achievement to Section 6 / Amending Existing Categories

*sufficient time to make required Systems changes and to ensure that any changed categories can be included in the HEARs of students graduating the following summer.)*

**ALL PROPOSAL FORMS SHOULD THEREFORE BE SUBMITTED TO THE SECRETARY TO LEARNING AND TEACHING COMMITTEE BY 15 OCTOBER EACH YEAR.**

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For Student Systems use only:

I confirm that the data that will be provided for this category of achievement is relevant, robust and available in a suitable format for upload to the Student Record.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Role: \_\_\_\_\_

The University of Edinburgh  
Senate Learning and Teaching Committee  
15 November 2017

## **Leading Enhancement in Assessment and Feedback Update**

### **Executive Summary**

This paper provides the Committee with an update on the Leading Enhancement in Assessment and Feedback (LEAF) project.

### **How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?**

The paper aligns with the University's Strategic Theme of 'Outstanding Student Experience'.

### **Action requested**

The paper is presented to members for information.

### **How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?**

Reports are shared with College Deans of Learning and Teaching and themes are discussed at the Assessment and Feedback Enhancement Group and shared through the Directors of Teaching Network. Information from LEAF will also inform reports from the Assistant Principal to the Learning and Teaching Policy Group and Learning and Teaching Committee.

### **Resource / Risk / Compliance**

#### **1. Resource implications (including staffing)**

The paper does not have resource implications.

#### **2. Risk assessment**

The paper does not require a risk assessment.

#### **3. Equality and Diversity**

Not required.

#### **4. Freedom of information**

The paper is **open**.

### **Key words**

Assessment, feedback, LEAF

### **Originator of the paper**

Dr Neil Lent

**LEAF Information for LTC 18/10/17**

The Leading Enhancement in Assessment and Feedback (LEAF) project enables programme teams to capture the typical experience of feedback and assessment on their programme using TESTA (Transforming the Experience of Students through Assessment) methodology [<http://www.testa.ac.uk/index.php>]. TESTA is a reflective process, providing an **overview of assessment and feedback on a programme**, and **facilitating reflection** and discussion, whilst also identifying good practice. From its introduction in 2013/14, TESTA audits have now been carried out in 31 programmes in 14 schools across all three colleges. During this time the TESTA audit methodology has been continually enhanced and has been successfully used on a taught postgraduate programme (not something it was originally designed for). In 2017-18 four of these programmes are piloting the new 'LEAF-light' process where the programmes themselves carry out most of the audit work with IAD supporting the focus group and elements where input external to the school is desirable.

As reported last year, LEAF can be very useful if timed as part of curriculum review discussions or other reviews, notably Teaching Programme Reviews (TPR). The additional granularity and data adds to the evidence base which can subsequently be a powerful lever for change. The four 'LEAF-light' programmes are taking this approach.

**Themes**

The main highlights identified from the 2016-17 LEAF programmes are consistent with those that were identified last year. This adds weight to previous LEAF findings. While recognising that each participating programme faces its own challenges, there continue to be common themes emerging. This supports the assertion from last year that there is no reason to assume that these features are unique to LEAF participant programmes. The themes identified so far are:

- Over-assessment and deadline log-jams. Deadline collisions seem common across a number of programmes. These seem to be causes of stress to a number of students and may also contribute to feedback arriving too late to be used in some cases. 2016-17 data may suggest the need to strike a balance between over assessment and assessment patterns that encourage regular student engagement. There seemed to be disparity in required workload and credit available for some students undertaking particular assessment tasks in 2016-17.
- Consistency in assessment and teaching. Students all seem to be receiving some excellent teaching but, not always. There is a sense of 'assessment injustice' in some programmes: either inconsistency between markers or perceived inconsistency between students' understanding of learning goals and the way they are assessed. In 2016-17 this theme continued with some evidence that suggested a lack of confidence in moderation and second marking.
- Agency / assessment literacy. There is a sense that sometimes students are not actually sure what is expected of them or that their expectations and those of their markers are different. Again the issues of clarity of expectations emerged in 2016-17. There is evidence from one school that assignment briefs that are perceived as vague by students led to overworking by students
- Aligned authentic assessment. Although there are examples of innovative assessments, it would seem that exams often predominate, together with other 'traditional' assessment methods (e.g. essays, lab reports). This predominance often results in relatively few formative feedback opportunities.



- A sense of place and belonging. Students largely seem to value a personalised experience where they feel that they are respected / valued by academic staff and have a sense of their own place within a programme or discipline. Key to this is the opportunity for staff contact and dialogue. This continued in 2016-17 and on some programmes there was evidence of practice from some (a minority) of staff that left students feeling undervalued. This might be related to consistency of (positive) experience. Where programme / school culture seems to be inclusive and helpful to students in developing their academic agency this seems to be valued by students.

There are implications from these themes in relation to the timing and type of assessments carried out across whole programmes. There may also be a case for developing shared assessment literacy across programme teaching teams to help facilitate consistent assessment practice and also to help students develop their own assessment literacy. The development of aligned, authentic assessment is likely to be helped through specific course and programme design support [<https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/learning-teaching/staff/course-programme-design>]. The theme relating to sense of place / belonging is supported by the detailed qualitative analysis of 2016 NSS free text comments undertaken by Kirsty Hughes, Jill MacKay and Hazel Marzetti in 2017. The themes also support the case for continuing to work on induction and transition and also using the design support mentioned above to develop more dialogic learning, teaching and assessment activities.

**Dr Neil Lent, Nichola Kett, Professor Susan Rhind  
November 2017**

The University of Edinburgh

Senatus Curriculum and Student Progression Committee

Meeting Date

**Service Excellence, Student Administration & Support Update**

**Executive Summary**

This paper provides a brief update of the work being undertaken by the Student Administration & Support strand of the Service Excellence Programme, as part of a commitment to ensure that the Senate Committees are appraised of progress across each of these projects.

**How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?**

The Service Excellence Programme has been identified as a strategic priority.

**Action requested**

To note (no requested action at this stage).

**How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?**

Future Service Excellence Programme recommendations will be communicated by the Board through existing committee structures. Future SA&S project proposals will be routed through Researcher Experience Committee, Learning & Teaching Committee, Quality Assurance Committee or Curriculum & Student Progression Committee as necessary.

**Resource / Risk / Compliance**

**1. Resource implications (including staffing)**

N/A at this stage.

**2. Risk assessment**

SA&S aren't identifying risks for consideration at this stage.

**3. Equality and Diversity**

N/A at this stage.

**4. Freedom of information**

Open

**Key words**

Service Excellence Programme / Student Administration & Support

**Originator of the paper**

Neil McGillivray

Student Administration & Support Programme Lead

4<sup>th</sup> November 2017

**NOV 2017: UPDATE ON SERVICE EXCELLENCE (STUDENT ADMINISTRATION & SUPPORT)**

The Student Administration & Support Programme's proposed programme of work (emerging from previous CSA and OBC phases) has been endorsed by the Service Excellence Board and the team are now working on a number of projects.

The Programme's vision encompasses a vision for professional services staff, academic staff, students and the University

- For students – from pre-arrival to graduation: Smooth. Seamless. Easy to navigate. "My way"
- For professional services staff: Fewer, better systems so less manual processing and fewer work arounds. Less duplicated effort. Better data. Clarity over who is responsible for what.
- For academic staff: Better admin support for you / your students. Less admin for you.
- For all staff and students: Clear, easy to understand policies
- For the University: Better Value for Money

The projects that are currently underway are the following:

- Special Circumstances, Extension and Concessions - to create a workflow system, application form, and data repository, as well as defining roles and responsibilities.
- Exam Timetabling - to provide students with personalised timetables of all of their centrally scheduled exams, published via their Office 365 calendars.
- Redesign of Working & Study Away Processes and Systems - a major project that includes the development of an online application form that is integrated into the Student Record. (Placements of all types are also within scope.)
- Student Centred Portal Pilot - to demonstrate the functional and technical requirements in order (ultimately) to deliver a single, personalised, point of access for all the information a student needs during their programme of study with us. Vision and consultation
- Comprehensive Timetabling Analysis - to define what we would need to do in order to deliver a comprehensive and personalised timetable to all students. Vision and student consultation
- Policy and Regulation Review - through a process of analytically reviewing the impact of current policies, to develop a set of principles for the development, implementation and review of policies and regulations, and to review business processes, roles and responsibilities.
- Tier 4 / Student Immigration Service - to reduce any risk associated with the University's Tier 4 Sponsor Licence through the strengthening of best practice in all areas of compliance, supported by a single Student Immigration Service unit.
- Timetabling Service - to develop a consistent cross institution approach to course scheduling and curriculum planning, delivered through reviewed business processes, roles and responsibilities.
- Student Finance - to develop a consistent cross institution approach to all aspects of student funding and finance (UG, PGT and PGR), reviewing business processes, roles and responsibilities, supported by the introduction of a single Student Finance unit.
- SA&S Target Operating Model - in common with other Service Excellence Programmes we will be undertaking some initial analysis and discussion on the current operating model in this area and looking to develop a Target Operating Model that represents a desired future state.

The SA&S Board will next meet on 20<sup>th</sup> November. It is anticipated that this Board will be asked to consider detailed process proposals from the following Project Teams:

- Special Circumstances, Extension and Concessions

- Working & Study Away
- Comprehensive Timetabling Analysis

Projects planned for the future (over the next 2-3 years) include work in the following areas:

- Creating systems, tools and processes to support the PGR lifecycle (including recording Annual Reviews and HEAR data)
- A major project to provide a single, golden-copy, data source for all Programme and course information, to clarify associated business processes for creation and update, and to provide tools by which the golden-copy data is used to publish key Programme and course information.
- Delivery of a transparent online matriculation process that guides a student through the steps they must complete (including a fee payment stage) in order to be fully matriculated.
- Create systems and tools to support the business processes involved in running Exam Boards.
- Redesign, simplify and standardise the processes for internal reporting through the creation of a single data warehouse and creating a user-centred interface to support day-to-day reporting requirements in Colleges and Schools.
- Completion of earlier work to support the Graduation process by introducing e-ticketing for Graduation (and eliminating inefficient manual processing).
- Various other investigations are planned, including into Online Course Selection, Course Assessment and Feedback tools, and the possibility of a digital document management system to support exam processes from setting questions to marking scripts.

Finally, it is likely that the work currently planned will result in further projects related to the new student interface and the ambition to deliver a comprehensive timetable to students.

The SA&S have developed a wiki, intended to provide detail on upcoming workshops and emerging project outputs. This will be maintained throughout the coming months, and into the next phase of the programme as detailed proposals are developed for future projects:

<https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=346121562>

The University of Edinburgh

Senate Learning and Teaching Committee

11 November 2017

**Report from Learning and Teaching Policy Group**

**Executive Summary**

In November 2015, the Senate Committee Convenor's Forum was superseded by a Learning and Teaching Policy Group (LTPG) designed to integrate strategic leadership in L&T across the Senate Committees, the Colleges (via College L&T Deans), thematic areas of priority (via existing and new Vice and Assistant Principals), and key professional services. This paper updates the Committee on LTPG's most recent meeting (25 October 2017)

**How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?**

LTPG's work supports the University strategic objectives of Leadership in Learning and Leadership in Research.

**Action requested**

For information

**How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?**

N/A

**Resource / Risk / Compliance**

1. **Resource implications (including staffing)**  
N/A – Committee is not being asked for a decision
2. **Risk assessment**  
N/A – Committee is not being asked for a decision
3. **Equality and Diversity**  
N/A – Committee is not being asked for a decision
4. **Freedom of information**  
*Open*

**Originator of the paper**

Tom Ward, Director of Academic Services

### **Report from Learning and Teaching Policy Group (LTPG)**

The main points from the 25 October 2017 meeting are set out below.

#### **Main points**

The Group:

- Received an update on progress regarding the Student Administration and Support strand of the Service Excellence Programme.
- Welcomed Assistant Principal Professor Sian Bayne's progress regarding progress in developing a vision for digital education (the Committee is scheduled to discuss this issue at its January 2018 meeting).
- Discussed Peer Observation of Teaching (POT) – expressing strong support for POT as a method for assisting staff (both those being observed and those observing) to reflect on their teaching, and noting that the Institute for Academic Development had recently developed new guidance to support this.
- Reflected on timetabling, room allocation and space issues, noting that the growth in intakes for 2017-18 had created challenges, and emphasising the importance of integrating recruitment planning arrangements with forecasting and planning for timetabling and room allocation.

The University of Edinburgh

Senate Learning and Teaching Committee

15 November 2017

## **Student Mental Health and Academic Policy**

### **Executive Summary**

In January 2017, the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee approved the University's Student Mental Health Strategy, which included the following recommendation:

“Review the use of Equality Impact Assessments and seek to introduce consideration of impact of policies and procedures on good mental health alongside evaluation of impact on those with formal protected characteristics.”

This paper provides an overview of the Equality Impact Assessment process, and of some evidence regarding the relationship between academic study and student mental health. It invites the Committee to discuss the issues raised in the paper.

### **How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?**

It aligns with the Strategic Objective of Leadership in Learning.

### **Action requested**

The Committee is invited to discuss the following:

- Identify aspects of the University's academic policy and procedure that may be particularly likely to contribute adversely to student mental health;
- Identify where there may be tensions between legitimate academic aims and student mental health, and explore how these tensions can be reconciled;
- Consider where there may be opportunities to promote positive student mental health through academic policy and procedure

### **How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?**

Committee members are encouraged to reflect on these issues and encourage Schools and Colleges to consider the impact of student mental health when developing academic policy and procedure, and in curriculum and assessment development. Any additional implementation and communication actions depend on how the Committee responds to the issues raised in the paper.

### **Resource / Risk / Compliance**

#### **1. Resource implications (including staffing)**

N / A - The paper does not include any specific recommendations for approval.

#### **2. Risk assessment**

The paper is to stimulate discussion and does not include a risk assessment.

### **3. Equality and Diversity**

The paper does not include any specific recommendations for changes to the University's policies and practices, and therefore does not require a formal Equality Impact Assessment. The paper does however aim to stimulate discussion regarding how academic policy and regulation contribute to positive student mental health.

### **4. Freedom of information**

Open

#### **Key words**

Mental Health, equality

#### **Originator of the paper**

Tom Ward, Director of Academic Services  
11 November 2017



## **Student Mental Health and Academic Policy**

### **Background – Student Mental Health Strategy**

In January 2017, the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee approved the University's Student Mental Health Strategy, the final version of which is available at:

[https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/student\\_mental\\_health\\_strategy.pdf](https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/student_mental_health_strategy.pdf)

A group convened by Gavin Douglas (Deputy Secretary, Student Experience) is now working to take forward implementation of the strategy over the three year period between 2017 and 2020.

### **Student mental health and academic policy and procedure**

The Strategy committed the University to address a range of issues regarding policy and regulations, including the following:

“Review the use of Equality Impact Assessments and seek to introduce consideration of impact of policies and procedures on good mental health alongside evaluation of impact on those with formal protected characteristics.”

### **Equality Impact Assessments – general points**

Under the 2010 Equality Act the University has a 'General equality duty' to 'have due regard to the needs to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it

The general equality duty covers the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation. It also covers marriage and civil partnerships with regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination in employment.

In addition to this 'General equality duty', the University has a specific duty under the Act to assess the impact of policies and practices, that is, to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA). The University guidelines on EqIAs say that a policy or practice should be assessed for impact if any of the following applies:

- It affects primary or high level functions of the University.
- It is relevant to the promotion of equality.
- It is a policy or practice on which interested parties could reasonably expect the University to have carried out an EqIA.

There are several key stages to undertaking an EqIA in relation to a policy or procedure:

1. Identify the main aims of the new or amended policy /procedure, and what changes to practices it will introduce, and consider whether these are likely to

have particular impacts (whether positive or negative) for students (or staff) with particular protected characteristics.

2. Consider what evidence will assist you to assess the likely impact of these changes, and what the evidence tells you.
3. If the changes are likely to have particular negative impacts for people with particular protected characteristics, consider whether those changes are necessary or justifiable, and whether there are any ways to amend the policy to remove or minimise those anticipated negative impacts.
4. If the changes are likely to have particular positive impacts for people with particular protected characteristics, consider whether it is possible to take any particular actions to maximise these benefits.
5. Decide whether to go ahead with the new or amended policy or procedure.

The University's guidance on EqlAs is available at:

[http://www.docs.csg.ed.ac.uk/EqualityDiversity/EqlA\\_Guidance.pdf](http://www.docs.csg.ed.ac.uk/EqualityDiversity/EqlA_Guidance.pdf)

### **Current position**

The University has well-established procedures for undertaking EqlAs which consider the impact on students' mental health as well as the impact on other protected characteristic. Academic Services has undertaken EqlAs for all academic policies and regulations, and the standard cover-sheet for Senate Committees already prompts authors to address this issue when bringing forward proposals for new or amended policies / regulations / procedures by asking them to reflect on whether Equality and Diversity issues have been taken into account.

Academic Services is currently commissioning the Equality Challenge Unit to provide the department's staff with some specialised training on undertaking EqlAs in relation to academic policy.

In some respects, it is straightforward in principle to take account of student mental health (whether promoting good mental health or supporting students with mental health difficulties) when undertaking EqlAs of academic policies and procedures, for example:

- If the policy aims to guide the provision of student support (eg policy on Special Circumstances, policy on Personal Tutoring), the EqlA should consider whether the policy is adequately addressing the needs of students with mental health issues, and whether there are any opportunities for the Policy to assist the promotion of good student mental health.
- If an EqlA identifies that a particular procedure is likely to inadvertently cause students stress or anxiety, the University should seek to modify that procedure to remove or minimise that anticipated adverse impact (while ensuring the procedure still fulfils its function).

- If an EqIA identifies that a policy may have potential to promote good student mental health (even if that is not its principle objective, the EqIA provides an opportunity to reflect on how to maximise that potential benefit. For example, some commentators have suggested that lecture recording can have particular benefits for students whose mental health condition may affect their ability to benefit fully from lectures.

However, in relation to assessment and curriculum, the appropriate relationship between student mental health and academic policy is not always clear.

### **Student mental health – policy regarding curriculum and assessment**

There is evidence that academic work is the most common cause of mental health issues among students:

- The NUS Survey indicates that ‘Course workload deadlines’, ‘exams (including revision)’, and ‘Balancing study and other commitments’ are the top three ‘contributors to feelings of mental distress. See <https://www.nus.org.uk/global/campaigns/20130517%20mental%20distress%20survey%20%20overview.pdf>
- The YouGov survey indicates that “...study is the primary cause of stress among students. Seven in ten (71%) say that work from university is one of their main sources of stress.” See <https://yougov.co.uk/news/2016/08/09/quarter-britains-students-are-afflicted-mental-hea/>
- Craig, 2017, suggests that “Studying at university places academic demands on students which are likely to be different from those they have experienced previously... In general, higher education courses will require a greater degree of self-directed learning, with students taking on more responsibility to manage their own workload... This has the potential to affect students’ ability to cope, even where courses are structured in different ways.” See [www.ippr.org/research/publications/not-by-degrees](http://www.ippr.org/research/publications/not-by-degrees), p34.

It is common for guidelines to suggest that Universities address these issues by reviewing their academic policies and practices (eg curriculum design), for example:

- “Considering which curriculum elements may cause stress or undue difficulties for particular students at the design stage enables course designers to structure modules and programmes in ways that will minimise the need for individual reasonable adjustments” (Higher Education Academy guidance on Inclusive curriculum design in higher education, [www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/resources/generic\\_considerations\\_of\\_inclusive\\_curriculum\\_design.pdf](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/resources/generic_considerations_of_inclusive_curriculum_design.pdf))
- “The aims of mental health promotion and related activities at institutional level might include... Reviewing course and programme design to reduce unnecessary stress.” (Crouch et al., Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion in Higher Education, 2007, <http://www.mentalhealthpromotion.net/?i=promenpol.en.toolkit.436>)

There should not need to be a tension between the University’s commitment to offering “...an educational experience that is inspiring, challenging, and

transformational” (University Learning and Teaching Strategy), and good mental health for all students. However policy development and assessment and curriculum design may need to change if students to be ‘challenged’ while minimising stress and anxiety. Some possible approaches might include:

- Practical steps to reduce pressure during Semester One, as proposed recently by the Students’ Association, for example, for programmes with regular (weekly) assessments, having one week free of assessments (proposed by EUSA);
- Providing students with opportunities to practice high-stakes assessments;
- Providing students with advanced notice of key readings and assessment deadlines (in line with existing policy);
- Minimising bunching of coursework deadlines through programme level assessment design (eg supported by the LEAF methodology);
- Induction and support for academic transition;
- Avoiding sudden changes in assessment types between years of programme;
- Assisting students to develop resilience.

## **Discussion**

The Committee is invited to discuss the following:

- Identify aspects of the University’s academic policy and procedure that may be particularly likely to contribute adversely to student mental health;
- Identify where there may be tensions between legitimate academic aims and student mental health, and explore how these tensions can be reconciled;
- Consider where there may be opportunities to promote positive student mental health through academic policy and procedure

## **Way forward**

Academic Services will take account of the Committee’s views when conducting future EqIAs for academic policies and procedures.

Committee members are encouraged to reflect on these issues and encourage Schools and Colleges to consider the impact of student mental health when developing academic policy and procedure, and in curriculum and assessment development.

The Committee may also wish to consider whether it may be appropriate to commission some further research into how academic work affects student mental health.