

The University of Edinburgh

**Senate Education Committee
Wednesday 15 September 2021, 2.00pm**

A G E N D A

- 1. Welcome and Apologies**
- 2. Minutes of Meeting held on 12 May 2021** SEC 21/22 1 A
- 3. Matters Arising from Meeting held on 12 May 2021**
 - 3.1 University's Involvement in the Delivery of Microcredentials Verbal update
- 4. Electronic Business Conducted Since 12 May 2021 Meeting**
 - 4.1 Student Mental Health Strategy 2021-2026 SEC 20/21
e-Business
1 July 2021
- 5. Convener's Communications**
 - 5.1 Update on Planning for Semester 2 2021/22 Verbal update
- 6. For Discussion**
 - 6.1 Exam Diets 2021/22 – Practical Implementation:
 - 6.1.1 December Exam Diet 2021/22 SEC 21/22 1 B
 - 6.1.2 Summer Exam Diet 2021/22 Preliminary
discussion
 - 6.2 University of Edinburgh Students' Association Vice President Education Priorities 2021/22 SEC 21/22 1 C
 - 6.3 Proposal to Establish a Student Voice Sub-Committee SEC 21/22 1 D
 - 6.4 Edinburgh Futures Institute Postgraduate Taught Programmes: Policy on Duration of Study for Lifelong Learning Students SEC 21/22 1 E
 - 6.5 Open Educational Resources Policy Review SEC 21/22 1 F
 - 6.6 Review of Senate Committees' Effectiveness SEC 21/22 1 G

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- 7.1.1 Curriculum Transformation Programme Update SEC 21/22 1 H
- 7.1.2 Curriculum Transformation Board - Terms of Reference SEC 21/22 1 I
- 7.1.3 Curriculum Transformation Board – Governance Links and Reporting Timeline SEC 21/22 1 J

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- 7.2.1 Student Survey Results 2021 SEC 21/22 1 K
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CLOSED
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- 7.3.1 Postgraduate Research Admissions Working Group Report SEC 21/22 1 N

8. For Information

- 8.1 Student Partnership Agreement 2021-22 SEC 21/22 1 O
- 8.2 Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy – Update on Review Verbal update
- 8.3 Committee Guidance and Review:
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 - 8.3.3 Senate Committees’ Members’ Guidance SEC 21/22 1 R
 - 8.3.4 Annual Report of Senate Standing Committees to Senate (2 June 2021) S 20/21 3 B
 - 8.3.5 Task Groups - Support for Curriculum Development Group SEC 21/22 1 S

9. Any Other Business

**Minutes of the Meeting of Senate Education Committee
held via Microsoft Teams at 2.30pm on Wednesday 12 May 2021**

For approval at meeting to be held on 15 September 2021

1. Attendance

Present	Position
Colm Harmon	Vice-Principal Students (Convener) – Ex Officio
Tina Harrison	Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance (Vice-Convener) – Ex Officio
Sabine Rolle	Representative of CAHSS (Learning and Teaching)
Lisa Kendall	Representative of CAHSS (Learning and Teaching)
Judy Hardy	Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching)
Antony Maciocia	Representative of CSE (Postgraduate Research)
Neil Turner	Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching, UG)
Sarah Henderson	Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching, PGT)
Paddy Hadoke	Representative of CMVM (Postgraduate Research)
Mike Shipston	Head of Deanery, CMVM
Richard Andrews	Head of School, CAHSS
Iain Gordon	Head of School, CSE
Stuart Lamont	Edinburgh University Students' Association, Permanent Staff Member
Fizzy Abou Jawad	Edinburgh University Students' Association, Vice President Education
Sue MacGregor	Director of Academic Services – Ex Officio
Velda McCune	Representing Director of Institute for Academic Development – Ex Officio
Shelagh Green	Director for Careers & Employability – Ex Officio
Melissa Highton	Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Services Division of Information Services – Ex Officio
Rebecca Gaukroger	Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions – Ex Officio
Sian Bayne	Assistant Principal Digital Education
Philippa Ward	Academic Services (Secretary)
Apologies	
Stephen Bowd	Representative of CAHSS (Postgraduate Research)
In Attendance	
Tom Ward	Head of Education Administration and Change Management, EFI
Sarah Harvey	Edinburgh Futures Institute
Teresa Ironside	Director of Data Science Education
Gavin Douglas	Deputy Secretary, Student Experience
Paula Webster	Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling

Fizzy Abou Jawad and Neil Turner, both of whom were leaving the Committee, were thanked for their outstanding contributions.

2. Minutes of Meeting held on 3 March 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2021 were approved as an accurate record.

3. Matters Arising

The Convener advised members that the University was in the process of divesting from all investments linked to Chegg, as discussed at the January 2021 meeting.

4. Convener's Communications

4.1 Update on Academic Year 2021/22 Planning

The Convener noted that the University's current planning assumptions – 1m+ with other mitigations – appeared to be reasonable at this stage in light of recent Scottish Government decisions. Other institutions appeared to be planning on a similar basis.

The timetable was proceeding, and it was hoped that a first draft would be available in the next two weeks. Where Schools had specific wishes or wanted to do something non-standard, attempts were being made to accommodate this within the timetable.

Building confidence around the return to campus was a key issue. A strong testing regime was likely to be required, and it was hoped that TestEd would be hugely beneficial to Edinburgh in this respect.

Students travelling from amber list countries would be required to quarantine on arrival, probably within the University. Those from red list countries would be permitted to travel for education, but were likely to struggle with the costs associated with red list quarantine arrangements. The University was investigating ways in which these students might also be permitted to quarantine within the University to help reduce costs.

The Committee discussed the importance of managing students' expectations around face-to-face teaching given that this was still likely to be limited in 2021/22.

5. For Discussion

5.1 Curriculum Transformation

The Convener provided members with a presentation. It was noted that the Curriculum Transformation Programme has a number of cross-cutting, underpinning themes: the student experience; widening participation; sustainability; equality, diversity and inclusion; and digital education.

There was a desire for open and broad conversation around the project, and the Curriculum Transformation Hub had been launched on 21 April 2021. The Hub was available to all staff and a small group of student representatives, but it was hoped that it would go live to all those with an EASE login later in the year. Six briefing papers, supported by videos, had been published at this stage to allow communities to feed back. The Convener thanked the

Institute for Academic Development for their help in launching the Hub. Members noted that the Hub appeared to have been well received by staff and was building momentum.

The Curriculum Transformation Programme Board had met twice and had had productive discussions around the vision and shape of the Programme and potential challenges and opportunities.

The starting point for the Programme was the development of a shared vision for 'The Edinburgh Graduate'. This vision would be the reference point as the University identified key elements of 'The Edinburgh Curriculum'. Once these elements had been identified, more detailed discussions around 'Degree and Curriculum Architecture' would take place, with stress-testing of different options.

The Curriculum Transformation Programme would be a standing item on Senate Education Committee's agendas going forwards.

5.2 Standalone Courses Task Group: Interim Report

The paper was presented by the Head of Education Administration and Change Management, Edinburgh Futures Institute, who noted that its purpose was to ask the Committee to clarify the Task Group's remit and focus. The Task Group had done a significant amount of thinking about standalone courses, but it had become apparent that there would be benefit in broadening the discussion to look at the University's overall approach to the provision of micro-credentials.

Members noted that the University's current processes are strongly geared towards programmes of study. Substantial work and investment would therefore be required if micro-credentials were to become a strategic priority for the University. The importance of adopting a strategic and values-led approach to any further developments in this area was noted.

The work of the Standalone Courses Task Group was closely linked to that discussed under items 5.4 and 5.5 below.

5.3 Edinburgh Futures Institute Undergraduate Curriculum

The paper provided members with an update on progress with the development of EFI's undergraduate curriculum. The Committee welcomed the paper, recognising the unique nature of the provision, which offered challenge-led, collaborative, interdisciplinary learning, complemented by a disciplinary focus.

A core team of six, representing all three Colleges, and supported by a group of Critical Friends, was taking the development work forward. Widespread consultation and market research were being undertaken to inform next steps.

Members noted that group work was an important component of what was proposed, and that, in order to accommodate this, it was likely to be necessary to do further thinking about the best way of assessing collaborative work. It may also be necessary to give further consideration to recruitment processes to ensure that programmes were sufficiently interdisciplinary. Finally, it would be important to do extensive market testing around the name of the first programme.

5.4 Data Skills Workforce Development and Upskilling Training

Members noted that in academic year 2019/20, the University had developed its Data Skills Workforce Development and Upskilling training portfolio at short notice in response to Government funding requirements. The Government's expectation was that the University would provide short, flexible, credit-bearing and / or accredited courses for those within the Scottish workforce. Following successful delivery of the pilot portfolio, funding was also provided for academic year 2020/21, and the University would be receiving further funding in 2021/22.

There appeared to be strong interest in training of this type from individuals, funders, and academic staff. However, upskilling is characterised by non-traditional learning and presents challenges for the University. Members agreed that, going forwards, it would be necessary for the University to discuss and take a view on whether or not the provision of upskilling training was a strategic priority.

5.5 Distance Learning at Scale Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Distance Learning at Scale (DLAS) was a three-year programme which tested the University's ability to produce and support sustainable, at-scale, online courses. The programme had now reached completion and had proved successful overall.

Members discussed the following:

- The University's existing VLE, Learn, is not suitable for the provision of short courses. It may be necessary for the University to invest in a new platform to successfully deliver courses of this type.
- DLAS covered postgraduate-level study only. The University will need to consider whether it also wishes to offer undergraduate-level study online.
- There would be value in undertaking a mapping exercise to ensure that all existing University provision that contributes to the micro-credentials landscape is recognised.
- DLAS's original goal of reaching 10,000 students may no longer be appropriate. There may be benefit in focussing on flexibility as opposed to scale. Before approving the recommendations for Senate Education Committee as outlined in section 5 of the DLAS paper, there would be value in revisiting the underlying questions around this provision.

Acknowledging the links between papers B, D and E (Standalone Courses, Upskilling and DLAS), the Committee agreed that the authors would meet with the Convener of SEC to consider some of the fundamental questions around the University's involvement in the provision of micro-credentials. Members noted that:

- Edinburgh is a city university that serves a community. The University also has global reach. Any provision should reflect both of these facts.
- The costs associated with delivering courses of this type can be prohibitive and are often badly understood.
- Micro-credentials can be used to showcase the University's research activity.
- It will be important for discussions to involve those areas of the University with significant experience of delivering micro-credentials, for example the Business

School and the Centre for Open Learning. There may be benefit in co-opting to SEC a member with specific expertise in this area.

- There would be value in ensuring that all course offerings were brought within the University's quality assurance framework. (It was noted that the existing School Annual Report template does ask Schools to include all provision, but that this may not be happening consistently.)

Action: Authors of Papers B, D and E to meet with the Convener to consider fundamental questions around the University's involvement in the delivery of micro-credentials.

5.6 Doctoral College Operations Group Report

The Committee welcomed the report, noting the large amount of business that had been conducted by the Group during academic year 2020/21.

5.7 Exam Diet 2021/22 – Practical Implementation

The paper invited the Committee to approve the proposed overall approach to the exam diet in 2021/22 and to agree policy on extra time and late submission.

Members approved the overall approach, but noted that some issues required further consideration. The Committee discussed the following:

- The Students' Association expressed concern that it had not had a representative present at the Planning Group meeting and as such, had not be adequately consulted about the proposals. It had reservations about reverting to two to three hour exams, noting that this removed freedom from Schools, and that there had been fewer complaints from students with Schedules of Adjustment about 24 hour exams.
- Ongoing discussions around the 10 minute 'silent window' and late submission would be best taken forward by Academic Policy and Regulations Committee.
- Schedules of Adjustments – some concern was expressed about offering tailored, individual student adjustments and the additional work that this would create for Schools. A number of members were of the view that a blanket, one hour approach for short format exams should be retained. The possibility of offering on-campus exams to those requiring specific adjustments (as well as to those whose home circumstances or accommodation were not well-suited to sitting online exams) was discussed.
- It would be important to take steps to ensure that students were adequately prepared for any return to short format, on campus exams.

A further paper, addressing the issues discussed, would be produced over the summer and circulated for electronic approval.

Action: Paper authors to produce a revised version for electronic approval over the summer.

5.8 Academic and Pastoral Support Policy

The Deputy Secretary Student Experience advised members that it would not be possible to implement the recommendations of the Personal Tutor and Student Support (PTSS) Review in academic year 2021/22. As such, the current Personal Tutor and student support structures would be retained. The Academic and Pastoral Support Policy had been updated to remove broken and redundant links and to align it with the amended Senior Tutor role descriptor, as approved at the previous meeting of the Committee.

However, the University's recent Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) had made recommendations around the University needing to make demonstrable progress in academic year 2021/22 in 'ensuring parity of experience for students and effective signposting to support services'. As such, there was value in the University considering what actions could be taken in 2021/22 that both met the expectations of the ELIR recommendation and were consistent with the direction of travel set out in the PTSS Review.

Members discussed the potential to make progress in the areas of cohort leadership and peer support. It was recognised that the proposed move to a more prescribed 'Programme Director' role to improve cohort leadership was likely to present challenges for some Schools. The Committee agreed that further discussion and consultation about the proposed role, including consideration of Workload Allocation Models, should take place. Contextualising the work within the overall direction of travel in relation to student support would be important. Any changes agreed would be reflected in further amendments to the Academic and Pastoral Support Policy in due course.

5.9 Committee Administration

Members noted the following items and that any further feedback should be sent to the Committee Secretary:

- 5.9.1 Annual Review of Effectiveness of Senate Standing Committees
- 5.9.2 Senate Education Committee Membership 2021/22
- 5.9.3 Draft Annual Report of the Senate Standing Committees
- 5.9.4 Senate Presentation and Discussion Themes for 2021/22 Meetings

6. For Information

6.1 Learn Foundations Project

Members noted that there had been continued, steady progress with this Project and that almost all Schools were now involved. The benefit to the student experience of having all Schools involved was noted.

Philippa Ward
Academic Services
10 June 2021

Senate Education Committee

1 July 2020

Refreshed Student Mental Health Strategy

Description of paper

1. This paper updates the Senate Education Committee on the review and refresh of the University's Student Mental Health Strategy.

Action requested / recommendation

2. Senate Education Committee is asked to approve the University's reviewed and refreshed Student Mental Health Strategy 2021-26.

Background and context

3. The University's first Student Mental Health Strategy was approved by Senate Education Committee in 2017. The Strategy was due for review in 2020, and Dr Andrew West has worked in partnership with the University to undertake a comprehensive review of the current Strategy and the University's approach to mental health within the context of the University UK report, [Mentally Healthy Universities](#) (2020). Mentally Healthy Universities is an update to the [UUK Step Change report](#) (2017), and continues to advocate for a 'whole-university' approach to addressing mental health within higher education. Dr West's report is attached as Appendix A.

Discussion

4. Attached as Appendix B is the new University Student Mental Health Strategy 2021-26 for SEC approval. In delivering on this work, Dr West undertook comprehensive engagement and consultation, the details of which are contained within in his report (Appendix A)
5. Dr West has made a number of recommendations within his report (Appendix A). Several of the recommendations are outwith the boundaries of 'student mental health', but do form important elements of the 'whole-university' approach to mental health (e.g. staff mental health and wellbeing). Andy Shanks is in discussion with Gavin Douglas as to what the University's governance function should be for moving forward with analysis and potential implementation of these recommendations.
6. Andy Shanks is undertaking further work to develop (a) an action plan; and (b) a monitoring and evaluation framework, both of which will complement the refreshed Student Mental health Strategy 2021-26. This work is scheduled to be completed prior to September 2021.

Resource implications

7. The work undertaken so far has been delivered through existing resources. There are no resource implications directly connected to the approval of the Student

Mental Health Strategy. However, several of the work-strands which will flow out of the action plan and the monitoring and evaluation framework are likely to require resources. Resource implications for each of these will be addressed at the point at which the individual projects are being planned.

Risk management

8. This strategy is designed to ensure that the University does all it can to promote positive student mental health and wellbeing, and to enable all students to flourish while they are studying at the University of Edinburgh.

Equality & diversity

9. All of the University's work in this area is designed to support students who disclose mental health conditions and/ or experience challenges due to their mental health.

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

10. Subject to the Senate Education Committee's views and approval, a comprehensive programme of multi-channel communications will be undertaken in close collaboration with CAM to ensure that information about the University's work on student mental health and wellbeing is visible and widely accessible to all staff and students across the University community.
11. The action plan will lay out how the strategy will be implemented (including prioritisation of particular work-streams), and the monitoring and evaluation framework will enable the University to measure impact in a co-ordinated and systematic way that has not been possible previously.

Author

Andy Shanks
(Director of Student Wellbeing)
01.07.21

Freedom of Information

Open paper

**Review and Refresh of Student Mental Health Strategy
at the University of Edinburgh**

Review Report

May 2021

Review and Refresh of Student Mental Health Strategy at the University of Edinburgh

Review Report

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Background

1. This review has been commissioned by the Director of Student Wellbeing at the University of Edinburgh.
2. The University of Edinburgh Student Mental Health Strategy is due to be reviewed and refreshed this year. As advocated by the Universities UK (UUK) Mentally Healthy Universities document “Stepchange” and the University Mental Health Charter, the University has the opportunity move towards taking a ‘whole system approach’ to student mental health. The revised strategy also needs to reference a move to hybrid service delivery within the context of the global pandemic (including working to support more students who are in different countries). It also needs to align with other initiatives/ documents, including:
 - Scottish Government Mental Health Strategy
 - UUK report- Principles and Considerations: Emerging from Lockdown
 - Think Positive’s Student Mental Health Agreement project
 - The University of Edinburgh’s Strategy 2030
 - The University’s review of Personal Tutoring and Student Support.The revised Strategy needs to be positioned within the local Thrive Mental Health and Wellbeing network; it needs to reference the University’s work on staff wellbeing, alongside other internal and external initiatives - for example links with the Doctoral College, with curriculum reform and with work on ‘sense of belonging’.
3. The University has commissioned Dr Andrew West to support a review and refresh of the University’s Student Mental Health Strategy, building on stakeholder engagement already begun and taking on the role of ‘critical friend’ in the review process. Key elements in the work are expected to include:
 - Initial analysis/ benchmarking against Mentally Healthy Universities to identify areas for development. Themes are likely to include Transitions/Progression; Prevention; Research; Estates and the Physical Environment.
 - a) Advice on model of stakeholder engagement; support with leading stakeholder consultation and analysis of information gathered.
 - b) Development of the structure and content of the refreshed Strategy.
 - c) Development of an associated action plan.
4. Further background consultancy information can be found in Appendix 1.

Executive Summary

1. My thanks go to those who have provided input to this review: all have engaged positively in the consultation process.
2. Alongside UUK's Mentally Healthy Universities framework "Stepchange", which the University asked me to use as a reference point, there is a strong read-across from this review into Scottish government priorities for wellbeing and mental health, including connections which can be made to the national mental health strategy.
3. There are multiple examples of good practice relating to mental health at Edinburgh, including excellent student support services and a range of provision supporting staff wellbeing.
4. With a firm foundation of good practice in mind, there are various areas where the university should consider further development and enhancement. Recommendations in this report include points relating to:
 - Better understanding the role of mental health and wellbeing in educational/academic activity (aka "wellbeing in the curriculum")
 - A proposed student-related action plan for mental health, to be aligned with a refreshed student mental health strategy
 - An institutional approach to staff wellbeing
 - Structural and organisational issues in the Residential Life area
 - Consolidating and sustaining the University's work around community building and student sense of belonging.
 - Governance and leadership issues relating to a 'whole university' approach to mental health
 - Continued engagement in student mental health issues at the NHS interface
 - Further development of student transitions support.
5. Edinburgh has set in train various initiatives responding to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and the University has the opportunity to ensure that mental health and wellbeing issues are incorporated in that work.

Review Findings

1. In introducing this report, it may be helpful for me to summarise my professional background – and the characteristics which suit me for a review of this sort. My thirty year HE professional services career has for the most part focussed in the area of academic and student-related services, with an eleven year period in a senior directorship role. Since 2017 I have provided consultancy services in the HE sector, working over the last three and a half years with around 30 different universities in all parts of the UK and across the HE mission groups. See Appendix 1 for further background information.
2. Alongside my professional insights, this report draws on the perspectives of around 50 members of the University of Edinburgh staff and student community who I have met remotely in a series of semi-structured stakeholder interviews, either 1-1 or in small groups. My thanks go to those who have provided this input: all have engaged positively in the process. In addition I have taken account of feedback (in the form of nine emails) on the existing student mental health strategy collected by the University ahead of my involvement. Staff involved in mental health support at Edinburgh demonstrate considerable experience and I have noted a strong commitment across a wide range of colleagues to see further developments and improvements taken forward in this area. Particular thanks go to Melissa Dowdeswell who made all the practical arrangements for the review. For more information on stakeholder consultation see Appendix 2.
3. As a reference point for this review, the University asked me to use UUK’s Mentally Healthy Universities framework “Stepchange”. Accordingly the findings in this report (beginning on page 8) are grouped under the broad thematic headings used in the Stepchange Framework, with observations, commentary and assessments included in relation to the fourteen Stepchange sub categories, as depicted below:

LEARN	1. Learning, teaching and assessment
SUPPORT	2. Support services
	3. Risk
WORK	4. Staff wellbeing
	5. Staff development
LIVE	6. Mental health promotion
	7. Residential accommodation
	8. Community
	9. Physical environment
ENABLERS	10. Leadership
	11. Information
WORKING WITH THE NHS	12. Working with the NHS
TRANSITIONS	13. Transition into university and the first-year experience
	14. Progression

4. Given the scope of the Stepchange framework, which promotes a ‘whole university’ approach to mental health, the contents of this report go beyond student-related issues into broader aspects of university activity, including the staff experience. Bearing in mind the starting point for the review (ie the student mental health strategy), the student area remains my principal concern and the work the University has commissioned to follow on from this report, including action planning, is all student-focussed.
5. There is an obvious read-across from the Stepchange themes into Scottish government priorities in respect of wellbeing and mental health, most clearly expressed in the government’s Mental Health Strategy 2017-27, which sets out an ambition to “prevent and treat mental health problems with the same commitment, passion and drive as we do with physical health problems.” I have taken account of the national strategy in approaching this review, albeit I note the strategy contains relatively few direct references to the higher education sector.
6. Given the external environment surrounding a review carried out during the period of ‘lockdown’ in spring 2021, I have also included a short commentary on the impact of the pandemic in paragraph 30.
7. There are multiple examples of good practice relating to mental health at Edinburgh, forming an important – and very positive – context for this review. Points to highlight by way of introduction include:
 - An established student mental health strategy and associated group overseeing implementation.
 - Excellent high quality student support services, with evidence of innovation and notably positive feedback from internal stakeholders.
 - A strong contribution from the Chaplaincy team - distinctive in its breadth and impact.
 - A successful student services ‘pivot’ to online delivery, with innovation and new service development continuing during the pandemic.
 - Planned work to support student community building and sense of belonging, with an associated leadership group and good practice materials.
 - A highly regarded residence life programme, with support and intervention arrangements informed by a behavioural approach.
 - A wide-ranging review of student support leading to recommendations in the direction of an ‘evolved’ model for the University.
 - Relevant awards/accolades including the Investors in People Wellbeing Standard and the ‘Healthy Working Lives’ award.
 - A positive and enthusiastic commitment to the mental health agenda evident in the University’s Sport and Exercise team.
 - Governance and leadership around equality, diversity and inclusion presenting positive opportunities for collaborative working and strategic connections in the area of mental health.

- A specific strand of work relating to PGR wellbeing being led by the Doctoral College.
 - Long-established and wide ranging peer support schemes – with the importance of peer support re-emphasised within the recent student support review.
 - Strongly engaged student advocacy, including an intentional wellbeing focus in the Sports Union.
 - An online staff wellbeing ‘hub’ to showcase the current range of activities and services.
 - Numerous examples of thoughtful and effective staff management practice in support of wellbeing.
 - Considerable staff development provision, including recent innovations in content and delivery.
 - Capital investment in student support in the new Student Health and Wellbeing Centre.
 - Very positive stakeholder engagement in this exercise – importantly including colleagues across the University and several members of the executive team.
8. As requested by the University, at the end of each thematic section in this report (beginning on the next page) I have included summary assessment rating/s referencing the colour-coded schema - similar to a RAG rating - contained within the Stepchange self-assessment tool as summarised below:

Not Started - no progress	
Major Challenge - minimal progress.	
Elements of Good Practice - evidence of examples of good practice.	
Widespread Good Practice - significant evidence of good practice.	
Best Practice - clear evidence of a whole university approach.	

Self-evidently the ratings I have chosen in each case represent a subjective judgement at the point of assessment and they need to be viewed in the context of many examples of good practice, and taking account of the review as a whole. I hope this report will be received by the University in the spirit of continuous improvement and that it will be helpful in highlighting potential areas for development and enhancement into the future.

Learn

9. The Stepchange model (second edition) being used as a reference point in this review places education (aka “learning, teaching and assessment”) as the first theme in the framework, sending a message about the importance of this core activity at the heart of university life. Stakeholders have referred to an aspiration to consider wellbeing in the context of the curriculum, including within the ‘curriculum transformation’ programme recently launched. There is more for Edinburgh to do to take this aspiration forward into a delivery plan with related actions and **I recommend** further work to underpin cross-university progress. At the outset it would be helpful for Edinburgh to lay out its understanding of mental health and wellbeing in the curriculum so that stakeholders have clarity on what is intended and can appreciate how this strand of work differs from – and complements – other academic-related activity such as student mental health support. The following are among the educational approaches which have been adopted by some other HEIs and Edinburgh might identify the most appropriate methodology/ies to take forward locally:

- Some universities have emphasised incorporating wellbeing themes within objectives for programmes of study and in learning outcomes, including issues such as healthy learning/working habits and self-care. This in-programme approach tends to be most common in professionally accredited areas (eg the healthcare profession), as already in place and/or being developed within some programmes at Edinburgh.
- Another approach locates the relevant learning opportunities within the co-curricular/extra-curricular domain, typically involving a range of opt-in provision such as self-service online material, workshops, peer-peer programmes and mentoring. Here there are links to be made with recent work at Edinburgh on student community building/sense of belonging in the academic context. For more on this topic see paragraph 19.
- Some institutions have promoted learning explicitly related to wellbeing within a modular curriculum as credit-bearing study options. The increasingly well-known global exemplar is ‘Psychology and the Good Life’ at Yale University which has become Yale’s most popular course ever. In the UK the University of Bristol has introduced a similar course with good take-up and positive outcomes recently reported (for example see <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/mar/24/bristol-university-happiness-course-students-found-to-be-more-upbeat>). Coursera makes a version of the Yale course freely available in MOOC format under the title The Science of Wellbeing.
- A further option is based on the concept of “embedding” wellbeing in the curriculum akin to the educational design and delivery methods used over recent years in respect of graduate employability. This could be a helpful approach for Edinburgh as the University moves forward with a curriculum transformation programme and I can see how considerations relating to mental health and wellbeing could be incorporated effectively into this planned programme of work, with a link to be made to developing graduate attributes such as resilience, agility and adaptability and/or to plans around inclusive curricula. As an approach, embedding presents a significant opportunity to impact the whole student population given the place of the curriculum at the

heart of every student's academic experience. On the other hand there is a potential danger in the embedded approach that specific issues are 'lost' within the multiple priorities of a broad transformation programme. Edinburgh will need to bear this risk in mind as project work streams are developed.

- It is also important to emphasise issues relating to overall curriculum design and pedagogical practice – and it probably makes most sense for this consideration to take place at programme of study level (or course year/stage) rather than in respect of individual modules. Here the question is how staff and student mental health and wellbeing is taken into account as programmes are designed and as assessment diets are planned across the academic cycle. In particular whether such matters are explicitly, or only implicitly, referenced. For more on staff wellbeing, see paragraphs 15-16.

Depending on how progress in this area is prioritised by the university, relevant colleagues might find it helpful to look at a teacher development 'microcredential' course on *Embedding Mental Health in the Curriculum* available on the FutureLearn platform: <https://www.futurelearn.com/microcredentials/teacher-training-embedding-mental-health-in-the-curriculum>. I have additional references/bibliography which I could share with the University if helpful.

10. Though not necessarily explicit within the Stepchange framework, clearly it will be important to ensure that any considerations at the wellbeing –learning interface are inclusive of the experience of postgraduate research (PGR) students. Issues include students' experience of research culture, the development of 'healthy' research practice, effective working in research teams, issues associated with lone research activity, and related matters. I was pleased to hear that wellbeing is one of the strategic themes being taken forward at an institutional level by the Doctoral College and it would make sense for mutually supportive connections to be fostered between this initiative and curriculum-related work for taught courses. I comment further on mental health support for PGR students in paragraph 11e).

Summary assessment for learning, teaching and assessment	
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Support

11. The University provides an excellent array of high quality student support services relating to mental health. Leadership in this area is demonstrably experienced, highly competent and strategic. The various staff teams incorporate an impressive range of professional expertise and a depth of HE experience. I was not surprised to find that stakeholders I consulted in the review – including the executive perspective alongside staff across the University – spoke very highly of student services provision and were confident in and appreciative of the range of support available. **I recommend** the University continues to build on its firm foundation of excellent student support. Following on from this report I have been invited to support Edinburgh to lay out a student-related action plan for mental health and there are various points to consider in that planning.

a) The University's overall 'system' for student support is an obvious starting point for effective promotion of mental health. Where HE institutions have articulated a vision/mission for student support, it is quite common for the service provision to be presented in terms of graduated tiers/steps/levels, for example:

- ◇ Student self-service help/care (Level 1)
- ◇ Peer-peer support services (Level 2)
- ◇ University welfare and pastoral support (Level 3)
- ◇ Specialist wellbeing services (Level 4)
- ◇ External provision, eg NHS referrals (Level 5).

Edinburgh may find it helpful to lay out a similar model – both as a means of articulating the support 'ecosystem' and as a point of reference for matters such as resource planning, staff development opportunities/requirements, staff career pathways, cross-institutional referral/escalation arrangements and the like. I have worked recently with other Russell Group universities on tiered/stepped care models in student services and I would be pleased to advise Edinburgh further in this area as desired.

b) Whatever student support delivery model is in place, there can be a tendency for proactive work supporting mental health and wellbeing across the whole student community to be crowded out by reactive support focussed on individual cases. Edinburgh is alert to the issue and it will make sense for the action plan arising from this review to incorporate a re-affirmation of - and renewed emphasis on - the importance of proactive work. Areas for consideration might include the opportunities presented by the new Student Health and Wellbeing Centre; capitalising on a pilot of learner analytics; and further developing the use of wellbeing-related content in Blackboard ("Learn").

c) Various stakeholders raised questions around the interface between university student support services and staff teams in the colleges and schools, taking account of the University's recent personal tutoring/student support review. Responding to increasing demands on student services over recent years, a growing number of universities have established additional

(professional services) student support roles in the academic context. Typical features in these developments include:

- A focus on student needs at the lower end of the case severity ‘spectrum’, aiming to reduce escalation of issues through speedy response/rapid intervention at the point of demand.
- Roles with a dedicated focus on student support – importantly not posts within which student support constitutes a fractional element or a bolt-on feature.
- A range of professional backgrounds tend to be evident among post-holders, often with a mix of internal/external appointments and a good spread of skillsets to cover the broad area of HE student support (not “more counsellors”).
- A matrix management model (‘locally based, centrally managed’) such that dedicated resource is added at the point of need - in academic units - combined with expert professional oversight and a strong link into specialist central services.
- A balance of proactive/reactive activity, including outreach work with student groups alongside responding to individual student needs as they arise.

While such posts have been relatively common in the post-92 HE sector for some time, a growing number of Russell Group universities have now moved further in this direction, including Birmingham, Bristol, Exeter, Glasgow, Leeds, Nottingham, Sheffield and UCL. Edinburgh’s plans in respect of an ‘evolved’ model for student support in academic schools looks a positive direction of travel and I understand that implementation of the new arrangements is now planned for 2022-23, following a project hiatus during the Covid emergency period. I hope the time during 2021-22 can be used fruitfully for some of the preparation which will be needed (eg space allocation) to support the changes ahead. Given the extent of variability and inconsistency in the current arrangements, if recruitment into some of the new professional services positions can be brought forward in time, so much the better.

- d) Edinburgh has a good understanding of the importance of peer-peer support in a student services context and the many established schemes serve as an excellent foundation around which further provision specific to mental-health could be developed, as desired – and I note plans for expansion within the ‘evolved’ support model. I have recently worked supported another university in an international benchmarking study covering peer-peer student wellbeing provision in HE and I would be very pleased to work with Edinburgh to incorporate a similar exercise within the student action plan, if the University would find this helpful.
- e) The particular position of postgraduate research students in an institution like Edinburgh was evident to me approaching this review – and the issue has been highlighted by several stakeholders. Among other matters, there are questions about how far cross-university student mental health support is best accessed by the PGR community, and potential challenges around the role of supervisor when considering student wellbeing issues. I have recently worked with Universities UK and the sector agency Vitae on an evaluation of PGR wellbeing support and I could assist Edinburgh further in this area within

- the action planning phase, if helpful and/or to support linkages into the 'wellbeing' stream of work being led by the Doctoral College.
- f) Edinburgh has a highly effective Students' Association and Sports Union, both with provision to complement the University's student services. Some stakeholders referred to the interface with the University in terms of 'parallel track' developments rather than representing genuinely collaborative partnership working and the action plan to follow from this review could present a helpful opportunity to reinforce the benefits of collaboration and to identify specific issues for priority shared action.
 - g) The University's Suicide Prevention Strategy (January 2021) would probably be better described as a briefing document or operational guide. It lacks a review (aka "postvention") dimension and could helpfully be reviewed in line with the guide on 'Suicide Safer Universities' published by Universities UK: <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2018/guidance-for-universities-on-preventing-student-suicides.pdf>. Recently the UK government released its latest progress report on preventing suicide and Edinburgh may find this another helpful reference point (accepting the focus on England): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/973935/fifth-suicide-prevention-strategy-progress-report.pdf. More generally it will be important for the University to continue to keep its activities in this area under review as discussions progress locally with NHS partners as to where support boundaries should properly lie between HE institutions and statutory mental health services (see also paragraphs 27-28). It would also be sensible to keep in touch with any developments following a 'roundtable' on suicide prevention in HE to be hosted by UUK in June 2021, assuming this initiative will have UK-wide applicability (see <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/schools-and-colleges-to-benefit-from-boost-in-expert-mental-health-support>).
 - h) Records management in student support is an area for improvement at Edinburgh. My discussions with stakeholders have revealed a proliferation of local arrangements in schools – raising questions about confidence and commonality in record keeping protocols (ie what records should be maintained and shared) not to mention potential information security and data protection issues. None of these local solutions appear to be connected into the central student record system and Euclid 'notes' looks to be a somewhat rudimentary feature in systems terms in any event (eg no work-flow technology). It is also problematic that the notes field cannot be used for the University's large PGR population. Multiple unconnected systems are in use additionally within the central services, for example in Counselling and Residence Life. There are considerable institutional risks associated with these very varied 'case management' arrangements and it would be sensible for the issue to receive early attention in the action planning phase following this review.
 - i) There is an obvious interface between support for student mental health and matters more generally concerned with equality, diversity and inclusion in a student services setting. I felt some uncertainty among stakeholders as to the best way forward on this point, building on existing individual/tactical initiatives. I have considerable experience of leading EDI in student services - in a strategic sense - and I have sample approaches/templates I would be

pleased to share with Edinburgh as part of the follow-on action planning phase, if helpful.

- j) The broad area of data in relation to student mental health and student support would merit further attention. Here I am also referring to arrangements for service monitoring/evaluation and onward reporting within the university's governance structure. While various evaluation activities are taking place as a matter of routine, I have gained only a limited sense of overall coordination and there are no agreed measures specifically attached to the student mental health strategy. In line with some other universities, Edinburgh might consider introducing periodic surveying specifically focussed on student wellbeing by way of baseline measurement and to track trends over time. Generally speaking, the relevant service functions would benefit from looking again at their evaluation and reporting arrangements, to include considering any opportunities to make beneficial connections into academic research, and reviewing the effectiveness of reporting into the governance structure as currently configured. I have considerable experience of effective evaluation in student services and I will be able to advise further within the action planning phase.
- k) A small number of stakeholders referred to the need to review various policy areas, thinking of potential impacts on student mental health, and it would make sense for consider whether policy-related work should be incorporated as a strand within the action plan. Policies mentioned include fitness to practise and special circumstances.
- l) I have noted that some recent student support initiatives have benefited from time-limited additional funding from the Scottish Government. It will be important for the University to undertake re-prioritisation of resourcing in this area over the coming months to avoid any 'cliff edge' scenario and to balance budgeting appropriately across established provision and new service development.

12. Where student cases require a speedy response, with an associated level of risk, stakeholders spoke very positively of the referral arrangements in place within the Counselling Service 'duty' system and/or via the Director of Student Wellbeing and his office, with regular case discussions taking place across the Student Wellbeing leadership team to ensure coherence in responses and ongoing management. A printed guide 'Helping Distressed Students' usefully lays out the agreed protocol for relevant staff. To build further resilience, into these arrangements there are various points **I recommend** for consideration.

- It would be sensible for the Wellbeing senior team to better document its agreed response procedure, perhaps by developing an operating manual incorporating appropriate risk assessment tool/s, process flow charts, templates and the like.
- The profile of staff involved at this level of risk management could also benefit from further thought. From my perspective it is relatively unusual for counsellors to be involved in critical response work; the direct involvement of the Director of Student Wellbeing also raises questions about the strategic/operational balance in that role, not to mention cover arrangements.

The tiered escalation process now established in the Residence Life area might be a helpful model for the wider team and it could be that some staff currently deployed only in the residences could take on a broader remit. A summary/streamlined version based on 'behavioural intervention' thinking might also support development of escalation principles within the revised 'evolved' support model in schools, as that is developed over the coming months. In this context, easy-reference tools (like flowcharts) are to be preferred to extensive procedural documents, albeit links need to be made into formalised procedures like 'support for study'.

- Out of hours support arrangements are laid out in a helpful staff 'resource pack' and I was pleased to hear of ongoing liaison between the security and student wellbeing teams to explore case study scenarios as a means of further clarifying boundaries of responsibility. Work on this theme should be an area of focus in the action plan to follow on from this report. Points for consideration might include security linkages with the Residence Life team, which look like they could be developed further – and with better clarification around the complementary role of a separate 'community support' team. Expectations around mental health-related training in the security team could helpfully be checked/reviewed, and efforts made to streamline record keeping hand-offs, accepting the rather fractured IT systems landscape already discussed. The University might also look again at its 'best endeavours' approach to on-call out of hours, with a view to reaffirming the adequacy of the existing arrangements or putting in place a different pattern such as twilight hours working as an expectation in teams like Residence Life.

13. The February 2021 issue of *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research* (Wiley) includes a helpful article drawing findings related to student support from a series of student "co-creation" panels associated with the development of the Student Minds [University Mental Health Charter](#). This new charter is being promoted in the sector alongside the Stepchange framework and I imagine the University will want to consider whether or not to engage with the initiative in due course. For added assurance in this section of the report, I have reviewed the recommendations contained in the article for congruence with my conclusions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/capr.12391#.YcJqsl8QK_Q.linkedin). Key themes in the article include resourcing; academic links; data/IT; tiered support provision; EDI. All feature among the observations and recommendations included here.

14. Because of the structure of the Stepchange framework, various points which are also relevant to student support appear in other sections of this report including:

- Staff training and development (paragraph 17)
- Communications (paragraph 18)
- Student community (paragraph 19)
- Student residential life (paragraph 20)
- Student transitions (paragraph 29)

- Pandemic-related implications (paragraph 30)

By their nature some of these issues have broader student services applicability, beyond the specifics of mental health support.

Summary assessment for support services	
Summary assessment for risk	

Work

15. Stakeholders consulted as part of this review have demonstrated well-developed understanding of management practices contributing to positive staff wellbeing. Managers at various levels have been able to provide examples of positive actions in their own practice. Those shared with me include:

- Visible leadership - ensuring time is available to talk with colleagues and to better understand their personal situation.
- Establishing a regular pattern of team meetings; 1-1s and the like.
- Introducing informal 'check-ins', virtual coffee sessions, social events, etc while teams are working remotely.
- Taking the initiative to ask colleagues how they are feeling, either informally or using a planned 'welfare check' approach.
- Managers being open about their own mental health challenges.
- Time and funding made available to enable professional 'supervision' for relevant colleagues, appropriate to the role context.
- Contractual changes where possible, with role security in mind.
- Rotating 'duty' arrangements to better manage service demand across a team.
- Building additional resilience by planning greater depth of staff coverage (eg out of hours).
- Staff wellbeing groups (aka 'community of practice') to foster peer support.
- Deliberately setting clear team and personal objectives with explicit links made to corporate strategy.
- Adopting a coaching approach to encourage more effective ways of working.
- Drawing on external models/frameworks, including professional body insights and research publications, to inform management practice.
- Prioritising staff communications, with additional efforts during the Covid emergency period (eg video messages, e-newsletter).
- Understanding the connection between effective home working arrangements and wellbeing – and taking action to make improvements as need be.
- An ongoing management emphasis on the importance of personal development, including refresher training specific to mental health.
- Team events with a specific focus on wellbeing (eg Chaplaincy 'replenishment' away days).
- Members of the university executive and senior managers setting a tone/culture, in turn empowering managers elsewhere.
- Carrying out a staff survey to identify issues for action to improve wellbeing.
- Positive encouragement to review workload priorities, including pausing projects/tasks during the pandemic.
- Relevant external accreditation (eg using the Investors in People Wellbeing Standard).
- Managers understanding their responsibilities regarding wellbeing, with positive role modelling in the team.

16. This very positive foundation of good practice was, for the most part, described by stakeholders in terms of localised and personalised initiatives rather than as part of a cohesive whole university approach. With this in mind, there are various points **I recommend** for consideration.
- a) To date the University has not put in place a staff-related strategy for wellbeing/mental health equivalent to the established student-focussed strategy and it would make sense to consider the potential benefits of laying out an institutional vision/plan of this sort. There are links to be made with elements of the University's Strategy 2030, for example the commitment to 'take care of one another' included within the 'People' strand. Building on these aspirations, a more specific strategic statement could more clearly demonstrate the institutional intent, with a positive and supportive message in the staff community to energise an organisational rather than individualised approach. Further practical progress could be achieved, with appropriate leadership and monitoring linked back to an ambitious set of strategic objectives.
 - b) The online staff wellbeing hub includes a 'wellbeing visual overview' with numerous clickable links (presented as 33 separate hexagons) enabling access to what the website describes as an 'overview of the support available'. This layout is potentially overwhelming for users and the site would benefit from considerable streamlining and a more coherent/concise presentation. As things stand this key website looks descriptive rather than visionary. Whether or not the university wishes to introduce a staff wellbeing strategy, an overarching strategic/vision statement within the hub would be a more effective way of demonstrating institutional commitment and engaging the staff community. It would be straightforward to make a reinforcing link to Strategy 2030, as mentioned above.
 - c) Governance arrangements around staff wellbeing would benefit from further thought and I understand that consideration is currently being given to the complementary roles of the Staff Experience Committee and the Health and Safety Committee in this area. If a new sub-committee with a wellbeing remit is introduced in the health and safety area, potentially involving a revised operational span in the health and safety team, care will be needed to ensure appropriate linkages with the strategic HR picture which currently sits elsewhere in governance and organisational terms. The University will also need to determine an appropriate balance across cultural and compliance issues. Executive leadership arrangements may need clarification to facilitate an integrated approach to staff wellbeing on the agenda of the University Executive Board and strategic assurance reporting for the Court.
 - d) Depending on any decisions around staff wellbeing strategy and associated leadership/governance, it would make sense to look again at the connections into student mental health matters in governance and reporting terms. In paragraph 11 I have already referred to the need to review monitoring and reporting arrangements for the student mental health strategy and the associated services. The agenda around equality and diversity is also relevant and the University should find ways of ensuring coherence and mutual reinforcement across the various strategies and plans to avoid any unintended consequences such as duplication of effort. The thematic sub groups being developed around the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee should prove helpful in this regard and a recent Advance

HE publication on black student mental health could be interesting for Edinburgh by way of case study: <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/news-and-views/black-students-mental-health-wellbeing-and-unbelonging-uk-higher-education>.

- e) Given the scale of the staff community at Edinburgh, in approaching this review I was surprised to see the relatively limited resources available for staff counselling (with problematic wait times) and the absence of a broader 'employee assistance' programme of the sort which is now quite common in the sector. I was pleased to hear that both matters are currently under active review, including reconsidering whether a small in-house staff counselling function (embedded within a student-focussed service area) will be the most effective approach into the future.
- f) For wellbeing initiatives to have credibility within the staff community, matters relating to job design and workload models need to be addressed directly such that wellbeing programmes are seen to be positively proactive rather than representing reactive responses to employee ill-health. It is helpful to see that the University's post-Covid hybrid working guidelines specifically reference wellbeing. For maximum impact it will be important for these considerations to extend into the university's academic 'heartland' and not only to focus on the professional services or operational teams. I comment further on pandemic-specific issues in paragraph 30.
- g) In all the work relating to staff wellbeing there is a significant contribution to be drawn from those with people/line management responsibilities. It follows that the university has a particular responsibility to support these colleagues in 'healthy' management behaviours and to avoid over-delivery and burn-out. There are multiple external good practice reference points which the University could find helpful; recently published McKinsey [research](#) on the importance of leadership development in building psychological safety might be of interest to Edinburgh.

17. Mental health-related CPD provision is extensive at Edinburgh, with multiple delivery partners involved alongside HR, including Student Wellbeing, Health and Safety and the Institute for Academic Development. Following on from this review, it would make sense for the University to take stock of this provision thinking of overall coherence and coordination. **I recommend** various points for consideration.

- The various websites setting out relevant training opportunities are not easy to navigate and some of the links appear to be circular. From my perspective, it would be more helpful if options could be laid out with reference to job role/responsibility categories, for example being sure that suitable provision has been designed specifically with academic staff in mind; that training materials adequately cover the specifics of the PGR student experience; that scenarios and case studies touch on cultural differences in seeking support; and other similar matters.
- Stakeholders referred to numerous localised training initiatives/arrangements, presenting a danger of duplicated effort and/or mixed messaging. Some schools have commissioned external training on the basis that University-level provision is apparently inappropriate or lacking. This looks inefficient and potentially counter-productive.

- Depending on progress with the ‘evolved’ student support model, boundary management and referral/escalation protocols for student issues could be a helpful specific theme for training. Here the focus would be less on generalised mental health awareness and more on the practical question of ‘what do I do in my role?’ Such training tends to be brief, including use of easy reference tools, flow charts and the like.
- The University might consider the extent to which mandatory training might be introduced on the theme of mental health or more broadly as regards student support. An example from the University of Sheffield could be a helpful reference point: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/sss/supporting-our-students>. This open access course is available online at any time. It is mandatory for all staff, renewable every two years.

In a number of my conversations with stakeholders, the degree of concern and anxiety on this theme was striking, suggesting the need for further work in the area of professional development as a matter of some priority.

Summary assessment for staff wellbeing	
Summary assessment for staff development	

Live

18. Edinburgh has good arrangements in place supporting communications around mental health, including expertise within a dedicated centrally-based internal communications team. The interfaces with HR and the student services look to work effectively and there are aspirations towards further improvements into the future. **I recommend** the following points for consideration – there are also obvious connections to be made with the recommendations contained in the ‘Support’ section of this report (see paragraph 11) and it would make sense for communications to form a strand of activity within the student action planning to follow on from this review.
- Building on the existing planning around events like Mental Health Awareness Week, it would be helpful for the University to develop an annual schedule/plan for mental health related communications. As well as the practicalities of dates/times, such planning should incorporate consideration of the potential range of topics and the communications ‘tone’ envisaged within some of the particularly sensitive themes such as student suicide prevention.
 - Links between the central communications function and the Students’ Association and the Sports Union seemed less embedded on mental health than I might have expected and it would be helpful for the University to identify specific communications projects/campaigns which could be used to foster this relationship. Outputs from a recent survey (and associated focus groups) relating to student awareness of support services are relevant in this context and this material could helpfully inform some follow-on work with the Students’ Association and the Sports Union.
 - The websites for the student wellbeing services could benefit from overhaul. Pages are typically excessively text-heavy; too many links tend to be presented on individual pages creating an impression of information overload for the user; the standardised running header impedes easy navigation; media such as video content is largely absent. By way of example, equivalent websites at University College London and Penn State University could be helpful points of reference when looking again at Edinburgh’s material: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/students/support-and-wellbeing/wellbeing>; <https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/health-wellness>. Within this work the University might also rethink overall branding for student services while planning for the ‘evolved’ support system.
 - Edinburgh has more to do in the area of evaluating communications, including using data for impact assessment, to further segment communications and to improve targeting of messages both for staff and students.
19. Recent coordinated work at Edinburgh on the theme of student community/sense of belonging is ahead of typical sector practice. The work is very positive from a mental health perspective, and the various materials arising from the project look helpful. Following a pause in further work during the pandemic, the University is currently seeking to re-energise activity across the institution using a group of student interns. **I recommend** further consideration around sustainability such

that a future direction can be laid out clearly for this work. Some options might include:

- 'Mainstreaming' the work within relevant elements of the curriculum transformation programme, making direct linkages on the theme of wellbeing, as already referenced in paragraph 9.
- Confirming academic and professional services leadership for an ongoing programme of cross-institutional work – with the associated resourcing put in place.
- Shifting focus in the work specifically towards post-Covid recovery, ie aiming to mitigate the anti-social impacts of the pandemic within the University community.
- Bringing the centrally coordinated phase of work to a close, while seeking to embed recommended good practice in schools and relevant service areas. For example the Sports and Exercise team already make a strong and very valuable contribution.
- Working closely with the Students' Association and Sports Union on all the above.

20. Edinburgh has a long established and successful Residential Life programme with a strong reputation in the sector. There is good partnership working with the Students' Association and the provision now includes a significant digital element, following an online 'pivot' during the pandemic lockdown. It makes sense to me that oversight for Residence Life has recently transferred into the Student Wellbeing area. This structural change looks to be work in progress, with some points (like resource transfers) yet to be concluded. **I recommend** the University moves forward with this transition, alongside taking forward the various points I have laid out about stakeholder interfaces in paragraph 11.

21. The University's Estates Vision 2017-27 includes numerous statements, aspirations and commitments which reference wellbeing in the staff and student community. This clarity of vision is helpful and my conversations with colleagues have revealed examples of the ways in which these intentions are taken forward in practice, for example in stakeholder consultation and in approaches to design within capital projects. The impact of the pandemic will raise new challenges for estates development concerned with utility and flexibility (including in the residences), and with reference to the University's principles for future hybrid working. **I recommend** continued emphasis on wellbeing issues as this development work is taken forward.

Summary assessment for mental health promotion	
Summary assessment for residential accommodation	

Summary assessment for community	
Summary assessment for physical environment	

Enablers

22. In commissioning this external review, Edinburgh signalled its desire for a refreshed student mental health strategy to underpin a move towards a ‘whole system approach’ on mental health. The University has asked me to follow this report with further guidance on structure and content for a refreshed student mental health strategy and there are various points to take into account.

- The format of the existing strategy is distinctive, with the content of the document straddling vision/strategy and operation/ planning in a way which may be rather confusing for the typical reader.
- A wellbeing ‘map’ introduced in the preamble to the strategy does not appear to be carried through further into the document and it is not reflected in the associated action planning. This disconnect looks rather incoherent.
- A SWOT analysis, currently embedded in the strategy, would be better separated out as a point of reference in the background.
- The strategy follows two key themes – broadly speaking mental health promotion and mental health support – while the associated action plan lays out five areas of focus. Alignment between the two documents is not self-evident.
- The University has asked me to use UUK’s Stepchange framework as a reference point for this review and I have noted that the existing mental health action plan draws on a previous version of Stepchange which has now been superseded.

23. **I recommend** a simplified format in future. By way of example, a refreshed strategy might cover the four ‘domains’ depicted below, using plain English and active language:

Leadership	
Mental Health Promotion	Mental Health Support
Monitoring	

Within each area, the revised strategy might summarise progress to date alongside the University’s aspirations, perhaps expressed straightforwardly in terms of “what we are currently doing” and “what we want to do into the future”. The core of the strategy, focussed on mental health promotion and mental health support, would be fleshed out in a suitably-aligned action plan. The University

has also asked me to make recommendations around progress monitoring and measurement, and it makes sense for these strands of work to be taken forward together, as a follow-on from this report.

24. As already mentioned, good leadership arrangements are in place for the University's student mental health support services. Leadership around the student mental health strategy currently largely draws on the same staff group, in particular the Director of Student Wellbeing, with the Deputy Secretary (Student Experience) making an important leadership contribution within the University executive. Academic leadership arrangements seem less clear and **I recommend** further thought on this point. For example, as priorities emerge in the curriculum transformation programme, the University might identify a senior academic champion for student mental health within the various leadership roles aligned to the remit of the Vice-Principal (Students). The same person could chair a student mental health strategy implementation group with oversight of progress.
25. UUK's Stepchange framework sets out a whole university approach to mental health. With a student mental health strategy already in place and a review in hand, there are questions for the University about an equivalent strategy for staff wellbeing/mental health (as discussed in paragraph 16); and/or whether an institution-wide mental health strategy with a comprehensive whole university scope would be a helpful development at this point. **I recommend** further consideration of the options and the likely benefits/potential drawbacks. Self-evidently this will be a matter of institutional judgement, though I expect that clarity and rationale around the agreed way forward will be important should the University wish to consider registration towards the new University Mental Health Charter. In my discussions with stakeholders I detected a range of opinions as to the potential utility of an institution-wide mental health strategy, including a view that the values and aspirations set out in Strategy 2030 already constituted a sufficient point of reference for the various strands of work (staff and student) on the theme of wellbeing. Also that the currently collaborative leadership arrangements are effective. By contrast other consultees put forward a view that the University's approach is currently piecemeal; that the staff and student wellbeing agendas are insufficiently connected in strategic terms; that leadership is unhelpfully fragmented; and that the implications of the pandemic present a fresh opportunity for the institution to lay out an ambitious whole-university (aka 'corporate wellness') approach.
26. I have reviewed the university's arrangements for information sharing, including the privacy statement and the arrangements for recording student emergency contact information. These all look sound and **I recommend** continued efforts to ensure that staff across the University are confident in the practical outworking of these policies in the local context. When decisions are taken (primarily by the

senior Student Wellbeing team) to share information without consent, a template/proforma record might be preferable to the current narrative record keeping approach.

Summary assessment for leadership	
Summary assessment for information	

Working with the NHS

27. The university has made good progress in establishing effective links with local NHS providers, including within a partnership project (“Thrive”). A clear set of objectives has been laid out in the project with a view to overcoming a range of existing operational difficulties, clarifying boundaries of responsibility and improving student support into the future. These are very positive foundational steps and **I recommend** continued active engagement in the project. I was also pleased to hear of additional plans to engage senior stakeholders (both within HEIs and the NHS) alongside the operational contacts which are already established. From my perspective, significant improvement in this area is likely to be dependent on a combination of ‘bottom-up’ initiatives and ‘top-down’ strategic vision.
28. Edinburgh is aware of - and networked with - equivalent projects with similar objectives in other parts of the UK. The Greater Manchester Student Mental Health Service is a particularly interesting benchmark by way of an operational service ‘trailblazer’: <https://www.gmmh.nhs.uk/news/greater-manchester-universities-student-mental-health-service-3107/>. I have been closely involved as external adviser to a similar Cardiff-based project to improve student mental health in South East Wales (involving four HEIs and the local NHS Health Board) and I have recently been appointed as external evaluator for the project over the coming months. The SE Wales project could be another helpful point of reference for Edinburgh.

Summary assessment for working with the NHS	
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Transitions

29. Various recent innovations, including new online tools, have strengthened Edinburgh's approach to new student orientation. **I recommend** further development as part of the student action planning to follow on from this review. There are several points to bear in mind.

- Messages around wellbeing should be emphasised in the generalised orientation material directed towards all students. Reflecting a 'whole university' approach, there is a need to ensure effective embedding in the various elements of the Welcome Week programme, including digital channels. Raising awareness of support services is an important element in this activity, but represents only part of the picture.
- Additional targeted transition support, based on student disability disclosure, could be facilitated either virtually or in person.
- I have already mentioned a student wellbeing survey which could be incorporated at the point of induction by way of 'baselining' (see paragraph 11).
- Developments in new student orientation might form a model for additional support at other stages of transition in the student life cycle, including progression to undergraduate 2nd year and to postgraduate study. Key points of transition 'risk' (eg academic failure; return from interruption in study; PGR 'writing up' phase; remote repeaters, etc) could be targeted for additional support.
- Bearing in mind the predictability of some transition points, there is an obvious link to future planning around pre-emptive mental health promotion, as already referenced in paragraphs 11 and 18. Pilot work on learning analytics should also be helpful in this context.
- A cohort approach can be helpful in segmenting and targeting transitions support to best effect. On this point Edinburgh may find it helpful to refer to a recently revised report on the mental health of HE students from the Royal College of Psychiatrists, which includes a useful section specific to the needs of international students: [https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/improving-care/campaigning-for-better-mental-health-policy/college-reports/2021-college-reports/mental-health-of-higher-education-students\(CR231\)?searchTerms=Higher%20education](https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/improving-care/campaigning-for-better-mental-health-policy/college-reports/2021-college-reports/mental-health-of-higher-education-students(CR231)?searchTerms=Higher%20education).
- Stakeholders shared some interesting examples of additional employability support relevant to mental health, including a personalised approach to support introduced for the 2020 graduating cohort. From my perspective there look to be more opportunities to explore mental health issues at the employer interface, including considering the connection with resilience as a graduate attribute, as mentioned earlier. A recent Resolution Foundation report investigating the links between the labour market and mental health outcomes of young people could be interesting in this context: <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/double-trouble/>

Summary assessment for transition into university and the first-year experience	
Summary assessment for progression	

30. The impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic are wide ranging across higher education and Edinburgh has already set in train various initiatives to support the University community as pandemic restrictions are eased. **I recommend** that mental health and wellbeing issues should be incorporated for consideration in all such projects. There are several points to highlight.

- The university's work on digital education (aka blended learning) is an obvious context in which to address staff and student wellbeing issues and a recent report from JISC, which covers some of this ground, may be an interesting point of reference: <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/reports/student-and-staff-wellbeing-in-higher-education>.
- The University will need to review its approach to learning spaces from an estates perspective – thinking both of formal settings and space for social learning – and the opportunity should not be missed to incorporate wellbeing considerations in this work.
- The implications of the pandemic on the development of children and young people (aka 'Covid Generation') will need to be taken into account in relation to student and learning support and Edinburgh may wish to pay attention to the findings likely to emerge from a recently launched UK inquiry into how universities can best support students from September 2021: <https://upp-foundation.org/student-futures-commission/>. The university might also note findings in a recently-issued HE Policy Institute [policy paper](#) that almost two-thirds of students believe their mental health is a little or much worse as a result of the pandemic.
- The University's principles for hybrid working will be directly relevant, as already mentioned.
- In the preamble to this report I made reference to the Scottish government's Mental Health Strategy and I have also reviewed an additional Mental Health Transition and Recovery Plan (October 2020) which lays out post-pandemic areas of focus. There are no new HE-specific references: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/mental-health-scotlands-transition-recovery>.

31. Next steps agreed to follow on from this review are:

- Development of structure and content for the refreshed student mental health strategy
- Draft student mental health action plan
- Proposals regarding monitoring/measurement/metrics associated with the revised strategy.

I shall discuss with the Director of Student Wellbeing how best to take these points forward drawing on the findings in this report and any further stakeholder consultation/feedback.

Assessment Ratings Summary

Not Started - no progress.	
Major Challenge - minimal progress.	
Elements of Good Practice - evidence of examples of good practice.	
Widespread Good Practice - significant evidence of good practice.	
Best Practice - clear evidence of a whole university approach.	

LEARN	
Learning, teaching and assessment	
SUPPORT	
Support services	
Risk	
WORK	
Staff wellbeing	
Staff development	
LIVE	
Mental health promotion	
Residential accommodation	
Community	
Physical environment	
ENABLERS	
Leadership	
Information	
WORKING WITH THE NHS	
Working with the NHS	
TRANSITIONS	
Transition into university and the first-year experience	
Progression	

Summary of recommendations

The following points have been drawn from the main body of the report and are presented here in summary. Further information can be found in the relevant paragraphs above, as cross-referenced in brackets.

1. The university should lay out its understanding of the role of mental health and wellbeing in the curriculum, to inform further development in this area, and to include the experience of PGR students. (9, 10)
2. Edinburgh should develop a student-related action plan for mental health to build on the recommendations included in this review, and to include communications as a strand of activity. (11, 12, 18, 26)
3. Edinburgh should consider various potential enhancements in the area of staff wellbeing, including related staff development, with a whole university approach in mind. (16, 17)
4. The University should progress various structural and organisational matters relating to Residence Life activity. (11, 12, 20)
5. The University should consider options to consolidate its positive work in the area of community building/student sense of belonging. (19)
6. In line with its Estates Vision, the University should continue to take wellbeing issues into account within its capital development activity, and as estates planning is flexed with pandemic impacts in mind. (21)
7. A simplified structure should be preferred in the University's refreshed student mental health strategy, with the academic leadership contribution re-affirmed. (23, 24)
8. Edinburgh should consider the most effective way of progressing a whole university approach to mental health within the context of its corporate strategy. (35)
9. Edinburgh should continue its active engagement in student mental health issues at the NHS interface. (27)
10. The University should take the opportunity to develop further its student transitions support. (29)
11. Edinburgh should ensure that mental health and wellbeing issues are incorporated within its various initiatives/projects responding to the Covid-19 pandemic. (30)

Appendix 1 - Consultancy background information

Dr Andrew West is former University Secretary at the University of Sheffield. In that role he provided advice and support to the University's Council and governance structure, working closely with the University Executive Board.

For eleven years Andrew led academic and student-related professional services at the University of Sheffield, with a wide remit covering student recruitment and admissions, academic services including learning and teaching support, registry and student administration, careers and employability, and a broad range of student support and wellbeing services, including disability.

Andrew West is a former Chair of AMOSSHE – The Student Services Organisation and he was national Vice-Chair of AUA. His work on leadership and management in professional services features in professional publications and journals in the UK and overseas, including a chapter in UNESCO's guide to global best practice in HE student affairs. Until 2015 he was a member of the Executive of IASAS – a global organisation for student affairs professionals

Andrew's career in Higher Education spans 30 years. He is a member of the Board of Governors at Leeds Beckett University, Managing Consultant for AUA Consulting, an Associate of Advance HE and a Halpin Consulting Fellow.

Consulting experience:

Since 2017 Andrew West has provided consultancy to more than 25 institutions throughout the UK, incorporating various projects related directly to student support and wellbeing. Relevant previous projects include:

- Review of student support at the University of Manchester
- Review of integrated student support at City, University of London
- Review of Student Services at the University of Glasgow
- Review of residential student support at the University of Nottingham
- Development of mental health strategy at the University of Bristol
- Review of student support at Manchester Metropolitan University
- Review of counselling and mental health service at Kings College London
- Student support review at the University of Sussex.

Further information on Andrew's consulting practice, including client testimonials, can be found at <https://drandrewwest.wordpress.com>.

Appendix 2 – Consultation

The following have contributed to the consultation around this review. I have conducted interviews remotely with:

Christy Abatan, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine
Jim Aitken, Sport and Exercise
Stephen Bowd, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Philippa Burrell, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine
Katie Cebula, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Ros Claase, Student Wellbeing
Paddy Corscadden, Student Wellbeing
Sarah Cunningham-Burley, EDI lead
Jeremy Crang, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Glyn Davis, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Gavin Douglas, Deputy Secretary
Susan Dunnett, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Victoria Farrar College of Science and Engineering
Colm Harmon, Vice-Principal
Shian Holt, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Kirsty Hope, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine
Philip Graham, Marketing and Communications
Patrick Hadoke, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine
Harriet Harris, Chaplaincy
Tina Harrison, Assistant Principal
Gary Jebb, Director of Place
Lisa Kendall, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Alex Laidlaw, College of Science and Engineering
Katie MacDonald, Sports Union
Niamh McCrossan, Students' Association
Pauline MacDonald, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine
Antony Maciocia, College of Science and Engineering
Theresa Merrick, Marketing and Communications
Ronnie Millar, Student Wellbeing
Niall Moffat, Security
Alan Murray, Assistant Principal
Mike Newton, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Jessie Paterson, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine
Scott Pirie, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine
Caroline Proctor, College of Science and Engineering
Lorna Quickfall, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Cam Ritchie, Sport and Exercise
James Saville, HR
Rebecca Shade, Student Wellbeing
Andy Shanks, Student Wellbeing
Deborah Shaw, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine
Sarah Smith, University Secretary
Helen Stringer, Careers
Carina Svensen, Accommodation, Catering and Events
Suzanne Thompson, Health and Safety

Kristel Torokoff , College of Science and Engineering
Christopher Tucker, Residence Life
Nadia Tuzi College of Science and Engineering
Stephen Warrington, College of Science and Engineering



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Student Mental Health Strategy 2021-2026

Vision

The University's strategy for the next decade outlines our aim to achieve excellence in all that we do, fostering a welcoming community, where we will encourage and take care of one another.

Good mental health is essential to students' academic success and to their participation in a high quality and rewarding student experience. Empowering students to participate in maintaining and improving their mental health sets the foundation not only for academic success, but also to support self-esteem, personal resilience and self-confidence, with increased ability to sustain good mental health throughout life. Our vision is for the University to be an environment which enables and supports our students to flourish.

About one in four people in the UK will experience a mental health problem each year; around three-quarters of adults with a mental illness first experience symptoms before the age of 25, and today's generation of young adults are more likely to experience mental illness than previous generations ([Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey: Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing, 2014](#)).

Levels of mental illness, mental distress and low wellbeing among students in higher education in the UK are increasing, and students can be at added risk of experiencing poorer mental health and wellbeing, due to factors relating to academic, financial and social pressures ([Advance HE Student Academic Experience Survey Report 2020](#)). This is evident in the high levels of mental distress reported by students, and the extent to which UK universities, including the University of Edinburgh, have experienced increases in the number of students seeking support, as well as in the proportion of students who disclose a mental health condition to universities.

Concerns about student mental health have been acknowledged in higher education at a UK level, and Universities UK has put forward a '[Mentally Healthy Universities](#)' framework which promotes a 'whole university approach', and which we are using to inform our work at Edinburgh.



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We have developed this student mental health strategy to focus on four priority areas for the University: **Leadership; Mental Health Promotion; Mental Health Support; and Impact.** For each area we have included a short explanation setting out our aims and intentions, followed by information on the University's existing activities and planned future developments. We will track our progress in implementing the strategy, making use of a monitoring 'dashboard' incorporating a range of indicators and measures.

Introductory statement from the Principal

In 2017 the University of Edinburgh developed its first Student Mental Health Strategy. Just four years later we are ready to relaunch a reviewed and refreshed strategy, built on University UK's 'whole university approach', which is relevant to both our students and staff. This expanded approach is indicative of our holistic thinking where we see the mental health and wellbeing of our students and staff as inextricably linked. Embedded within our recent Strategy 2030 is our commitment to our people where we assert that "We will encourage and take care of one another. We will provide support in times of difficulty and celebrate success. We will build relationships that are mutually beneficial, long lasting and constructive."

The University years for our students are a time of great change: gaining new knowledge; accumulating new experiences; independent living; new opportunities; being away from friends and family; meeting new people and the immersion into academic life, experiences that all bring with them tremendous excitement. Yet, often this time of potential transformation is also one which leaves us open to stresses and difficulties that can have an impact on overall wellbeing. It is critical that we openly acknowledge this and put in place pre-emptive, easily accessible, strategies that prioritise wellbeing, embed healthy behaviours and offer help and support to everyone that needs it. That is at the heart of our refreshed strategy.

Of course we cannot do this alone, it is critically important that we link with our partners in the National Health Service. While we continue to make our own investments in student support services, it is important that the University works effectively with the various NHS services, whether that be in supporting students to navigate the support available or strengthening the systematic and operational links between the University and NHS.



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During the period of this review, 2020-2021, society has been living through the most challenging of times due to the global pandemic. We know that many members of our University community (as in all communities) have often struggled to cope, making the need to talk openly about mental health issues and the support available more important than ever. The fact that such conversations are becoming increasingly open and commonplace represents a significant positive shift and one in which the University of Edinburgh will continue to take an active part.

To ensure success of our strategy and to continue to reflect, review and improve, a strategy leadership group will monitor implementation against defined outcomes and Key Performance Indicators and report into the University's governance and committee structure.

The University of Edinburgh is a global community, diverse, inclusive and accessible to all. We welcome, in fact it is essential to our ethos that, students and staff from all social and cultural backgrounds feel at home with us. This strategy is a key part in bringing that promise alive.

Peter Mathieson
June 2021



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Leadership

We want to establish effective governance and leadership arrangements to support implementation of this strategy. We want to encourage collaborative leadership in the whole University community to support student mental health and wellbeing, aiming for a sector-leading approach. We want to strengthen academic oversight for the strategy to foster strong connections into the University's education and research.

What we are currently doing

- Our Director of Student Wellbeing provides a coordination point for taking forward actions aligned to our student mental health strategy.
- We have developed a student mental health action plan to focus activity and help to track progress.
- We have established a multi-disciplinary strategy task group to oversee implementation.
- We have invested in additional student support services.
- We have reviewed key policy areas with improved mental health in mind.
- We have commissioned an external review to propose a refreshed strategic direction and to guide future planning for student mental health.

What we want to do in future

- We will publish a revised student mental health action plan aligned to this refreshed strategy, and informed by external review.
- We will strengthen academic oversight for implementation through reviewing our governance structures for student mental health and wellbeing and establishing a new strategy leadership group, with Deans of Students in each College taking a leading role
- We will develop connections with the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, to foster collaborative working on student mental health.
- We will continue targeted policy review to support improved student wellbeing.
- We will align our work on student mental health and wellbeing with the University's developing work on staff mental health and wellbeing.



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Mental Health Promotion

We want to work proactively - and in partnership with the Students' Association and the Sports Union - to promote improved student mental health and wellbeing and to campaign against stigma. We want to integrate healthy behaviours and promote positive mental health within the university's educational and research mission, within the curriculum and in our co-curricular activities.

What we are currently doing

- We promote a wide-ranging programme of activities and events for Mental Health and Wellbeing Week and our #LetsTalk campaign.
- Our work on student 'sense of belonging' has put forward a range of recommendations relevant to improved student mental health.
- We work in partnership on student communications, drawing in teams across the University, including Residence Life, the Students' Association and the Sports Union.
- We have developed a range of supportive links with local mental health services external to the University.

What we want to do in future

- We will develop an annual student mental health promotion plan, with collaborative contributions from across the University to cover a wide range of issues relevant to student wellbeing.
- We will continue to develop our student mental health services across the proactive/ responsive spectrum.
- Our new Health and Wellbeing Centre, along with our service bases across the campus, will act as a focus for mental health and wellbeing promotion, and as a base for related events and activities.
- We will seek to consolidate our work on student ['sense of belonging'](#) to sustain best practices into the future.
- Our Doctoral College will promote improved student wellbeing as a key strand in their work with research students.
- We will work with colleagues on the Curriculum Transformation Programme to embed wellbeing and self-care within the curriculum across the University.



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Mental Health Support

We want to provide effective student support services which are easy to access and meet a wide range of student needs. We want to support improved mental health and wellbeing at key points of student transition. We want to provide effective training and support for staff relating to student mental health and wellbeing. We aim for effective collaborative working within the University and strong partnerships with external organisations to support student mental health and wellbeing. We want to learn from national and international best practice, aspiring to a sector-leading approach.

What we are currently doing

- We provide an extensive range of high quality student support services, including our Student Counselling Service, Student Disability Service, Chaplaincy and Residence Life.
- Our wide-ranging review of personal tutoring and student support has proposed an ‘evolved’ student support model for the University, with enhanced mental health support in mind, alongside delivering other improvements.
- Our staff development provision and training programme aims to help staff to support students with mental health difficulties.
- We have established student support networks both at pan-University and College levels to foster good practice among staff with student support responsibilities.
- We have put case referral routes in place to support staff to help students in distress.
- Our local NHS/HE partnership project “Thrive” aims to improve mental health support for our students.

What we want to do in future

- We plan to implement an ‘evolved’ student support system across the University, delivering improved support for student wellbeing, as well as proactive skills development, awareness raising activities and community building in Colleges and Schools.

- We will work to sustain additional investment in student services, with post-pandemic priorities in mind.
- We will strengthen case referral, escalation and management arrangements within a 'whole system' approach to student mental health.
- We will seek to develop additional peer-peer services supporting student wellbeing.
- We will enhance mental health support at key points of student transition, building on improved student induction/ orientation support, with specific reference to inclusion and welcoming of students from diverse backgrounds.
- We will review staff development relating to student mental health, ensuring that training is focused on staff roles across all student groups through our Professional Development Framework– and that we have coherence across the range of provision.
- We will progress our work with NHS partners, seeking tangible service improvements for students.



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Impact

Drawing on the skills of our professional teams and expert academic researchers, we want to use data and research effectively to support student mental health and wellbeing, helping us to monitor trends, track progress, evaluate impact and plan improvements.

What we are currently doing

- Student support services employ a range of monitoring and evaluation methods, including service usage and satisfaction ratings alongside impact measurement.
- We ensure that the services we deliver are evidence-based, drawing on academic research.
- We commission specific evaluation/ research projects to inform service development.
- We use regular student surveys to obtain feedback on student support provision.
- We report annually on student mental health to the Senate Education Committee.

What we want to do in future

- We want to introduce a 'baseline' wellbeing measurement to enable us to track trends in student mental health over time.
- We will develop a student mental health 'dashboard' using a range of indicators to demonstrate progress and impact in implementing this strategy.
- We will work closely with academic colleagues across our University, and draw on academic research to support improved student mental health services.
- We plan to review our approach to reporting on student mental health within the University's governance and committee structure with effective monitoring and improved impact in mind.

Senate Education Committee

15 September 2021

December Exam Diet 2021/22 – Practical Implementation

Description of paper

1. This paper confirms the practical approach to the December 2021 exam diet. It takes into account:
 - a. the discussion and partial agreement reached at the 12 May 2021 SEC meeting;
 - b. decisions made at the 3 June 2021 APRC meeting;
 - c. the outcomes of an additional meeting of a sub-group of SEC on 3 September 2021 to discuss individually-tailored adjustments.

Action requested / recommendation

2. SEC is asked to APPROVE the recommended approach to the December 2021/22 exam diet, and to the implementation of adjustments for students with assessed needs in particular.

Background and context

3. At its 12 May meeting, SEC approved an overall approach to running the December 2021 exam diet online with standard durations of 2 or 3 hours (short-format exams).
4. Decisions on additional time for students to upload and submit exam work and on the treatment of late submissions were referred to APRC. At the 3 June APRC meeting, the following was agreed:
 - a. Students would be offered an additional 1 hour for submission, with no further 'silent window'.
 - b. Where special circumstances had been accepted, Schools could decide whether or not to mark exam answers submitted late on a case-by-case basis. Late submissions would only be marked where Boards of Examiners were satisfied that the student could not have gained an unfair advantage by submitting late.
5. On 6 August 2021, SEC was provided with an electronic business paper informing it of the decisions taken by APRC, and asking it to approve a proposed approach to implementing adjustments for students with assessed needs. Consensus was not reached on the proposals and as such, an additional meeting of a sub-group of SEC was convened on 3 September 2021 to discuss the matter further. The minute of this meeting is provided in the appendix.

Discussion

6. The University is committed to providing adjustments that are based on individual students' needs and the way in which these affect their studies.

SEC 21/22 1 B

7. However, operational difficulties can make it complex for some Schools to implement individually-tailored exam adjustments for all online exams. Where these operational difficulties exist, the University is committed to ensuring that any blanket adjustments used instead either meet or exceed students' assessed needs.
8. Students with assessed needs undertaking short-format, online exams in academic year 2020/21 received a blanket, 1 hour adjustment. This appeared to work well. Any move away from this approach in the December 2021 exam diet (particularly towards applying a smaller adjustment) would be difficult to justify.
9. **In this context, SEC is invited to approve the recommendation that the University introduces a blanket, 1 hour adjustment for short-format exams in the December 2021 diet for the majority of students with a Schedule of Adjustments.**
10. This will provide adequate support for almost all students with a 25% or 33% adjustment (the most common adjustments); will provide continuity for students; and will significantly reduce the operational difficulties associated with implementing adjustments for some Schools.
11. **SEC is also invited to approve the following exceptions to the use of a blanket, 1 hour adjustment:**
 - a. **for those students whose assessed needs will not be adequately addressed through a 1 hour adjustment;**
 - b. **for those areas where individually-tailored adjustments are already being successfully implemented on account of the technology and exam formats being used;**
 - c. **in cases where PSRB requirements prevent the University from making use of blanket adjustments.**

In these cases, individually-tailored adjustments will be implemented.

12. No change is recommended to the permitted upload / submission window: while not all technologies and exam formats require an upload / submission window, those that do will retain a 1 hour window for all students.

Resource implications

13. The proposed approach will substantially reduce the operational difficulties and therefore the resource required to implement exam adjustments for students with assessed needs.

Risk management

14. The recommended approach mitigates risks associated with the exam diet: the Students' Association is content that students will consider this a fair approach to the implementation of adjustments, and the approach reduces the operational difficulties associated with implementing adjustments for some Schools.

Equality & diversity

15. The proposed approach will provide fair adjustments for students with assessed needs, in line with the University's commitments in this area.

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

16. Implementation by Exams & Timetabling. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the agreed approach will be overseen by APRC.

Author

Philippa Ward
7 September 2021

Presenter

Philippa Ward

Freedom of Information – Open

**Note of Meeting to Discuss Arrangements for December 2021 Exam Diet -
Individual Adjustments****3 September 2021, 12.00pm**Present

- Colm Harmon - Convener
- Judy Hardy - CSE
- Rachael Quirk - CAHSS
- Sabine Rolle - CAHSS
- Neil Turner – CMVM
- David Kluth – CMVM
- Karen Howie - IS
- Scott Rosie – Timetabling Services
- Paddy Corscadden – Disability Service
- Tara Gold – Students' Association
- Pippa Ward – Secretary

Members noted that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss individualised adjustments for exams. All other issues relating to the implementation of the December 2021 exam diet had been resolved and the Senate Education Committee discussion paper amended accordingly.

The following points were discussed and agreed:

- The University is committed to providing adjustments that are based on individual students' needs and the way in which these affect their studies.
- Where operational difficulties make it difficult for Schools to implement individually tailored exam adjustments, any blanket adjustments must meet or exceed students' agreed adjustments.
- It is essential that a University-wide approach is adopted such that a student receives the same adjustment, regardless of which exam they are sitting.
- Online and on-campus exams provide very different experiences, and online exams can present particular challenges for students with disabilities.
- Given that the University is moving towards 'business as usual', there would be benefit in implementing a model of adjustments now that also works in the future. However, no long-term decisions have yet been taken about the use of online exams. Further work on this will be done through the Assessment and Feedback workstream of the Curriculum Transformation programme in the coming year.
- There was strong support for implementing a blanket adjustment (1 hour) for short format (2 to 3 hour) exams for the majority of students with a Schedule of Adjustments on the basis that this:
 - would provide adequate support, in line with the University's commitments, for almost all students with a 25% or 33% adjustment (the most common adjustments);
 - would provide continuity for students who had undertaken short-format exams in 2020/21 and had become used to receiving a blanket, 1 hour

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adjustment. Any move away from this (particularly towards a smaller adjustment) would be difficult to justify to students;

- would significantly reduce the operational difficulties associated with implementing adjustments.
- The following exceptions were discussed:
 - Students whose needs would not be adequately catered for through a 1 hour adjustment. In these cases, individually tailored adjustments would be implemented.
 - Schools who were already successfully implementing individually tailored adjustments on account of the technology and exam formats they were using. In these cases, there would be no requirement to make use of a blanket adjustment.
 - Cases where PSRB requirements prevent the University from making use of blanket adjustments. In these cases, individually tailored adjustments would be implemented.
- Upload / submission time is not required for all of the technology and exam formats being used by Schools. However, where upload / submission time is required, a 1 hour window would be retained for all students.

Senate Education Committee

15 September 2021

**University of Edinburgh Students' Association Vice President Education
Priorities 2021/22**

Description of paper

1. This paper provides an overview of the Students' Association Vice President Education's priorities for the academic year 2021/22.

Action requested / recommendation

2. For information and comment from Committee members.

Background and context

3. In March 2021, Tara Gold was elected as the Students' Association's Vice President Education for the academic year 2021/22. This paper outlines her priorities for the year ahead, including key areas of work.

Discussion

4. Over the coming year, Tara will be focusing on the following priority areas:

Strengthening the University's response to the pandemic

COVID has had an incalculable impact on students' lives; their academic study, mental health, and finances, all of which need to be kept in mind as we return to campus. Marginalised students have been particularly adversely affected throughout the pandemic, necessitating increased consideration of their perspectives and needs. The shift to online learning has also presented an opportunity to improve accessibility.

Tara will work to strengthen the University's COVID response by prioritising the centring of student voices in decision-making and planning, advocating for measures to support students who have missed essential components of their degrees, and working to ensure progress on accessibility is not lost in the return to on-campus activity.

Modernising Edinburgh's curriculum

Events in recent years have increasingly highlighted the decreasing suitability of Edinburgh's curriculum for students. Furthermore, while the topic of decolonisation

has been highlighted as an area of activity, the University is yet to enact decolonisation efforts across its educational offering, which is central to the creation of an educational experience that reflects the University's values. *The Curriculum Transformation Project* represents an opportunity to reimagine the curriculum, and to help it reflect the world we live in now and the unique challenges we face in it.

Through *The Curriculum Transformation Project*, Tara will prioritise supporting student engagement and involvement in the programme's work and outputs. Centrally, ensuring the perspectives of students from marginalised backgrounds are heard and supported is a priority in creating an inclusive and accessible curriculum. Tara will push for strong engagement of the project in decolonisation work, and the integration of modes of accountability on decolonial activity into its operation, to ensure alignment between values and educational delivery. Tara will also work to establish processes for future processes of curriculum transformation, creating more opportunities for student-staff collaboration so that learners have an active role in shaping the education they want and need. Another key focus will be integrating recognition of broader aspects of the University experience into the curriculum, such as internships, studying abroad, student activism and research.

Increasing transparency, responsibility, and accountability

Tara will prioritise fostering more transparency, responsibility and accountability from the University and its structures to improve the student experience. Complex and opaque University processes create additional burdens on students, particularly when dealing with difficult circumstances, often exacerbating pre-existing inequities. Tara will work on improving the navigability of University structures for students, particularly student support services, advocating for better co-ordination between services and clearer student communications of available support and how to access it.

Tara will also work with stakeholders to make the University's structures more accountable on issues which are important to students, such as sustainability and ethical partnerships, and will advocate for the strengthening of reporting procedures, support structures, and policy protections for marginalised students in academic spaces.

Risk management

5. To be considered if specific actions arise from the paper.

Equality & diversity

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

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

7. To be agreed if specific actions arise from the paper.

Author

Stuart Lamont
Academic Policy Coordinator, Edinburgh University Students' Association
03/09/21

Presenter

Tara Gold
Vice President Education, Edinburgh University Students' Association

Freedom of Information

This paper is open.

Senate Education Committee

15 September 2021

Proposal to establish a Student Voice Sub-Committee

Description of paper

1. The paper proposes that Senate Education Committee (SEC) establish a Student Voice Sub-committee with responsibility for
 - analysing and synthesising student feedback from questionnaires, Student-Staff Liaison Committees and other fora;
 - developing action plans / recommendations and monitoring progress with implementation of changes in response to student feedback.

This work aligns with the 2030 aim that “Our teaching will match the excellence of our research. We will improve and sustain student satisfaction and wellbeing.”

Action requested / recommendation

1. SEC is recommended to approve the establishment of a Student Voice Sub-Committee.

Background and context

2. Feedback from the National Student Survey (NSS) in recent years have consistently shown that our students – in broad terms – think that the University does a good job of seeking out their views but does a poor job of responding to them or demonstrating that action has been taken based on student feedback. The University compares poorly against its Russell Group peers in this area. See Figure 1.

A number of free text comments in the NSS go further in articulating a sense that student views are dismissed or that Schools and the wider management team are defensive when approached with feedback.

“Staff on my course have absolutely no interest in hearing or responding to feedback suggested by students. The response from course organisers, especially after Student-Staff Liaison Committee Meetings has been incredibly hostile and passive aggressive. As a student, I really feel like staff do not care about me and have absolutely no interest in even attempting to improve the degree according to student suggestions.”



Fig 1: 2021 NSS results for “Student Voice” theme, including comparison with Russell Group average.

Discussion

3. The University collects feedback from its students in many different ways including:
 - a. Mid-course feedback
 - b. End of course feedback (currently under review)
 - c. National surveys such as NSS, the Postgraduate Taught and Postgraduate Research Experience Surveys;
 - d. “Pulse” surveys (ie short regular surveys running over the course of a semester or a year with broadly similar questions)
 - e. Student/Staff Liaison Committees (SSLCs) which allow student representatives to identify and raise issues directly with senior School representatives.
 - f. (In future) a University-wide student experience survey is planned that will be used to gather feedback from students who are not participating in a major external survey that year.
 - g. A number of other internal student surveys run every year, often focussed on a particular area of student experience (eg the applicant experience). Some of these are annual, others may be ad hoc. Use of these surveys is approved (or not) by the Student Surveys Ethics Committee, chaired by the Deputy Secretary (Student Experience). (However this group is not responsible for oversight of how the feedback gathered is responded to.)
4. There are some recognised challenges with some of the mechanisms above:
 - a. Pulse surveys ran for the first time in Academic Year 20/21. They presented invaluable insights not student perceptions and experiences over the course of the year but the University lacked a mechanism to

- respond rapidly to issues that could – potentially – have been fixed “in year” and led to an improvement in student experience as a result.
- b. SSLC’s can be a powerful mechanism for both collecting to and responding to student voice, but there is no clear route for SSLC’s to escalate concerns which are raised but which the SSLC has no power to address (for example concerns about changes to the KB Shuttle Bus).
 - c. Course Enhancement Questionnaires (currently discontinued) allowed students to give feedback on their courses but only at the end of the course so any enhancements made as a result would be of no benefit – and potentially not even visible - to the students who provided the feedback.
 - d. Student feedback can cover quite short- and medium-term practical issues (the quality of seat booking software to reserve library space; the quality of catering on a particular campus) as well as issues that require policy or regulatory change if they are to be enacted (for example the institutional approach to exams and assessment, adjustments, or special circumstances). Feedback may require local action nor institutional action – or both. This makes the flow of feedback into the right area for consideration and action more complex.
5. A Student Voice Sub-Committee of SEC could provide a vehicle for:
- a. Improved analysis and synthesis of student feedback, particularly synthesis of issues across different questionnaires and surveys
 - b. Identification of both major issues that require to be considered, and the groups or individuals that need to consider them (for example, escalating issues from SSLC’s to relevant University groups or departments)
 - c. Establishing and reporting on what actions have been taken based on student feedback.
 - d. Establishing and reporting on how changes based on student feedback have been communicated and “fed back” to the student community.
6. The possible Terms of Reference for a Student Voice Sub-committee of SEC are attached as Appendix A.

Resource implications

7. The major resource commitments are:
- The time needed by committee members to attend the committee.
 - The time needed by the Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling team within Student Administration to service and prepare papers and reports for the Sub-Committee.

Risk management

8. Addressing current, systemic failures in the way the University responds to student voice will contribute to mitigation of the strategic University risk of “failure to enhance the student experience”.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

9. Responding effectively to student voice will contribute to the SDG to “*Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.*”

Equality & diversity

10. The draft terms of Reference for the Sub-committee place a specific responsibility on the Sub-committee to analyse major issues and themes across the different equality groups, and to take and report on appropriate action where equality impacts are observed.

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

11. If the recommendation to establish a Student Voice Sub-Committee is agreed there will need to be further engagement between the convenor, the Student Data team and Colleges and Schools to agree membership, also to establish a schedule of business and clarity over what feedback the Sub-committee will be considering, and when.

Author

*Gavin Douglas
Deputy Secretary Student Experience
08 Sept 2021*

Presenter

Same

Freedom of Information

Open

APPENDIX A:

Student Voice Group – a sub-committee of Senate Education Committee

Draft Terms of reference:

- Receive and review student feedback from national surveys, University of Edinburgh surveys and Student and Staff Liaison Committees, including analysis of feedback by different equality groups
- Develop action plans / identify changes that are required as a result of student feedback
- Escalate issues with Schools / professional service teams as they arise
- Monitor progress / changes made after issues have been escalated
- Feedback actions taken as a result of student feedback back to the wider student population

Membership:

- Gavin Douglas, Deputy Secretary (Students) – Chair
- VP Education, EUSA
- Philip Graham, Head of Internal Communications
- Fiona Philippi, Doctoral College
- Melissa Highton, Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Services, ISG
- Paula Webster, Head of Student Analytics, Insights & Marketing, SS&A
- College Deans of Students
- A nominated DoPs from one School per College

Senate Education Committee

15 September 2021

Edinburgh Futures Institute Postgraduate Taught Programmes: policy on duration of study for lifelong learning students**Description of paper**

1. EFI is in the process of launching a new PGT portfolio. The EFI Curriculum Oversight Board has approved the first six programmes, which EFI will launch in 2022-23, meaning opening for admissions in October 2021. EFI is piloting 12 PGT courses associated with these programmes in 21-22.
2. EFI will market its PGT portfolio in part on a lifelong learning basis to potential students, offering a new way to be part of the University community. The EFI portfolio is based on courses that combine skills development with research-led academic knowledge and understanding, contributing to the social and skills agendas for lifelong learning. They are structured in 10-credit chunks, delivered over a 2-day period (with some pre- and post-activity) designed to appeal to new kinds of students and be workable on a lifelong learning basis. The portfolio emphasises accessibility for part-time students and provides sector-leading flexibility to combine online and on-campus study.
3. Lifelong learning policy and strategy is an increasingly high priority for governments and supra-national organisations, from the UK government [lifetime skills guarantee](#), Skills Development Scotland's '[A human future](#)', to the OECD ([Skills Outlook 2021: learning for life](#)), the UNESCO [lifelong learning policy and strategies programme](#), the [growing EU policy focus](#) and the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#). Often framed in terms of readiness of response to the 'megatrends' of automation, increase in life expectancy, rapid technological change and migration, the lifelong learning agenda is most typically framed in terms of the skills and future of work agendas. However its broader benefits for individual fulfilment, enhanced quality of life and social cohesion are also increasingly emphasised.
4. The University is active in its lifelong learning response on many fronts from the [Centre for Open Learning](#), to the [DDI Skills Gateway](#), our [short online courses](#) and postgraduate professional development courses in key areas (for example [Data Science, Technology and Innovation](#); and [Internal Medicine](#)). Microcredentials are a part of this picture and an increasing focus. The EFI approach contributes to this activity by further breaking down the distinction between formal academic programmes and lifelong learning, designing its extensive PGT portfolio from the ground up to be accessible on a course-by-course basis to a broader community of learners.
5. EFI's distinctive academic vision, and the innovative and nature of the planned portfolio, are likely to test the boundaries of the University's established academic regulations and policies. The high degree of flexibility around duration of study

that EFI wishes to offer lifelong learning students studying courses associated with these programmes (see paragraph 9) is not anticipated by the University's current academic regulations. The Senate Academic Regulations and Policy Committee has advised that the University should clarify its position on the underlying policy issues before allowing EFI to go ahead with its plans. The Vice-Principal (Students) advised us to present a paper to the Senate Education Committee to seek its views on these policy issues.

6. Since lifelong learning is central to EFI's academic vision, if at all possible we want to secure the Committee's support for our plans in time to allow us to highlight them when we launch our high-profile marketing campaign for the new PGT programmes in October 2021. On a practical level, we want to offer two of the Semester Two pilot courses in 2021-22 on a lifelong learning basis (ie to members of the public not currently studying on UoE programmes), and in order to do so will need to put appropriate programme codes in place. We are therefore seeking a clear position at this meeting if possible.

Action requested / recommendation

7. We are asking the Committee to confirm whether it supports EFI's proposed arrangements for flexibility in duration of study as set out in paragraph 9 below.

Background and context

8. EFI is in the process of developing a large portfolio of new interdisciplinary PGT programmes. The EFI Curriculum Oversight has approved the first six of these programmes (along with c. 60 individual PGT courses to support the programmes):

- Narrative Futures: Art, Data, Society
- Data, Inequality and Society
- Education Futures
- Service Management and Design
- Creative Industries
- Future Governance

Discussion

EFI plans for lifelong learning

9. In addition to offering the opportunity to study for named programmes of study (MSc, PG Diploma, PG Cert), EFI plans to offer the opportunity to study courses associated with this portfolio on a 'lifelong learning' basis - that is, to take individual standalone credit-bearing courses without needing to register for a particular named award. We would like to offer a high degree of flexibility here – **allowing students to remain registered on a lifelong learning basis for a long period of time (10 years in the first instance) without having to enrol on courses in each academic session**, and with a high limit (120 credits) that students could take on this basis without having to transfer onto a programme leading to a named award. Operating a 10 year programme code is not the norm

for lifelong learning in the University, but is not unprecedented for taught postgraduate study (for example, the University's regulations allow a maximum of 11 years study, including concessions, for part-time intermittent Masters). It would establish a path – following a piloting phase – to extend this period further as a stronger 'lifelong' promise.

Likely volumes of lifelong learning students

10. We do not have firm forecasts for the number of students we expect to take EFI courses on a lifelong learning basis. EFI's business engagement team (who have expertise in particular sectors, for example creative industries) have advised us that some of our courses will work well in the lifelong market since they address key skills development issues (eg around data driven innovation) relevant within particular sectors. External stakeholders that we have engaged with about our portfolio have also been positive about the idea of us offering our courses on a lifelong learning basis, and we have already held one successful pilot (on the topic of Digital Influence, with c. 50 external participants). However, external stakeholders have also signalled that our planned fee structures are likely to constrain demand for the courses.
11. Other areas of the University, for example various programme areas in MVM and the MSc Data, Science, Technology, and Innovation, have experience of offering credit-bearing courses on a 'standalone' basis (sometimes referred to as 'Postgraduate Professional Development', PPD). Feedback from these areas suggest that demand tends to be relatively modest, and that the majority of students enrolling on this basis as an alternate route to MSc study, having missed the deadline for applying for the named programme. However, those areas are not offering the degree of flexibility that we are planning, and not all are marketing this aspect of their portfolio in its own right – and therefore the level of demand for lifelong learning study for their provision is not necessarily a predictor of demand for our portfolio.
12. Ultimately, our lifelong learning portfolio is new and distinctive, and we will not be certain about the level of demand until we start offering it. In the short- to medium- term, the most likely scenario is that numbers will be relatively modest. In 21-22, we are only planning to offer two of our pilot credit-bearing courses on a lifelong learning basis– and do not anticipate more than c. 10-20 lifelong learning students in total (the other students will be taking our courses as electives while enrolled on other UoE programmes). While from 22-23 we plan to offer the majority of our courses on a lifelong learning basis (so, potentially c. 40-50 courses in 22-23), in practice we think only a sub-set of these courses are likely to have strong demand within the lifelong learning market, and that it will take a while for EFI to develop its profile as a provider of lifelong learning.

Divergence from typical arrangements

13. Strictly speaking, the University's academic regulations and policies do not prevent the University from establishing a programme for lifelong learners with a ten-year prescribed period. However, the proposed arrangements would be a significant departure from typical University practice for programme set-up for

lifelong learning / PPD students. For example, at present, Schools / Deaneries that offer opportunities for lifelong learning tend to limit this to a maximum of 50 credits over two years – although we are aware of one example that allows a substantially longer period of study.

14. Given that our plans diverge from typical arrangements, in June 2021 we asked the Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC) whether it supported our plans. However, SAPRC thought that our plans raised some significant institutional policy issues, on which it did not think it was the right body to advise.

System and statutory returns implications

15. APRC was aware that our plans to allow lifelong learning students to remain registered for a long period of time (by creating a programme code with a long period of study, for example 10 years) could raise substantive systems and statutory returns issues. However, Student Systems has subsequently confirmed that our plans are compatible with student system and statutory return requirements (although operating such arrangements would create significant administrative overheads for EFI). Student Systems have highlighted that the move to HESA Data Futures may require the University to change how it manages students on unstructured programmes who are not taking courses in a particular years – at present Student Systems does not require these students to be on interruption until they return to study, but this could change in the next year or two. While a change of that type would be likely to increase the administrative overheads associated with managing such arrangements, it would not prevent EFI from operating its planned arrangements.

Policy issues

16. The following paragraphs set what we understand to be the main policy issues associated with our plans for lifelong learning.
17. In order to operate our plans for lifelong learning, it would be necessary for the individuals to matriculate on an annual basis – otherwise Student Systems would withdraw them. **This means that – should they choose to matriculate – these individuals would have the formal status of matriculated ‘students’ irrespective of whether they plan to enrol on any credit-bearing courses in any given session**, and could continue to have this status for up to 10 years. In some respects, the same position applies to students on part-time intermittent programmes, since they have the flexibility to matriculate while choosing not to register for credits in any given session. However, students registering for a named award have expressed an intention to study until they had completed the award – making it reasonable to regard any year that they do not study as a temporary gap before they recommence their studies. In contrast, lifelong learning students may have registered for a single course without necessarily expressing an intention to study with EFI in the future.

18. Allowing lifelong learners to have the status of students for a sustained period of time without requiring them to register for credit-bearing courses in any given year raises two substantive policy issues.
19. One relates to **access to University services**. While we have not undertaken a full review of how University service providers manage access, we understand that many areas manage access to students on the basis of downstream data from EUCLID – meaning that if EUCLID records an individual lifelong learner as a matriculated student, many (if not all) University services will provide them with access to their services. This means that, under our proposed arrangements, as long as they continue to matriculate each year, EFI lifelong learning students would continue to have access to the full range of University services (eg Library, subsidise access to the Centre for Sport and Exercise, student services such as Careers and Counselling) on an ongoing basis for the full prescribed period (which we are proposing would be 10 years). As we understand it, these students would also continue to have membership of the Edinburgh University Students Association.
20. There is an argument that, as a point of principle, the University should not allow lifelong learners to access University services if they are not registered on any courses in a particular year (and therefore are not paying any tuition fees), simply because they undertook a credit-bearing course at some point in the past. However, the University already allows students to access the full range of services when they are not paying for those services – for example, because they are on interruption of studies or on part-time intermittent programme and not studying in a particular year (and therefore not paying tuition fees at all), or because they are enrolled on credit-bearing courses that charge relatively low fees which could not cover the full overheads associated with those services.
21. There is also an argument that allowing lifelong learning students to access these services even when not registered for courses could increase pressure on student services which are already facing significant pressures. Lifelong learning students will utilise the Library and other digital services while undertaking specific courses, and they will also access the Student Disability Service if they require adjustments for particular courses. However, in practice, we think that lifelong learning students are relatively unlikely to seek to access student services when they not studying with the University, and that it is unlikely that students would seek to exploit the situation by registering for a single credit-bearing course in order to access University services for a sustained period thereafter. We have asked some of the key wellbeing services if they hold data on use of their services by lifelong learning students – to date only one service (Chaplaincy) has responded, and, while they have not provided any quantitative data, they have suggested that any use is modest. Anecdotal evidence from areas of the University that offer lifelong learning provision also suggest lifelong learners may be less likely than other student categories to make use of many student services (such as Careers / Counselling) even while they are registered for particular courses – although it is unclear whether this is because they are not sure what service are available or relevant, or because they are typically mid-career professionals who have their own support structures in their local and professional contexts.

22. Another substantive issue relates to **the price of licenses**. Some suppliers take account of the number of students when setting the price of their services – and for these purposes in some cases the University will report the number of students on the basis of EUCLID data on matriculated students. As a result, our plans for lifelong learners could increase the cost of the University’s licenses for certain services.
23. Allowing lifelong learners to have the status of students for a sustained period of time without requiring them to register for credit-bearing courses in any given year raises several other policy issues:
- Were the University to become aware that a lifelong learner is behaving in a way that could contravene University rules and regulations, the University would need to decide whether it would be reasonable (and justifiable) to take action under **the Code of Student Conduct** even if the individual is not currently undertaking credit-bearing study at the University and has not committed to do so in the future. In a formal sense, by matriculating lifelong learning students accept that they are subject to the Code. If a lifelong learning student’s behaviour relates directly to their studies or to their interaction with the University community, then it seems reasonable to apply the Code to them in the same way as to other students. However, the Code also gives the University power to act if a student is behaving in a way that adversely affect the reputation of the University, even if the student’s activities are taking place outside the University community. There is an argument that it may be reasonable only to consider using the Code in exceptional circumstances for lifelong learners not currently registered on a course at the University and not otherwise engaging with the University community – and it should be possible to consider this on a case by case basis. Therefore, while these arrangements would create a degree of ambiguity regarding whether and how the University should apply the Code, Academic Services advise that, in practice, any ambiguity would be manageable.
 - The ambiguous status of these students poses questions about whether the University has a **duty of care and an obligation to provide student support** to a lifelong learner when they are not currently studying at the University. For example, should academic areas assign Personal Tutors (for as long as the University continues to operate the PT system) to lifelong learners simply because they are registered on a ‘programme’. We suggest that it would be reasonable only to provide student support and Personal Tutors to lifelong learners during a period that they are registered on a credit-bearing course, and not to consider the University as having an obligation to provide student support or any duty of care at other times.
 - The operation of a published ‘prescribed period of study’ makes it clear to prospective and current students that the University has no obligation to keep offering a programme, or particular courses within it, beyond that period – and, by implication, that the University would continue to offer that provision to students until the end of the prescribed period. There is a risk that applying a long prescribed period (eg 10 years) for lifelong learning study at EFI could

raise expectation and create legal obligations under consumer law to keep running this provision for a long period of time (10 years). However, we would make it clear in marketing materials that we would not have any obligation on the University to continue to offer specific courses or awards for the full period – and that, instead, we are simply saying that we would allow EFI lifelong learning students the opportunity to take any courses that we happen to offer over that 10 year period. We anticipate that this approach would avoid any material consumer rights and expectation-management risks.

24. While it is important that the Committee considers these policy issues, we think there are strong grounds for allowing EFI to proceed with our plans for lifelong learning:

- It will be difficult for EFI to test the market for our vision for lifelong learning without putting these flexible lifelong learning arrangements in place. Operating programme codes with a duration of (say) 1 or 2 years and then withdrawing students to re-apply if they want to undertake any further study would disincentive individuals from participating in lifelong learning on an ongoing basis, and would make it much more challenging to make them feel part of our community.
- Even if University services are able to provide quantitative data on current levels of use of their services by lifelong learning students, this would not necessarily predict levels of demand for EFI, given the distinctive nature of the EFI lifelong learning offer. The only way to establish whether EFI lifelong learning students would place any material demands on University services when not registered for particular courses is to put the arrangements in place and monitor levels of uptake of particular services.
- While, in theory, the addition of EFI lifelong learners to the University's student body could increase some license fee levels, it seems unlikely that it would make a material difference unless EFI is successful in recruiting large number of these lifelong learners (and therefore generating a significant income to offset any new institutional costs). Therefore, it should be possible to keep this issue under review, until the demand for lifelong learning study with EFI is clearer.
- The other policy issues (those associated with the Code of Student Conduct, duty of care and student support, and consumer law) should be relatively straightforward to manage.

Broader discussions about microcredentials

25. For the purposes of academic regulation and management of access to services, the **University operates on a binary arrangement - there is only one category of student** (anyone undertaking credit-bearing study irrespective of the volume, level and duration of study), and **everyone else is a 'learner'**. If you are a 'student', you have access to a full range of services and are treated as a member of the University community (but only for a defined period, until your programme ends). If you are a 'learner', the default is no access to any University

services and no membership of the broader University community. This binary makes in a context in which an institution focuses almost exclusively on offering degree programmes for which all 'students' are paying a significant sum in order to study (and therefore it is reasonable to give them all access to the full range of services), whereas all other types of provision are marginal and low-cost. However, there is increasing interest across the University in expanding the range of 'microcredentials' that the University offers – for example, 'standalone' credit-bearing courses, micro-masters, and non-credit CPD. This increasingly diverse field of micro-credentials is likely to break down the traditional binary between credit-based and non-credit study and to pose fundamental questions about how the University manages access to services. If the University wants to offer a range of microcredentials, it may need to consider replacing this binary approach to managing access to services with more flexible models.

26. It is possible that, over the long-term, the University will revise its strategic position on students' access to services more fundamentally in response to the microcredentials agenda. Allowing EFI to proceed with its plans for lifelong learning will provide evidence of demand for services that would assist the University to establish its strategy. Were the University to wait for these broader strategic discussions to take place before allowing EFI to proceed with our plans, EFI would not be able to make lifelong learning a central part of its offer when it launches its PGT portfolio.

For discussion

27. **We are asking the Committee to discuss these issues and to decide whether it supports EFI's proposed arrangements for flexibility in duration of study.** One option would be to allow EFI to proceed on a pilot basis – allowing us to test the demand for this model and to explore the practical and resourcing implications of operating the arrangements, while establishing an evaluation point (say, after three years) and putting a contractual mechanism in place with students that would allow us revise or end the arrangements without having to wait for the full ten years to end.

Resource implications

28. EFI's proposed arrangements for flexibility in duration of study have administrative implications for EFI, which we will factor into our planning. The paper also highlights the potential resource implications for access to services, and for license costs.

Risk management

29. This paper aims to minimise any risks associated with the proposed arrangements for duration of study and lifelong learning by allowing the University to consider the policy implications at the outset.

Equality & diversity

30. The proposed arrangements for the project do not raise any equality and diversity issues. The proposed arrangements for duration of study and lifelong learning will provide greater flexibility of study, which will enable students from a diverse range of backgrounds to study with EFI.

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

31. If the Committee supports the proposed arrangements, we will report back to the Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee's meeting on 23 September 2021. Since we would not need any formal changes to University regulation and policy, this would be for information only - APRC would not need to take any specific action.

32. Were the Committee to support the idea of proceeding on a pilot basis, we would need to establish an evaluation point.

Author

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EFI Head of Education Administration
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Presenter

Tom Ward

7 September 2021

Freedom of Information

Open

Senate Education Committee

15 September 2021

Review of the Open Educational Resources Policy

Description of paper

1. This paper presents a review of relevant developments relating to the Open Educational Resources (OER) Policy introduced in 2016, and a proposal to update and improve the Policy in light of these developments.
2. Strategy 2030 outcomes:
 - iii) “We will be a global leader in ... the use of data with integrity.” The revised Policy strengthens the University’s guidance on the use of personal data within OERs.
 - iv) “Improved digital outreach will see us enabling global participation in education.” Considering and, where appropriate, incorporating national and international developments in open licensing of teaching and learning resources will help maintain leading practice in this area.

Encouragement to produce OERs also contributes to the following outcomes:

- v) “We will be leading Scotland’s commitment to widening participation.”
- vii) “We will have created opportunities for partners, friends, neighbours and supporters to co-create, engage with the world and amplify our impacts.”

Action requested / recommendation

3. Members are asked to **approve** the revised OER Policy appended to this paper.

Background and context

4. Senate through the former Learning and Teaching Committee approved the current OER Policy in January 2016. Around this time Information Services established an OER Service and the Open.Ed website to promote open education and OERs, and support staff and students to use, create and publish open licensed educational resources.
5. In the five years since the OER Policy was approved, the quantity and quality of open educational resources produced by staff and students across the University has increased considerably. We now have a collection of thousands of media assets and dozens of massive open online courses which can be used, re-used, adapted and re-shared in sustainable ways. This includes:
 - a. over 4,700 open licensed videos on Media Hopper Create,
 - b. 223 open resources and collections shared through the Open.Ed OER Showcase,
 - c. 67 student-created OERs for school teachers on TES Resources, which have been downloaded over 60,000 times.
 - d. The OER Service has run over 230 digital skills workshops, employed ten student interns and won three awards.
 - e. Our ‘How To’ Guides on Open.Ed have been accessed 109,502 times.
6. In addition, the University of Edinburgh has become an exemplar of open education practice, with other institutions worldwide frequently approaching the OER Service for advice and guidance on OER policy implementation and strategic support for open education.

7. We note relevant developments that have taken place since the Policy commenced.
 - a. The UN Sustainable Development Goals being made actionable (July 2017) and the agreement of the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Educational Resources in 2019.
 - b. The continued development of Creative Commons licences and the increasing adoption of the most recent (CC 4.0) non-portable licences.
 - c. Increased awareness of data protection issues with the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation and revised UK Data Protection Act 2018.
 - d. Launch of the University's Lecture Recording Policy in 2019 and its Virtual Classroom Policy in 2020.
 - e. Launch in 2019 of the University Vision and Strategy 2030.
 - f. Changes in UK accessibility regulations, and the continued anticipatory requirement to implement reasonable adjustments such as subtitling of recordings.
 - g. International consortia such as UNA Europa and the OpenU Project which is aiming to "establish a European platform for blended and online learning, academic cooperation and mobility" have commitment and requirement for open educational materials and this Policy is essential infrastructure for doing that.
 - h. The COVID-19 pandemic, that placed digital delivery and recording of teaching front-and-centre throughout UK and worldwide Higher Education. In response to the pandemic, UNESCO issued a Call for Joint Action: Supporting Learning and Knowledge Sharing through Open Educational Resources (OER).
 - i. Reviews of the University Open Access Policy and Research Data Policy. These reaffirm commitment to open access to academic publications and research data from both the University and many of its research funders.
 - j. Institutions are facing rapidly increasing textbook costs as a result of moving from print to digital materials in response to the COVID pandemic and longer-term trends in academic publishing. This has resulted in increased interest in publishing of open eBooks, open textbooks and open journals.

Discussion

8. The Policy has been held up as a good example of open policy and open practice, both on its own and as part of a suite of open policies around digital recording of teaching, learning analytics and online safety.
9. Examples of University of Edinburgh's exemplars of open education practice include:
 - a. That the University of Edinburgh is a leader amongst UK universities in terms of the amount of content we share to the sector and the impact our policy has on practice. We are regularly invited to contribute to international conferences and to learning & teaching conferences at other universities to talk about this area of work.
 - b. Our success in reaching Data-Driven Innovation (DDI) targets is underpinned by this Policy. As of January 2021, we had accumulated a total of 355,243 learners and 15,499 certificates sold on DDI MOOCs.

- c. Open education resources created for the LGBT+ Healthcare project in 2015 by Dr Jeni Harden, Senior Lecturer in Social Science and Health, have contributed to the medicine curriculum over the past five years.
 - d. Five years of open licensed resources from Geoscience Outreach students' projects are published directly as OER and used in Scottish schools.
 - e. Edinburgh teams consume materials released by others. It shows the value of sharing and actively challenges ideas of silos and not using materials which were 'not invented here' that is one of the troublesome issues in higher education and prevents us from de-colonising and diversifying our content.
 - f. The University's response to the pandemic included the MSc Critical Care team – in conjunction with the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh – developing an online training and education hub called the Covid-19 Critical Care Education Resource. This was all based on open educational resources and reached 50,000 learners.
 - g. The University's first student-created open textbook has been developed by the Reid School of Music, based on the Fundamentals of Music Theory course.
10. For the main part, the Policy still meets its primary aims as a permissive policy to motivate and encourage colleagues and students to use and create OERs and as a starting point to empower them to do so. The changes proposed are improvements designed to bring the Policy in line with recent trends and developments in the open education landscape, rather than changes in these aims and objectives.
11. The revised Policy has adopted the UNESCO definition of OER in order to bring it in line with current global practice.
12. Our review considered developments at several other UK and European universities with existing OER practice. Some institutions mandate the use of a single central OER repository in order to curate, quality control and monitor impact of the resources their faculty create. The University does not have a single central OER repository as they are often unsustainable, and it can be difficult to encourage engagement. Instead, the Policy continues to recommend that OERs are shared in an appropriate repository or public-access website in order to maximise their discovery and use by others. The OER Service provides access to many channels for this purpose:
- a. Open.Ed [OER Showcase](#) (223 resources)
 - b. Media Hopper Create
 - i. [Open Media Bank](#) (555 resources)
 - ii. [Open Media Snippets](#) (32 resources)
 - iii. [Open.Ed](#) (81 resources)
 - iv. [Wikimedian in Residence](#) (383 resources)
 - c. [TES Resources](#) (67 resources)
 - d. Flickr
 - i. [Open Ed](#) (242 images)
 - ii. [Interactive Content](#) (614 images)
 - iii. [Centre for Research Collections](#) (467 images)
 - e. YouTube

- i. [Open Ed Edinburgh](#) (318 videos)
 - ii. [Wikimedian in Residence](#) (99 videos)
 - iii. [Interactive Content](#) (134 videos)
 - f. [Sketchfab OpenEdEdinburgh](#) (28 models)
 - g. Twitter [@OpenEdEdinburgh](#)
13. Some universities mandate that any resource considered for internal teaching awards must be open by default. While we encourage all colleagues to share their resources under open licence, and the sponsors of awards to consider OERs in their award criteria, we do not propose enshrining this in policy.
 14. A third approach we observed elsewhere is to specify that any resource produced in cooperation with the central learning technology service must be open by default. This is often the case in practice here, and, for example, the majority of the resources created with support from the Online Course Production Service are open licensed. Information Services are satisfied that existing processes for supporting School colleagues to create resources are well-developed and appropriate for encouraging open practice.
 15. As a result of the OER Service's digital skills programme of workshops and events, there has been an increase in understanding of the benefits of using and creating OERs and knowledge of copyright and open licensing among both staff and students. The OER Service will continue to offer this programme, updating it on an annual basis to meet requirements. Bespoke training for schools and colleges is also available on request.
 16. The update brings this Policy in line with the Lecture Recording and Virtual Classroom Policies. These policies specify how staff and students appearing within a recording made on the lecture recording or virtual classroom services can licence their rights to allow that recording to become the basis of an OER. There is also a suite of standard recording agreements that external contributors, guest lecturers and colleagues contributing to MOOCs or free short online courses are encouraged to sign so recordings can be released under open licence with the appropriate permissions and attribution.
 17. With the increase in media being recorded, widespread knowledge of data protection requirements among content creators has become essential when making and releasing open content. The Policy clarifies that the names, images, voices and personal opinions of individuals are all classed as personally identifiable information.

Resource implications

18. Implementation of the revised Policy will be from within existing resources.

Risk management

19. Covering copyright and data protection issues within the Policy, coupled with providing digital skills training that is focused on copyright literacy and understanding of open licences, lessens the legal and reputational risks to the University and its members resulting from copyright infringement and inappropriate use of copyright content.
20. Regular reports are prepared for ISG senior management to monitor the KPIs and success of the service.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

21. The UNESCO Recommendation on OER recognises that mainstreaming OER can help to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly SDG 4 (Quality education), SDG 5 (Gender equality), SDG 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure), SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities within and across countries), SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals). The Policy supports these goals.

Equality & diversity

22. The revised Policy should continue to have a positive impact on the needs of a range of diverse groups by facilitating sustainable curriculum diversification, mandating accessibility of resources and encouraging colleagues to engage with a huge worldwide pool of diverse resources. The [Equality Impact Assessment undertaken in January 2016](#) has been reviewed and we believe it is still appropriate and relevant.

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

23. If approved, the revised Policy will be communicated to colleagues and students through existing channels by Learning, Teaching and Web Services and Academic Services. Implementation and evaluation of the impact of the Policy is undertaken by the OER Service.

Authors

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and Neil McCormick, Educational
Technology Policy Officer
9 September 2021*

Presenter

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Freedom of Information

Open paper



Open Educational Resources Policy

Purpose of Policy

This policy outlines the University's position on Open Educational Resources (OERs) and provides guidelines for practice in learning and teaching.

The University encourages staff and students to use, create, and publish OERs to enhance the quality of the student experience, increase the provision of learning opportunities for all, and improve teaching practices. It also recognises that the use and creation of OERs is consistent with the University's vision and values; to discover knowledge and make the world a better place, and to ensure our teaching and research is relevant to society, diverse, inclusive, and accessible to all.

Overview

This document provides background, University position and guidance for the use of OERs in learning and teaching at the University of Edinburgh.

Scope: Mandatory Policy

This policy applies to all students and staff in the University.

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Document control

Dates	Approved: 15.09.21	Starts: 15.09.21	Equality impact assessment: 28.01.16	Amendments:	Next Review: 2024/2025
Approving authority	Senate Education Committee				
Consultation undertaken	Senate Education Committee, Learning, Teaching and Web Services, UK and international OER expert practitioners				
Section responsible for policy maintenance & review	Learning, Teaching and Web Services				
Related policies, procedures, guidelines & regulations	Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy , IP Commercialisation Policies , Lecture Recording Policy , Virtual Classroom Policy , Research Data Management Policy , Research Publications & Copyright Policy				
UK Quality Code	Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching				
Policies superseded by this policy	2016 Open Educational Resources Policy				
Alternative format	If you require this document in an alternative format please email Academic.Services@ed.ac.uk or telephone 0131 651 4490.				
Keywords	Open educational resources, open education practice, open education, widening participation				



Open Educational Resources Policy

Background

Open Educational Resources (OERs) are “learning, teaching and research materials in any format and medium that reside in the public domain or are under copyright that have been released under an open license, that permit no-cost access, re-use, re-purpose, adaptation and redistribution by others.”¹

At the University of Edinburgh we believe that OERs are strongly in keeping with our institutional vision and values; to discover knowledge and make the world a better place, and to ensure our teaching and research is relevant to society, diverse, inclusive, and accessible to all. We sustain a deep allegiance and commitment to the interests of the city and region in which we are based, alongside our national and international efforts, ensuring relevance to all. In line with the UNESCO OER Recommendation, we believe that OERs and open knowledge can contribute to achieving the aims of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), which the University is committed to through the SDG Accord.

Our staff and students use, create and publish a wide range of teaching and learning materials to support exceptional learning experiences, including course notes, hand-outs, course work assignments, audio, video, images, animations, multimedia materials, ebooks, open textbooks and others. Staff may provide students with access to open resources to support learning from the University library, museums and collections or from beyond the University.

Staff and students at the University of Edinburgh are strongly encouraged to use OERs to enhance learning and teaching whilst contributing to “a vast pool of educational resources on the Internet, open and free for all to use ... creating a world where each and every person on earth can access and contribute to the sum of all human knowledge”².

University position

1. The use, creation and publication of OERs is consistent with the University’s vision and values; to discover knowledge and make the world a better place, and to ensure our teaching and research is relevant to society, diverse, inclusive, and accessible to all.
2. The University encourages staff and students to create and publish OERs to enhance the quality of the student experience, increase the provision of learning opportunities for all, and contribute to the global pool of open knowledge.
3. The University also encourages staff and students to reuse and repurpose existing OERs and open licensed resources, created within and beyond the University,

¹ UNESCO Recommendation on Open Educational Resources (2019).

² Cape Town Declaration. (2007). *Cape Town Open Education Declaration: Unlocking the Promise of Open Educational Resources*. Retrieved from: www.capetowndeclaration.org/read-the-declaration



Open Educational Resources Policy

provided they are relevant, fit-for-purpose and used in accordance with the terms of the licence. This will help to expand the pool of resources available for teaching and learning, reduce duplication of effort, and increase return on investment.

4. It is expected that staff and students will use, create and publish OERs in a wide range of formats, including but not limited to, course materials and handbooks, images, video, multimedia resources, podcasts, assessment items, ebooks, open textbooks and course work assignments.
5. Whether or not OERs are used or published in a School, Department or Service is ultimately a decision for the Head of School, Head of Department or Head of Service as appropriate. Unless stated to the contrary, it is assumed that use, creation and publication of single units or small collections will be allowed. Where use, creation and publication are to be restricted, Schools, Departments and Services are encouraged to identify and communicate a rationale for restriction. It is expected that justifications for restriction will normally be based on protection of commercial interests.
6. University policies on intellectual property rights (IPR) must be adhered to.³ When using OERs, students and staff must comply with the terms of the licence of use.
7. University policies and guidance on data protection must be adhered to.
8. All OERs used and created must be as accessible as reasonably possible for all users and must comply with the University policy on Accessible and Inclusive Learning:
http://www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/AcademicServices/Policies/Accessible_and_Inclusive_Learning_Policy.pdf
9. The University reserves the right to restrict access to, remove or edit any resources it hosts that do not comply with its policies, and to request removal of resources from external repositories or sites.

Guidance

1. It is the responsibility of staff and students to ensure that they have the necessary rights to publish an OER and that all resources published comply with all relevant legislation, policy and guidance (e.g. copyright, IPR, data protection, accessibility).
2. Staff and students are advised to publish OERs using a Creative Commons Attribution licence (CC BY). Other Creative Commons licences may be used if colleagues feel this is necessary or appropriate for their particular resource, or to

³ Examples of relevant policies here may include the [Lecture Recording Policy](#); [Virtual Classroom Policy](#); and [University policies on IP commercialisation](#)



Open Educational Resources Policy

comply with the licence of any third-party content used in the resource.

3. When creating and publishing OERs, the copyright owner(s), author(s), date and Creative Commons licence must be visibly attributed. The copyright owner will normally be the University of Edinburgh for OERs created at the University. Author(s) and performer(s) should also be properly acknowledged, giving recognition for work undertaken, along with date and Creative Commons licence applied so that others can clearly understand what permissions for reuse are being granted. An example of good attribution would be:

© [Author Name], The University of Edinburgh, CC BY, 2021

4. Staff and students creating OERs must ensure any personally identifiable information (PII) within their resource is processed on an appropriate lawful basis, in accordance with data protection law and University policy. Creators should be aware that resources containing PII processed on the lawful basis of “consent” are at risk of that consent being withdrawn at any time, and that a person’s name, username, image, voice and personal opinions are all considered as PII.
5. The University recommends that open educational resources should be published in an appropriate repository or public-access website in order to maximise their discovery and use by others. Where OERs have been created as part of an externally funded activity, any licensing regulations and repository locations mandated as a condition of the funding should be adhered to.
6. The University recommends that audio and audio-visual OERs should be published in the University’s multimedia repository, Media Hopper Create.
7. Where students are creating OERs as part of their programme of study or within a staff-directed project, these guidelines should be followed and OERs should be checked by a member of staff before publication.
8. The University actively encourages staff and students to reuse and repurpose existing OERs created by colleagues within the University, and by other institutions and organisations. Examples might include MOOC videos, open textbooks, open data sets, simulations, 3D models, cultural heritage resources. The OER Service provides advice and guidance on finding, reusing and repurposing all kinds of open licensed content.

This document is an update of an earlier 2016 policy, itself adapted from University of Leeds OERs (2012, no longer available; [current 2017 version](#)), incorporating additions from the [GCU Interim OER Policy](#) and the University of Greenwich Position in relation to Open Educational Practices 2015-2017 (no longer available on [blogs.gre.ac.uk](#)).



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02 September 2021

Senate Education Committee

15 September 2021

Review of Senate Committees' Effectiveness

Description of paper

1. This paper provides the results of and proposed actions in response to the review of the effectiveness of the Senate Standing Committees conducted in summer 2021.

Action requested / recommendation

2. The Committee is invited to consider the results of the review and, while recognising the low response rate, to APPROVE the proposed actions in section 4 of the Appendix. These will aid continuous improvement of our approach to academic governance in 2021/22.
3. The results of the effectiveness review and agreed actions will be reported to the 20 October 2021 meeting of Senate.

Background and context

4. In summer 2021, Academic Services carried out a primarily self-reflective review of the effectiveness of the Senate Standing Committees. Members' input was requested across the themes of:
 - a. Remit
 - b. Composition
 - c. Support
 - d. Engagement
 - e. Impact of the Committees' work
5. Information on the Senate Standing Committees' remits and memberships can be found at <https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/committees>
6. The response rate was low across all three Committees (14 replies in total), but there are potentially some common themes in relation to remits, communication and equality, diversity and inclusion.
7. Committee Conveners discussed the results of the review at a meeting on 24 August 2021 and, with Committee Secretaries, have proposed relevant actions for the year ahead.

Discussion

8. The results of the review and proposed actions in response can be found in the Appendix.

Resource implications

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

Risk management

10. This activity supports the university's obligations under the 2017 Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance.

Equality & diversity

11. Conveners have noted the particular comments made by respondents in this area. It is recognised that the level of diversity in the composition of the Senate Committees is largely driven by the diversity of the College, School and Professional Services posts from which Committee members are drawn. Conveners will continue to monitor the composition of their respective Committees and work with colleagues to continually improve diversity.

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

12. Any amendments arising from the Senate Committees' discussions of this paper will be incorporated into the final version presented to Senate on 20 October 2021.

Author

*Director of Academic Services
6 September 2021*

Presenter

Pippa Ward / Colm Harmon

Freedom of Information - Open

Senate Committee Effectiveness Review 2020/1

Analysis of feedback by Committee

1. Senate Education Committee (SEC)

SEC currently has 23 members. 7 responses were received to the Internal Effectiveness Review Questionnaire.

- **Committee Remit**

Respondents broadly agreed that the remit of the Committee is clear and the scope appropriate. However, it was suggested that:

- there would be benefit in separating out discussion relating to the student experience and wellbeing by establishing a separate committee for this.
- SEC's responsibility for Curriculum Transformation (CT) should be clarified.
- the extent to which SEC has ownership of learning and teaching strategy and governance in COVID and post-COVID planning should be clarified.

Respondents broadly agreed that the Committee has responded effectively to the challenges of changes in priority. However it was noted that:

- in relation to managing the move to hybrid learning during the pandemic, there would have been benefit in the Committee meeting more regularly to pick up work. The view was expressed that SEC or task / working groups of SEC could have taken on some of the work undertaken by Adaptation and Renewal (ART).

One respondent disagreed that the Committee makes effective use of task groups.

- **Governance and Impact**

All respondents understood how the Committee fits into the academic governance framework of the University, and considered there to be an effective flow of business between College Committees, the Senate Committees and Senate.

One respondent disagreed that there is a clear link between Committee business and the University's strategic priorities, and one respondent did not agree that the Committee makes the desired impact. In relation to impact it was noted that:

- this is lacking because there are not clear lines of communication for key outcomes and decisions. The respondent noted that the Senate Committees' Newsletter should not be relied upon to convey all important information.
- this would be increased if the Committee were to meet more frequently (although the respondent noted the potential workload challenges associated with this). For example, it was noted that the shift to hybrid learning had broadly been managed by groups outside of the Senate Committees' structure (ART). This left colleagues feeling that Senate and its Committees did not have sufficient oversight or opportunities to influence decision-making around hybrid learning.

- **Composition**

Respondents were satisfied that the composition and size of the Committee broadly enables it to operate effectively. However, it was suggested that:

- there may be benefit in reviewing the Committee's use of co-opted members. Co-option of members of Senate itself was suggested, particularly for task group or shorter-term work.
- the Committee is probably too large to be as agile as it would like, although it was recognised that it is important to have representation from across the institution, and that the University is large.

- **EDI**

The majority of respondents did not agree that the composition of the Committee is suitably representative of the diverse University population. It was suggested that:

- there would be benefit in having more student voices on the Committee.
- the lack of diversity is a difficult issue to tackle given that the majority of members are on the Committee because of their roles within Colleges / Schools / Support Services. The University needs to consider how lack of diversity can be addressed across the institution. Asking representatives of minority groups to sit on every University committee is not the answer to addressing EDI concerns.

One respondent disagreed that equality and diversity considerations are adequately addressed when discussing Committee business:

- EDI issues are too often addressed as 'tick box exercises' and not given proper consideration.

- **Role**

Respondents felt they had a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities, and that members engage fully in Committee business.

Two respondents did not feel that they had received an effective induction when they joined the Committee.

- **Communications**

While the majority of respondents felt that the Committee communicates effectively with stakeholders and that they had a clear understanding of their role as a representative of their College or Group, around half of respondents did not have a clear understanding of their role in cascading information from the Committee. It was noted that:

- the Committee does not tend to discuss how and when information should be disseminated by members.
- while every effort is taken to communicate with stakeholders, not all parts of the University feel that they are adequately informed and as involved as they would wish to be. It is, however, difficult to know how to tackle this problem, and may be an inevitability in an institution of this size.

- **Support**

All respondents felt that the Committee was effectively supported by Academic Services; that the information provided to the Committee supports effective decision-making; and that Committee papers provide an appropriate level of detail. It was however noted that:

- even though papers are detailed, members do not always have a full understanding of the way in which decisions will be implemented. It is not possible to anticipate all potential aspects / problems.

2. Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC)

SQAC currently has 13 members. 2 responses were received to the Internal Effectiveness Review Questionnaire.

- **Committee Remit**

Respondents agreed that the remit of the Committee is clear, that it has adapted well to changes to priorities and uses its task groups effectively. However, it was suggested that:

- *The extent to which the Committee can escalate concerns discovered through the quality processes or act if responses received are inadequate, is unclear (eg. concerns about responses to thematic reviews). Furthermore, some key policy decisions relating to quality seem to lie outside the Committee's remit (eg. amendments to assessment regulations).*

- **Governance and Impact**

All respondents understood how the Committee fits into the academic governance framework of the University, and considered there to be an effective flow of business between College Committees, the Senate Committees and Senate.

One respondent disagreed that there is a clear link between Committee business and the University's strategic priorities, and one respondent did not agree that the Committee makes the desired impact. In relation to impact it was noted that:

- *Information flows smoothly between different governance levels vertically. But it is not clear that information flows horizontally to adjacent committees (eg Senate Education Committee) or that SQAC insights are taken into account when determining strategic priorities.*

- **Composition**

Respondents were satisfied that the composition and size of the Committee enables it to operate effectively.

- **EDI**

The respondents were split on whether the composition of the Committee is suitably representative of the diverse University population. The dissenting response suggested that:

- *We do not seem to be representative of the University population in terms of gender, ethnicity, nationality, or disability. We do consider E&D regularly, but this may be driven by the interests of current committee members. It's not clear that this would be sustained or that it is integral to the business of the committee.*

- **Role**

Respondents felt they had a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities, and that members engage fully in Committee business.

- **Communications**

The respondents felt that they had a clear understanding of their role as a representative of their College or Group and had a clear understanding of their role in cascading information from the Committee. However, one respondent disagreed that the Committee communicates effectively with stakeholders, noting that:

- *Email communications to key stakeholders are always clear and well directed, but more widely SQAC still seems to be mysterious outside of a small group who*

are involved in quality work. Communications through Teaching Matters and newsletters have improved the Committee's reach, but I doubt that many read the PDFs of committee minutes. There is much to be done to make it easier for stakeholders to learn about the Committee's work. Hopefully the digital maturity project will assist with this issue.

- **Support**

All respondents felt that the Committee was effectively supported by Academic Services; that the information provided to the Committee supports effective decision-making; and that Committee papers provide an appropriate level of detail.

One response noted that:

- *Academic Services support for this committee has been outstanding, consistently.*

3. Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC)

APRC currently has 16 members. 5 responses were received to the Internal Effectiveness Review Questionnaire.

- **Committee Remit, Governance and Impact**

All respondents strongly agree that the remit of the Committee is clear and appropriate.

All respondents strongly agree that the Committee has adapted effectively to challenges of changes in priority.

Two respondents disagree that the Committee uses task groups effectively. However it was noted:

- Whilst APRC has not had many task groups recently, this has been appropriate to needs.

All respondents understand how the Committee fits into the academic governance framework of the University, and consider there to be an effective flow of business between College Committees, the Senate Committees and Senate.

All respondents agree there is a clear link between Committee business and the University's strategic priorities, and that the Committee makes the desired impact based on its remit and priorities.

- **Composition**

All respondents are satisfied that the composition and size of the Committee enables it to fulfil its remit and to operate effectively. It was noted:

- APRC covers some highly complex regulatory areas of practice. There are some highly experienced and knowledgeable colleagues on the committee as well as less experienced colleagues. Many of the issues dealt with on APRC require good knowledge of regulations and we rely on the diversity of the membership to cover the expertise necessary.

- **EDI**

All respondents agree that the composition of the Committee is suitably representative of the diverse University population, and that they are satisfied that equality and diversity considerations are adequately addressed when discussing Committee business. However it was noted:

- Representation for EDI can always be improved and should be reviewed regularly. The current committee is pretty good but there is always room for improvement.
- As with many University committees, APRC could welcome more colleagues from BME backgrounds, and with other protected characteristics.

- **Role**

All respondents feel they have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities, and that members engage fully in Committee business.

One respondent does not feel that they received an effective induction when they joined the Committee. It was noted:

- Some issues brought to APRC are highly specialist and it might be helpful for there to be some checks that all terminology or current practice is understood by committee members before debate. However, often colleagues are invited to present their papers and this can add clarity, or the chair (or another committee member) explains terms.

- **Communications**

All respondents are satisfied that the Committee communicates effectively with stakeholders, and they have a clear understanding of their role on the Committee as a representative of their area.

All respondents feel they have a clear understanding of their role in cascading information from the Committee. It was noted:

- It was unclear how widely colleagues at the University understand the remit of APRC and other senate committees. The newsletters summarising business covered by the committees is a very helpful contribution to sharing more about the work of the committees and thereby making it easier for colleagues to understand what we do.

- **Support**

All respondents feel that the Committee is effectively supported by Academic Services; that the information provided to the Committee supports effective decision-making; and that Committee papers provide an appropriate level of detail. It was however noted that:

- Sometimes implementation plans are a little thin.
- The volume of papers is usually quite big for this committee, but it is understood why.

4. Suggested Actions in light of responses (combined)

A combined analysis of the answers to the review questions suggests the following recommended actions:

Area Under Review	Recommended Action	Responsible	Date
Remit	1. Student Experience to be included as a standing item on SEC agendas in 2021/22.	Secretary to SEC	New academic year
	2. Curriculum Transformation to be included as a standing item on SEC agendas in 2021/22.	Secretary to SEC	New academic year
	3. SQAC and SEC to consider triggers for escalation and relationship with University Executive	Conveners' Forum	Next meeting
Composition	4. Senate to receive discussion paper on this topic at a later date.	Academic Services to take forward with the Senate Convener.	TBC
Governance & Impact	5. Each Committee to discuss more explicitly at the time how decisions taken will be implemented / communicated / impact evaluated.	Conveners / Secretaries	Every meeting
	6. Authors of papers to be encouraged to make better use of the 'Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed' section of the paper template.	Conveners / Secretaries / paper authors	Every meeting
	7. Each committee to consider more effective use of short-life working / tasks groups	Conveners / Secretaries	Ongoing
EDI	8. Each committee to ensure proactive consideration of EDI for all papers, discussion and decision-making.	Conveners / Secretaries	Every meeting
	9. Senate to receive a discussion paper on 'composition', including EDI, at a later date.	Academic Services to take forward with the Senate Convener.	TBC

Role	10. Each Committee to consider effective induction for members and implement revised approaches as required	Conveners / Secretaries	Start of new academic year and for any member appointed mid-year
Communications	11. Each committee to be more explicit at each meeting about the way in which decisions will be communicated.	Conveners / Secretaries	Every meeting