

Minutes of the Meeting of the Senatus Learning and Teaching Committee
(LTC) held at 2pm on Wednesday 16 November 2016
in the Board Room, Evolution House

1. Attendance

Present:

Professor Sian Bayne	Director of Centre for Research in Digital Education (co-opted member)
Mr Patrick Garratt	Vice President (Academic Affairs), Edinburgh University Students' Association (ex officio)
Ms Rebecca Gaukroger	Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions (ex officio)
Ms Shelagh Green	Director, Careers Service (co-opted member)
Professor Judy Hardy	Director of Teaching, School of Physics and Astronomy, CSE
Professor Tina Harrison	Assistant Principal (Academic Standards and Quality Assurance)
Dr Elaine Haycock-Stuart	Director of Learning and Teaching, School of Health in Social Science (co-opted member)
Ms Roshni Hume (Secretary)	Academic Policy Officer, Academic Services
Professor Charlie Jeffery (Convener)	Senior Vice-Principal
Mr John Lowrey	Dean of Undergraduate Studies (CAHSS)
Ms Tanya Lubicz-Nawrocka	Edinburgh University Students' Association, Academic Engagement Co-ordinator (ex officio)
Dr Antony Maciocia	Senior Lecturer, School of Mathematics, CSE (co-opted member)
Professor Neil Mulholland	Dean of Postgraduate Studies (CAHSS)
Professor Graeme Reid	Dean of Learning and Teaching, CSE
Professor Neil Turner	Director of Undergraduate Teaching and Learning, CMVM
Mr Tom Ward	University Secretary's Nominee, Director of Academic Services (ex officio)

Apologies:

Professor Sarah Cunningham-Burley	Assistant Principal (Research-Led Learning)
Ms Melissa Highton	Convener of Learning Technologies Advisory Group (ex officio)
Professor Peter Higgins	Representative of Social Responsibility and Sustainability
Ms Nichola Kett	Academic Governance Representative, Academic Services
Dr Velda McCune	Deputy Director, Institute for Academic Development (Director's nominee) (ex officio)
Professor Anna Meredith	Director for Postgraduate Taught, CMVM

In attendance:

Dr Donna Murray	Head of Taught Student Development, Institute for Academic Development
-----------------	--

The Convener welcomed members to the meeting.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2016 were approved.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 Peer Observation of Teaching

At the previous LTC meeting, the Institute for Academic Development was asked to take revised guidance to College Learning and Teaching Committees for consultation, and specifically, to gain a view on whether Schools were planning to make peer observation of teaching mandatory or optional, and how often it should take place.

It was reported that consultations with Colleges were still taking place and would continue until January 2017. It was noted that upon completion of this process, the finalised guidance would be published on the website.

Actions:

Academic Services to replace existing guidance on peer observation of teaching with the new guidance when finalised.

4. Convener's Communications

The Convener did not have any items not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

5. For Discussion

5.1 Taught Postgraduate Experience/PTES Results

Dr Donna Murray introduced Paper 16/17 2B, which outlined work undertaken across the University to understand the Taught Postgraduate (PGT) student experience and highlighted key trends regarding responses to the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and future considerations.

LTC members welcomed the paper and the following issues were discussed:

- Members highlighted the importance of delivering a positive PGT student experience and the reputational benefits that flowed from this. The Committee agreed that the Committees should give greater focus to this in the future.
- Positive PTES results in some Schools (compared to their results for the National Student Survey) could be attributed to the more integrated structure of some PGT programmes and smaller class sizes (compared to some UG programmes) meaning that PGT student groups are more cohesive. These may provide learning points for the UG student experience.
- It was agreed that the PTES question set was much clearer than the NSS question set.

It was suggested that capacity should be put in place to deepen analysis and enhance communication regarding PTES.

It was suggested that Colleges and Schools should be encouraged to make greater use of PTES results as they could be used as a valuable data set.

Actions:

Head of Student Development (IAD) to create terms of reference for a short life working group which would consider how to plan for the use of the 2017 PTES results, and coordinate dissemination of key messages from PTES results.

5.2 University Learning and Teaching Strategy

Paper 16/17 2C sought approval of the revised Learning and Teaching Strategy and the arrangements for implementing it within planning processes. LTC members considered the revised Strategy, welcomed the proposed changes and approved the use of the Strategy within planning processes.

LTC members raised the following points regarding the revised Strategy:

- The Students' Association welcomed the emphasis on partnership in the document.
- The Strategy could include a high level and aspirational opening statement.
- The phrase 'diversity in the curriculum' may be too generic and open to interpretation – phrasing needs to be more transparent.
- While all Colleges discussed the Strategy, it was not clear that all Schools had considered and commented on the Strategy.

LTC members agreed that a revised version of the Strategy should be issued for comment, to Colleges, Schools, the Students' Association and other stakeholders to ensure that a thorough consultation has taken place.

Actions:

Director of Academic Services to issue a revised Strategy for consultation.

Director of Academic Services to establish a Learning and Teaching Committee subgroup to meet in early January 2017 to finalise the Strategy.

5.3 Draft Student Partnership Agreement

Paper 16/17 2D invited LTC to discuss and provisionally approve the draft agreement.

LTC welcomed the agreement and the following issues were discussed:

- Further consideration should be given to the values section of the agreement and how they align with wider University values.
- The document could change on an annual basis based on the priorities of the Students' Association sabbatical officers. It was agreed that the document should provide clear and realistic priorities for the upcoming twelve months.
- It was suggested that further consideration be given to the presentation of the document and how the document will be used and distributed to students.

Action:

The Assistant Principal (Academic Standards and Quality Assurance) to undertake further consultation with the Student Association and present a draft agreement to LTC for approval by correspondence in January before seeking final approval from Senate.

5.4 Final Report of Edinburgh University Students' Association Teaching Awards Analysis Project

LTC members welcomed the report (paper 16/17 2E) and agreed that in light of the University's disappointing NSS results, a document which highlights positive achievements across the University was welcome. The committee agreed that the four key themes provided in the report were useful in providing staff with a level to aspire to.

LTC noted that the findings included in the report would be formally highlighted at an event titled 'What does Good Teaching Look Like to Students?' taking place on 1 December 2016.

The Committee suggested that the key themes and recommendations from the report could be taken into account in the Student Partnership Agreement.

Actions:

College committees to consider the report and the key themes and consider what insights can be drawn into enhancement of teaching.

5.5 Further Information on Festival of Creative Learning Proposals

Paper 16/17 2F was provided for information and to provide an insight into the variety of proposals that had been put forward for the Festival of Creative Learning.

The Committee welcomed the proposals and agreed that the number of proposals was encouraging.

It was noted that, going forwards, the week between teaching blocks three and four would be referred to as 'Flexible Learning Week'.

5.6 Senate Committee Planning 2017-18

Paper 16/17 2G set out the framework for Senate Committee planning for 2017-18, and invited the committee to identify any major developments that may require resourcing via the Planning Round.

The Committee highlighted the importance of investment in the teaching estate, particularly the availability of suitable teaching spaces and facilities within them, noting that the Assistant Principal Research-led Learning's convenorship of the University's Space Strategy Group will support a strong link between decisions regarding space and learning and teaching considerations.

The Committee identified a few additional areas in which (subject to potential further policy development) may have resource implications, eg for Information Services Group:

- Facilities in seminar rooms to allow on campus and off campus students the option to learn together (though there were mixed views regarding whether specialist resources were required for this)
- Availability and creation of open education resources
- Potential resources required to develop assessment literacy support for students

The development of the University's Digital Education Vision may have resource requirements in due course (eg. Project resources to support University-wide discussions with staff and students).

It was noted that as part of the second stage of the Planning Round, the Senate Committees would undertake a broader discussion of priorities for the coming session. This would take place in Semester 2.

Action:

Secretary to ask Convener of the Space Strategy Group to provide an update on the progress of the group at the next meeting.

The LTC Planning Round discussion to be scheduled in advance in future to allow members to prepare suggestions.

Secretary to contact Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Services (ISG) to highlight issues that Information Services Group may wish to take into account in the planning round (eg technology in learning spaces).

5.7 National Student Survey – Revised Question Set

Paper 16/17 2H outlined substantial changes to the NSS questionnaire based on the outcome of a recent review. The committee was asked to consider the changes and the new question set. The committee was also asked to consider what steps need to be taken ahead of the survey going live in January 2017.

The committee noted that revised guidance would be sent out to Schools which would highlight what students can and cannot be informed of regarding the NSS.

The committee discussed the following issues:

- LTC members agreed that it was important to focus on communicating with students rather than deliberating on the outcomes of the recent NSS
- LTC members agreed that the use of the word 'course' in the NSS questions could be open to misinterpretation, given that the University is unusual in using 'course' to refer to a module rather than a programme.
- The committee discussed whether or not the questions had been considered in a systematic way.

Actions:

Director of Academic Services to consult with Assistant Principal Academic Support and Assistant Principal Assessment and Feedback to produce an analysis for the Committee's next meeting regarding what steps the University is already taking to address the new questions and what further steps could be taken in order to maximise positive feedback.

5.8 Student Surveys Review – Recommendations for Simplification

At the previous LTC meeting the Director of Student Systems was asked to consider ways in which further simplification might be achieved in relation to the University's suite of student surveys.

The Committee endorsed the following way forward:

- The International Student Barometer would remain and run in 2016/17
- The Edinburgh Student Experience Survey would not be released in 2016/17
- The Induction Survey would not run in 2016/17, and Student Recruitment and Admissions would explore with the Student Surveys Unit alternate ways of gathering student feedback on induction.
- Activity on the survey review would continue from January 2017 and would aim to present recommendations on the simplification of student surveys by the end of the first quarter of 2017 to enable implementation in academic year 2017/18.

Actions:

Student Survey Unit to consider alternative methods of seeking student views without overwhelming students with numerous surveys.

Secretary to add further discussion on this topic to a future LTC agenda.

6. For Approval

6.1 Formation of Assessment and Feedback Enhancement Working Group

Working Group approved

6.2 Proposed Membership and Remit for Lecture Recording Task Group

Membership and remit approved

6.3 Formation of groups to support innovation, Research-Led Teaching and University-Wide Courses

Groups approved

It was noted that no further groups were planned to support this strand of work.

7. For Noting / Information

7.1 Update on Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)

Paper 16/17 2L outlined the arrangements for the second year of TEF, and also provided information regarding the prospect of subject level TEF.

The Convener reported that the Principal's Strategy Group would be making a recommendation for decision at University Court about whether or not the University will make a provider submission to the Teaching Excellence Framework in year two. He also noted that discussions were now underway in the sector about the challenges of subject-level TEF.

7.2 Communications Strategy for Learning and Teaching

The paper (16/17 2M) was noted.

LTC expressed support for the communications campaign.

7.3 Digital Education Governance Summary

The paper (16/17 2N) was noted. The Convener noted that the paper identified two groups that reported to the Committee but which had not recently submitted reports, and asked that they do so in the future.

7.4 Enhancement Themes – Update

The update was noted.

7.5 Learning Analytics Policy Task Group – Remit, Membership, Approach and Timelines

The paper (16/17 2O) was approved by correspondence in October 2016.

8 Any Other Business

8.1 Course Enhancement Questionnaire

The Convener noted that some stakeholders had raised concerns regarding an aspect of the roll-out of the Course Enhancement Questionnaires, and that these issues would be discussed at the EvaSys Project Board's upcoming meeting.

Roshni Hume
November 2016