<u>The University of Edinburgh</u>

**Senate Education Committee
Wednesday 17 November 2021, 2.00pm**

A G E N D A

1.	**Welcome and Apologies**	
2.	**Minutes of Meeting held on 15 September 2021**	SEC 21/22 2 A
3.	**Matters Arising from Meeting held on 15 September 2021**	
3.1	University's Involvement in the Delivery of Microcredentials	Verbal update
3.2	Proposal to Establish a Student Voice Sub-Committee	Verbal update
4.	**Convener's Communications**	Verbal update
5.	**For Discussion**	
5.1	Curriculum Demands of Prospective Students and Recent Graduates	SEC 21/22 2 B CLOSED
5.2	Digital Strategy – Summary of Work so far Focussing on Student / Educator Theme	SEC 21/22 2 C
6.	**Standing Items**	
6.1	**Curriculum Transformation**	
	6.1.1 Curriculum Transformation Programme Update	SEC 21/22 2 D
6.2	**Student Experience**	
	6.2.1 Student Experience Update	SEC 21/22 2 E
6.3	**Doctoral College**	Verbal update
7.	**For Approval**	
7.1	National Student Survey (NSS) 2022 Optional Questions	SEC 21/22 2 F
8.	**Approved by Convener's Action Since Previous Meeting**	
8.1	Updated Policy for the Recruitment, Support and Development of Tutors and Demonstrators	SEC 21/22 2 G
8.2	Summer 2022 Exam Diet – Practical Implementation	SEC 21/22

9.   Electronic Business Conducted Since Previous Meeting

9.1   Student Experience: Delivering a New Model of Student   SEC 21/22
Support   E-Business
                                                               07/10/2021

10.   Any Other Business

**Minutes of the Meeting of Senate Education Committee
held via Microsoft Teams at 2.00pm on Wednesday 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)
Stephen Bowd	Representative of CAHSS (Postgraduate Research)
Judy Hardy	Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching)
Antony Maciocia	Representative of CSE (Postgraduate Research)
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
Tara Gold	Edinburgh University Students' Association, Vice President Education
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 Division of Information Services – Ex Officio; Assistant Principal (Online and Open Learning)
Rebecca Gaukroger	Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions – Ex Officio
Sian Bayne	Assistant Principal Digital Education
Paula Webster	Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling
Philippa Ward	Academic Services (Secretary)
Apologies	
Andy Dugmore	Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching)
Jamie Davies	Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching)
Sue MacGregor	Director of Academic Services – Ex Officio
In Attendance	
Tom Ward	Head of Education Administration and Change Management, EFI
Teresa Ironside	Director of Data Science Education
Gavin Douglas	Deputy Secretary, Student Experience

2. Minutes of Meeting held on 12 May 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2021 were approved as an accurate record.

3.   Matters Arising from Meeting Held on 12 May 2021

3.1 University's Involvement in the Delivery of Microcredentials

The Assistant Principal (Online and Open Learning) updated the Committee on progress since the last meeting. A meeting of key stakeholders had taken place and mapping of all institutional activity relating to microcredentials was underway. Understanding the University's rationale for any involvement in the delivery of microcredentials would be essential, as would ensuring that the work was well integrated within University structures, with clear reporting lines.

> **Action**: Assistant Principal (Online and Open Learning) to establish a group to take the work forward.

4.   Electronic Business Conducted Since Meeting Held on 12 May 2021

Members noted that the Student Mental Health Strategy 2021-2026 had been approved by electronic business on 9 July 2021.

5.   Convener's Communications

4.1 Update on Planning for Semester 2 2021/22

The Convener advised the Committee that the University would need to agree a broad direction of travel for Semester 2 2021/22 within the next few weeks. It was noted that some institutions were moving towards full re-opening in Semester 2. Members were in favour of greater opening up in Semester 2, noting that the University had asked students to return to campus and therefore had an obligation to provide an in-person experience. However the Committee expressed reservations about planning for full re-opening, particularly in the case of the largest lectures: it would be important to ensure that the University did not adopt a position now that needed to be reversed at a later date. In addition, it was noted that some of the alternative teaching arrangements use by the University during the pandemic were working well and were appreciated by students. It would not therefore be beneficial to return to previous arrangements simply because it was possible to do so. It was also recognised that in some Schools, student numbers and estate constraints meant that it would not be possible to return to all pre-pandemic modes of teaching.

Members agreed that strong engagement with students about plans for Semester 2 was essential. The Convener noted that he would feed the Committee's views back to the Semester 2 Planning Group.

6.   For Discussion

6.1   Exam Diets 2021/22 – Practical Implementation

6.1.1 December Exam Diet 2021/22

Members approved the proposed approach to the December 2021 exam diet and to the implementation of adjustments for students with Schedules of Adjustments in particular.

6.1.2 Summer Exam Diet 2021/22

Members noted that this was a preliminary discussion about arrangements for the Summer 2021/22 exam diet and that a formal position paper for approval would be brought to the November meeting of the Committee.

The following was discussed:

- Many students would be apprehensive about a return to in person exams, and it would be important to seek their views on this.
- Appetite to return to in person exams varied across the University.
- Holding some in person exams should be permitted where there were pedagogic arguments for doing so. A clear process for judging whether or not there were good pedagogic reasons for using in person exams would need to be established.
- Online and open book exams are not one and the same thing. It would be important to understand whether those students who were in favour of online exams appreciated the online nature of the exam or the open book aspect.
- Concerns remained about the academic integrity of online exams, particularly from some accrediting bodies.

Action: Convener and Secretary to establish a sub-group to discuss the issues and produce a position paper for the November 2021 meeting of the Committee.

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

The incoming Students' Association Vice President Education outlined her priorities for academic year 2021/22:

- Strengthening the University's response to COVID-19 – the importance of listening to the student voice (particularly the voices of the most marginalised) and of ensuring that good practice developed over the past 18 months was not lost were highlighted.
- Modernising Edinburgh's curriculum – the Students' Assocation was keen to ensure that student engagement was central to this work and that it was collaborative. Discussions around decolonisation of the curriculum would be key.
- Increasing transparency, responsibility and accountability from the University to improve the student experience – it was noted that there is room to build more trust and greater understanding of University structures with students. The Students' Assocation was positive about plans to press ahead with the implementation of the new model of student support.

Members were very supportive of the priorities outlined and noted that the 'critical friend' role played by the Students' Assocation was highly valued.

6.3 Proposal to Establish a Student Voice Sub-Committee

The paper proposed the establishment of a sub-committee of Education Committee to:

- analyse and synthesise student feedback from questionnaires, Student-Staff Liaison Committees and other fora;
- and develop action plans and monitor progress with the implementation of changes in response to student feedback.

Members discussed:

- The need for any group to have a clear remit; to be empowered to make change; and to have ways of evaluating effectiveness.
- The intersection of the proposed group with the work of Senate Quality Assurance Committee and the Student Voice Policy.
- The frequency with which the group would need to meet if it were to work effectively, and particularly to address issues in-year.
- The potential value of referring to 'student voices' as opposed to 'the student voice'.
- The potential value of establishing a 'Senate Student Experience and Wellbeing Committee', which might be a more natural 'home' for a group of this type.
- The value of having a greater proportion of students on the membership of any group established, and of the group being co-chaired by a student representative.

Members approved the proposed direction of travel, but expressed the view that the group as proposed may not be fit for purpose.

Action: Deputy Secretary (Student Experience) to work with other members of the Committee to revise the proposal.

6.4 Edinburgh Futures Institute Postgraduate Taught Programmes: Policy on Duration of Study for Lifelong Learning Students

The paper was presented by EFI's Head of Education Administration and Change Management, who noted that EFI is committed to lifelong learning: it wants individuals to be able to take credit-bearing courses over a period of up to 10 years, and to be able to stack these up as opposed to undertaking them as part of a named programme of study. This is difficult within the University's current structures: while there are no systems or statutory issues, when Academic Policy and Regulations Committee looked at the matter, it agreed that there were some policy issues that the University should take a position on before proceeding.

At this stage, it is difficult to forecast how many students will wish to engage in this way, although there does appear to be a good level of interest. It is not clear what the implications will be for student services, but the only way of finding out will be to pilot learning of this type with a set review point.

Members discussed the following:

- Lifelong learning is something that the University should be involved in. This proposed pilot would be one way of understanding how this might work.
- What was being proposed was not the same as part-time, intermittent study. There would potentially be value in looking again at the University's regulations on part-time, intermittent study to see if these could be adapted to cover provision of this type.

- Other areas of the University were also interested in offering provision of this type. The possibility of running additional pilots outside EFI was raised. The PGT Curriculum Transformation workstream would consider how provision of this type might be rolled out more widely.
- Although the contact time of the proposed courses was largely concentrated into two days (14 hours), the overall time commitment for each course would be around 5 weeks, or 100 hours, on account of there being both structured and unstructured activities in the weeks before and after the contact time. The contact time element for courses was in line with, or slightly more than the average for PGT courses in the College of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences.
- Any concerns around courses potentially being withdrawn while students were still enrolled with the University could be addressed by advising students clearly at the outset that they would be permitted to accumulate any courses they took, but that the University was not committing to continuing every course.

In conclusion, the Committee was very positive about the proposals as a way forward for the University. It endorsed the proposed arrangements for flexibility in duration of study as set out in the paper.

6.5 Open Educational Resources Policy Review

Members noted that the Policy has served the institution well since its introduction in 2016. Revisions to the Paper included adopting a new definition of OER from the [UNESCO Recommendation on Open Education Resources](#) and bringing the Policy in line with the University's Lecture Recording and Virtual Classroom Policies. The revised Policy also clarified what personally identifiable information colleagues should be aware of when creating OER.

The Committee approved the revised Policy.

6.6 Review of Senate Committees' Effectiveness

The Committee noted the findings of the internal effectiveness review carried out over the summer, and approved the recommended actions. However, concerns were raised about the Committee continuing to cover within its remit matters relating to the student experience. The governance of the student experience would be given further consideration over the coming year.

7. Standing Items

7.1 Curriculum Transformation

Members noted that there would be significant School and College engagement in the coming months with a view to producing the 'vision for the Edinburgh Graduate' by the end of the year. The Convener would discuss with the Students' Association Vice-President Education the best way of engaging students with the project.

Action: Convener and EUSA Vice-President Education to discuss student engagement with the Curriculum Transformation project.

7.2   Student Experience

Members noted that the Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling would be leaving the University at the end of October 2021. They were thanked for their significant contribution to the work of the Committee and the University.

The Committee discussed the following in relation to the 2021 student survey results:

- COVID-19 had not raised new issues in relation to the student experience: it had exacerbated issues the University was already aware of.
- There would potentially be benefit in separating the results for on campus and online distance PGT programmes.
- Using performance metrics to drive forward improvement in the student experience was likely to be of limited benefit. The University should instead be aiming for culture change.
- There was unlikely to be a single, transferable mechanism for assisting those Schools with the most disappointing results.
- In relation to mental health support, many students are unaware of the existence of Mental Health Mentors, and others are discouraged from seeking Mental Health Mentor support because of the service being based within the Student Disability Service.

In relation to the Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) undertaken in February and March 2021, the Committee noted that:

- the University had been judged to have "effective arrangements for managing academic standards and the student learning experience." This was a positive judgement and the best possible outcome for an ELIR. The University had also received a robust set of recommendations, which would only be addressed through culture change.
- in a number of areas of the University, volatility in student numbers was having a significant impact on the student experience. It was recognised that this was a complex issue that was not entirely within the University's control. However, it was agreed that the University needed to continue to take steps to even out some of the volatility.

Members were supportive of the approach to addressing the ELIR recommendations and the draft Action Plan outlined in Paper M. It was agreed that the Action Plan would be made available to Schools to enable them to see what action was being taken and by whom.

7.3   Doctoral College

7.3.1 Postgraduate Research Admissions Working Group Report

The paper was provided for information, having been considered at the May meeting of Student Recruitment and Fees Strategy Group. It was noted that widening access for PGR was a hugely important issue, but a difficult one to tackle. Actions relating to data collection and policy and practice had been identified by the Working Group and consideration was now being given to the way in which these would be taken forward. An EDI intern would be recruited to assist with the work, and widening access for PGR would be the focus of a Doctoral College forum in October.

8. For Information

8.1   Student Partnership Agreement 2021-22

The Committee approved the Agreement for 2021-22, noting that small pots of funding were available for colleagues to undertake projects under the Agreement's themes.

8.2   Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy – Update on Review

Members were advised that the Policy was in the process of being reviewed. The review would include consideration of the way in which the Policy might dovetail with a University Learning and Teaching Strategy as recommended by the ELIR. In the meantime, the principles of the existing document remained good and should be adhered to.

8.3   Committee Guidance and Review

Members noted the Committee guidance and review documents provided and that the work of the Support for Curriculum Development Group would be paused until June 2022.

Philippa Ward
Academic Services
26 September 2021

Senate Education Committee

17 November 2021

Digital Strategy – summary of work so far focussing on Student/Educator theme

Description of paper

1. This paper provides an extract of draft output from work so far to develop a Digital Strategy. The work to develop the Digital Strategy is split into a number of themes. This paper focusses on one of these themes, Students and Educators. Details of a draft overall vision for the Digital Strategy along with details on the other Digital Strategy themes are provided in the appendix.

Action requested / recommendation

2. Senate Education Committee members are invited to provide feedback on the Student/Educator theme, suggest priority actions and comment on other areas using the following padlet before, during or after the meeting on 17th November: https://padlet.com/JT_IAD/59eaam7xyhx3pngp

Background and context

3. Our adaptation during the pandemic has included a rapid uptake of digital technology and capability. Our digital environment is now a key strategic enabler for the future resilience of the University and for the delivery of our strategic objectives including Strategy 2030 and Curriculum Transformation.

4. The University is creating a Digital Strategy to set a vision for our future digital environment alongside a roadmap for implementation that will coordinate, guide and enable our strategic priorities. A Digital Strategy also helps us to address many of the existential risks we face as a university.

5. When we speak about our Digital Environment we mean the technologies we require and how we adopt these, in addition to the skills, ways of working and culture needed.

6. This paper summarises draft output from work so far and provides an opportunity for the Senate Education Committee to feedback on this. We aim to publish the Digital Strategy in early 2021. This paper does contain some tensions and contradictions that are present within the University. We have deliberately included these for the purposes of discussion.

7. The Digital Strategy will be refreshed annually to reflect the pace of change in the digital arena and as our understanding of strategic requirements becomes clearer, for example Curriculum Transformation. Once the Digital Strategy has been agreed we will develop an implementation plan and will monitor the University's progress against that plan.

Discussion

8. Extract from draft discussion document on digital strategy: **Our Students and Educators:**

9. Our institutional digital environment plays an increasingly influential role in our approach to teaching and learning, and the experience of students and educators. The development of a new digital strategy provides an important

opportunity to focus on their needs, balancing opportunities for innovation and sophistication with the importance of having a digital environment that meets a simple set of basic requirements that is reliable, easy to use and accessible to all.

10. Given the current pressures on the University community, in developing this initial discussion document draft we have drawn on existing work and resources rather than run additional workshops or meetings. This includes the Digital Education work stream of Curriculum Transformation, the Near Future Teaching Project, reviews and analysis of our response to COVID, external benchmarking and internal practice sharing.

11. As the Curriculum Transformation programme progresses there will be emerging requirements over the next 3 to 5 years. We will respond to these emerging requirements in annual updates to our Digital Strategy. In the meantime, our hope is that some of the priorities identified will stimulate further discussion and provide helpful context for the decisions around long term investments and planning that need to be made now. We are particularly keen to use the opportunity we have to incorporate lessons from the digital transformation made as a result of Covid.

12. What follows are an initial set of potential thematic priorities and cultural considerations.

13. Community and Belonging:-

    a. The importance of supporting academic and learning communities, student-staff and student-student relationships have been highlighted as a key priority by many groups across the University . Building these communities and links enables students to feel part of a disciplinary community and helps them to establish their disciplinary and professional identities. It is critical to the development of effective peer support and learning, and makes an important contribution to wellbeing, personal and professional development. The importance of community building ranges in scale from engagement and involvement in individual seminars and classes, to building relationships and shared purpose between educators and students and making connections beyond the formal taught curriculum into the wider university community.

    b. Our experience during Covid lockdown has brought these issues into sharper focus. There have been reports of greater social isolation and challenges in building engagement, community and belonging, as a well as increased awareness of the value of these connections. We have seen the challenges of using digital means to support community, from reluctance to appear on camera in virtual classrooms to inappropriate and damaging online behaviours (e.g. rare cases of online bullying or harassment). Many of us, some for the first time,

have seen the power and potential of digital to support community and collaboration. Virtual meetings have brought students and educators together online; online collaboration tools have enabled the sharing of ideas as well as live and asynchronous collaboration (e.g. social reading); while many colleagues have used a mix of digital tools and approaches (live text; discussion boards; video/audio tools) to check in with students and share insight and advice.

c. Some are sceptical about the extent to which digital can support community and belonging, believing that this requires on campus contact, at least to establish communities. This viewpoint has been challenged (in a positive way) by the experience of many in the last year, even while recognising the additional value of meeting together in person and the importance of informal discussions and connections on campus for student cohorts and staff. We have also been able to draw upon the extensive expertise and experience of colleagues who have taught online programmes for many years. They have shared a wealth of insights and practical approaches to building digital communities, including ways to build trust, confidence and engagement.

d. Key potential action: use our digital environment to support an even greater focus on community and belonging, within and beyond academic courses and programmes. This needs to be done in a way that is accessible to all, practical, intuitive, integrated with other activities and supports digital interactions that are both authentic and respectful of others.

14. Coherence, Consistency & Continuity

a. A key driver for Curriculum Transformation is to improve the learning experience of students. While most students experience excellent teaching and are well supported, there is a sometimes a lack of coherence, consistency and continuity between and sometimes within courses and programmes. This is an important area of concern and is a particular challenge for some joint programmes. It can result in students having to learn and adapt to multiple different digital tools and ways of accessing learning support materials. Students may experience competing and conflicting assessment deadlines, unbalanced workloads, and a lack of connection between different courses at a programme level. Staff teaching on multiple courses and programmes also have to adapt to and understand these different approaches. This all leads to wasted time, confusion and frustration, and can exacerbate gaps in understanding of what is required between students and staff, as well as having a negative impact on efforts to enhance accessibility and inclusion.

b. While some variations in approach between courses and programmes are essential, much of this variability and inconsistency has developed organically as a result of local differences in custom and practice. The potential to require greater consistency and rationalisation of course and programme

structures, methods and support for course and programme design are topics likely to be considered as part of Curriculum Transformation. In the meantime, there is the potential to build on recent progress to rationalise and increase the consistency of how teaching and learning support material is organised and presented (e.g. Learn Foundations).

c. Another potential area to consider would be to involve students and staff in attempting to define a baseline set of digital tools and resources. These could be used as a foundation set of intuitive, reliable and fully integrated teaching and learning tools, with all staff and students trained and supported in their use.

d. Key potential actions:
   - Short term - Build on recent progress to rationalise and increase the consistency of how teaching and learning support material are organised and presented (e.g. Learn Foundations).
   - Short term - Define a baseline set of digital tools and resources with all staff and students trained and supported in their use.
   - Medium term - address coherence, consistency and continuity within Curriculum Transformation

15. Assessment and Feedback

a. Assessment & Feedback is a central consideration in course and programme design and is likely to be a major theme of Curriculum Transformation. The University's recent Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR) interim report included the following recommendation: 'Over an extended period of time, the University has considered a broad evidence-base which has highlighted concerns about assessment and feedback, and this remains an area of challenge for the institution. The University is asked to make demonstrable progress, within the next academic year, in prioritising the development of a holistic and strategic approach to the design and management of assessment and feedback'.

b. The Curriculum Transformation Programme has established an Assessment & Feedback group to coordinate the University's response to ELIR over the next 12 months and ensure strategic alignment with Curriculum Transformation. This is likely to include recommendations for the development of a set of assessment & feedback principles, consideration of assessment and feedback methods (including innovation and diversification), assessment volume and place. This, in turn, will have implications for the digital tools and systems needed to support and manage assessment and feedback.

c. Many changes to assessment practice were made in response to Covid during 2020-21. In the short term there will be a continuing focus on embedding the most successful of these changes, including greater use of open book exams, a shift in emphasis from exams to course work and opportunities for authentic assessment tasks, as well as greater use of online submission of course work. This will include the sharing of practice with colleagues across the institution and how best to address challenges and concerns (e.g., risk of academic misconduct and role of online proctoring).

d. Key potential actions:
   - Short term - continuing focus on embedding the most successful changes to assessment practise that were made in response to Covid, including

greater use of open book exams, a shift in emphasis from exams to course work, as well as greater use of online submission of course work.

- Medium term - Curriculum Transformation group complete work which is likely to include development of a set of assessment & feedback principles, consideration of assessment methods and assessment volume and place

15. Hybridity

a. The potential and role of hybrid teaching and learning has come into sharp focus as a result of the Covid pandemic, with a huge step change in the extent to which digital learning and teaching methods are being used and adopted by staff and students. The view that online learning is somehow 'second best' has been challenged and diminished, with students and staff appreciating the flexibility and depth we can achieve when digital is well designed and supported.

b. These changes include greater use of blended learning approaches, where digital technology is used to enhance on-campus teaching through the use of technology in the classroom and flipped classroom methodologies, as well as hybrid approaches designed to bring together students studying on-campus, online synchronously and online asynchronously.

c. The opportunity and challenge that we have now is to move from hybrid by necessity due to Covid, to hybrid by design for enhancement. While staff and students have missed and are keen to return to an on-campus experience, many recognise the potential benefits of greater hybridity and integration of digital opportunities into their teaching. This includes the potential to support alternative assessment methods, increase student engagement and interaction (e.g., using live contact time for interaction/discussion rather than didactic/information transfer teaching), provide greater agency for students to determine their own learning experiences and use of time, add value to laboratory or field-based learning, and offer greater flexibility around participation (with potential associated benefits for inclusion and accessibility)

d. Our key challenge is in how to do this without overwhelming staff or students and whilst ensuring that the experience of using these digital technologies is intuitive, reliable and open to all. There is also a need for continued investment to fully integrate virtual classrooms, tools for collaboration and learning platforms, and better connect thinking around our digital and physical estate.

16. Other potential thematic priorities

Other potential priorities include a continued focus on the digital transformation of student services (e.g., increased take up and greater convenience for students of move to online and digital support by groups like the Careers Service and Institute for Academic Development). The EDI and Ethics section of this report also includes several significant areas of activity for students and educators. For example, while the availability of lecture recordings, investment in asynchronous teaching resources and the efforts made by staff to support accessibility through subtitling has had a positive impact on access and accessibility, for many students it has not been without problems. The growing importance of digital tools and resources has

highlighted the impact of digital access for some students (hardware, Wi-Fi access, confidence and capability) while there remain significant practical challenges around subtitling.

17. Cultural Considerations.

In developing our digital strategy, it is important to consider the process of change alongside these thematic priorities. The successful implementation of our digital strategy will require significant adaptation and culture change for students and educators. Key issues for us to consider include:

a. **Creating a healthy and productive digital environment**. We need to create a digital environment that students and educators are comfortable in, one that is easy to use, reliable and integrated. A digital environment where they can concentrate on what they want to achieve and do, rather than on understanding the idiosyncrasies of a particular digital tool, or on how to make different technologies work together or find the information or assistance they need. The student and staff experience of our digital environment should be at the heart of our digital strategy.

b. **Building capability, confidence and capacity.** Training and skills development are key. We need to ensure that staff and students have the baseline skills needed to thrive in our digital environment. Whilst this should include a focus on providing formal training (self-paced, workshop or course based) it is also important to consider the role of informal and peer learning. This includes supporting the role of learning technologists and other digital education champions and role models, as well as the role for training provides (like Information Services and the IAD) in working with programme and course teams and at a School/Deanery level.

c. **Staff and student agency.** Decisions made around our digital environment must support pedagogic and educational requirements. Academic engagement, including engagement informed by local applied pedagogic research and enquiry, should be a central element of institutional decision making. At an individual scale it is important to find ways in which students and staff can be supported to take ownership and agency for their use of digital technologies.

d. **Digital leadership decisions and decision making.** Many colleagues find themselves either taking digital leadership decisions unconsciously and by default, or without fully understanding the consequences of these decisions or alternatives. One example is where staff make a decision on the use of a particular tool or technology based on familiarity without realising the negative consequences, costs or risks of this in terms of integration with other elements of the digital environment, knock-on implications of its use, accessibility or data protection/privacy considerations. Support for digital leadership decisions should be a key consideration for training and capacity building. We should also look for more opportunities to make transparent the

factors influencing institutional decision making around digital procurement and strategy.

e. **Balancing consistency & scale with scope for experimentation & innovation.** As part of our digital environment, we need to provide opportunities for educators and students to innovate and experiment with digital learning, in response to both disciplinary and pedagogic considerations. We should encourage a scholarly and research-minded approach to the design and evaluation of this sort of experimentation & innovation and sharing of the results with the wider University community.

18. Proposed Actions

A key next step in the development of the Digital Strategy will be to identify a series of specific actions needed to implement the agreed thematic objectives. Examples of these include:

a. Community & Belonging: Build on experience from online programme teams and experience over the last year to continue sharing insights on effective ways of using the digital environment to support community and belonging. Use these insights to inform promotion of digital tools and build staff and student capability and confidence.

b. Coherence, Consistency & Continuity: Use the next phase of the Learn Foundations project to build on recent progress to rationalise and increase the consistency of how teaching and learning support material is organised and presented.

c. Assessment & Feedback: Work closely with the Curriculum Transformation Assessment & Feedback Group to identify opportunities to identify and support roll out of appropriate e-assessment tools.

d. Hybridity: Explore and share opportunities to design hybridity for enhancement

e. Student Services: Continue to offer a significant element of student support services online (e.g. workshops and consultations from groups like the Institute for Academic Development and Careers Service) to support greater flexibility and take up for participants.

f. Accessibility: Work to simplify and enhance guidance and support for subtitling and other mechanisms to increase accessibility.

16. Case Studies

Outlined below are five potential case studies.

a. Community building online

Examples of community building online, including a range of approaches linked to different purposes and points in the learning journey (e.g., induction and orientation; live/synchronous teaching; discussion boards/groups; co- and extra-curricular activity). This will include reference to the practice sharing and applications to support for digital and hybrid teaching for dominantly on-campus programmes.

- Teaching Matters: e.g. https://www.teaching-matters-blog.ed.ac.uk/?s=digital+academic+communities
- Curriculum Transformation Briefing Paper: https://uoe.sharepoint.com/sites/CurriculumTransformation/SitePages/Briefing-Paper---Insights-and-Learning-from-2020-21.aspx

b.   Learn Foundations to Support Consistence & Coherence

Work with the Learn Foundations teams and some of their academic/School partners to describe the approach taken to develop the Learn Foundations project, the progress made to date and plans for the future.

- https://www.teaching-matters-blog.ed.ac.uk/?s=learn+foundations

c.   Digital Decision Making – online proctoring

Use the work of the Online Remote Examinations and Assessment Group to describe the approach taken by the University to weigh up the pros and cons of online proctoring that has led to the develop of policy, guidance and a services that Schools can use to guide their thinking and planning.

- https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/committees/education/task-groups/orea
- https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/learning-technology/assessment/onlineproctoring

d.   Supporting accessibility – the challenge of lecture subtitling

Start by reporting on the positive impact that having capacity to record and caption content has had on accessibility and access for students (potential to include student reactions, including the related achievements of the lecture recording programme). Move on from there to some of the challenges and problems (uncertainty around responsibility; understanding of alternatives; limitations of auto-captioning including technical terminology and the EDI impact for teaching staff). Explain work done to date and give some options for next steps and the future.

e.   Hybridity for enhancement

Show examples of how hybrid teaching methods can and are being used for enhancement by design:

- Chemistry video work on lab practicals
- Minecraft for simulations – biology and biomedicine
- Alternative methods for assessment (e.g., reflections, blogs, teaching materials)
- Student agency (e.g., SLICCs and other routes)

Resource implications

17. There will be resource implications from the Digital Strategy and having adequate resources will be critical to its success. Resource planning will be developed as we plan implementation of the Digital Strategy.

Risk management

18. Risks have been managed as we develop the Digital Strategy and details of these are available on request.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

19. As we develop the Digital Strategy we are working to ensure the strategy aligns with these. We acknowledge that further work is required in this area.

Equality & diversity

20. Equality and diversity is at the core of our work on Digital Strategy and is a theme in its own right under Jenny Hoy, Dean of EDI for CAHSS.

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

21. Any feedback from this committee is highly valued and will be considered alongside other feedback from consultation on a Digital Strategy discussion paper which contains very similar content to this paper. We will then utilise feedback as appropriate as we produce the first issue of the Digital Strategy.

Authors	**Presenters**
Dr Jon Turner, Director, Institute of Academic Development	*Dr Jon Turner, Director, Institute of Academic Development*
Stephen Roy, Digital Strategy Programme Manager	*Stephen Roy, Digital Strategy Programme Manager*
Date : 10th November 2021	

Freedom of Information *(Open)*

DRAFT

Appendix – Draft Digital Strategy overall vision and draft output from other themes

Prepared for Senate Education Committee

Contents

DRAFT

1   Draft Overall Vision and Principles for our Digital Environment

Vision

Our Digital Environment will be driven by user need to offer a personalised, intuitive, consistent and joined-up experience in the simplest possible way while being resilient, sustainable and reliable. Alongside Strategy 2030, it will empower our community to deliver on their goals and give them the skills to thrive. It will be accessible and inclusive so that no-one is left behind. It will balance consistency and scale with scope for experimentation & innovation, enabling the University to take advantage of new opportunities and to increase its business resilience.

User-focussed, effective and efficient principles

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1.	When building our Digital Environment, we should be critical in adoption of Digital, ensuring what we do translates to Research and Teaching excellence or a better Edinburgh experience. We should not be techno-optimistic.
2.	The Digital Environment we create should be built alongside those who will use it. We should aim for a seamless, frictionless experience when building our offerings and services.
3.	Building the Digital Environment is not all about huge investments in new technology. The University already has many advanced digital capabilities and experience. We should leverage these to make the most of our limited resources and work that has gone before.
4.	We should use Digital to optimise our efficiency and effectiveness and allow the University to better operate within its financial constraints.
5.	We should consider and understand when strategy and delivery should be provided locally in colleges and schools and when it should be provided centrally.
6.	Digital skills and capability or further "digitalization" does not necessarily translate to Research and Teaching excellence or a better Edinburgh experience. We must follow-through and link to the pedagogy, estates and other aspects that are needed to holistically create the outcome.

Community-driven and inclusive principles

Our Digital Environment should:

1.	be built upon and support our core values of community, inclusivity and learning. Digital should be adopted in a way that is empowering to the University's members and community, and in a way that enhances and supports the University's overall vision of purposeful education and research.
2.	enhance rather than limit inclusivity.
3.	enhance the quality and experience of learning and teaching, both for students and academics.
4.	support the wellbeing of its community.

World-leading and innovative principles

1. We should support a culture of innovation and calculated risk-taking to deliver the solutions required by the University community.
2. We should recognise and build upon the digital capabilities and the leading role the University already plays in Digital.
3. We should ensure the Digital Strategy considers colleagues who are working on the leading/cutting edge where technology may not be used in a standard way.
4. We should use Digital to make education, and the learning and teaching experience flexible, accessible, seamless and of high quality.
5. We should focus on and address the Digital Skills of our leaders. There is no point if everyone else gets it and our leaders don't.

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2 Draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) / Ethics

Vision

"The University of Edinburgh will embrace and embed EDI and Ethics in every aspect of our Digital Environment. By tackling the inequalities that exist within our digital environments, we not only fulfil our obligations to one another, but we improve our status as an employer and institution of choice. People rightly expect progress here in an increasingly competitive and diverse sector."

Simply put, embracing and embedding EDI and Ethics within our University is the right thing for an enlightened institution to do, we should be leading the way. If we invest in these areas we improve the student, staff and visitor experience. There can be no doubt that if we identify and address some of the inequalities that exist within our digital environments, we not only fulfil our obligations to one another, but we improve our status as an employer and institution of choice, people rightly expect progress here in an increasingly competitive and diverse sector.

Potential ideas and commitments EDI (in no particular order)

EDI – People

1.	We are right to celebrate what we're doing well, but we shouldn't be don't be afraid of sharing 'failed practice' alongside 'best practice', we should be open about what we get wrong.
2.	Have colleagues who make decisions relating to our digital infrastructures tried using the recommended accessibility software? How many of us have navigated our digital estate from the perspective of someone else, particularly those with additional needs?
3.	Students and staff, particularly those from underrepresented groups should be able to easily and confidently provide feedback on how inclusive and accessible they find our digital infrastructure and learning environments.
4.	Does our digital infrastructure provide us with the appropriate data to identify retention and attainment gaps in underrepresented groups?
5.	How can we support colleagues to receive training in accessibility?
6.	Are we sure that the people and business we entrust with designing and/or supplying our systems (internal and external) are aware of approaches to inclusive learning? For example, Teams was designed to be a business tool, not a teaching tool.
7.	Can we provide a broader variety of online learning options to support students to have more choice and to improve accessibility, with attention to synchronous provision and online 1:1 meetings.

EDI - Processes

1.	Is our digital estate inaccessible in its design and sheer volume of information and documentation? Many would agree, so what can we do to improve this?
2.	Improving communications via digital platforms to make better use of staff and student time.

3.	More consistent and informed use of Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs), making these less of an overlooked formality and more transformational.
4.	Cease using inaccessible PDFs wherever possible Accessible PDF Design – Website and Communications Blog (ed.ac.uk)
5.	Can we make our presentations more accessible? Student interviews told us that they often find PowerPoint or Keynote presentations inaccessible.
6.	Subtitles, captions and/or transcripts- we must be clear about whether these are essential or best practice and to whom, adjustments made to improve accessibility for those with additional needs are often appreciated by everyone.
7.	Consider how best to improve the digital infrastructure in support of social activities, sports, societies and clubs, in support of access and participation.
8.	Can we build in more time for digital support (in its many forms) during peak periods in our calendar year?
9.	Embed inclusion and ethics in all policies at the point of creation and review, ensuring that they are updated regularly and fit for application. Digital tools might aid this process and its tracking.
10.	Checking our validation processes and documentation, in order to be certain that they appropriately consider and embed digital literacies, costs and accessibility, using a persona model (low-income student without a laptop who is reluctant to ask for help due to feeling stigmatised, staff with little confidence with digital tools, visitor in a different time zone, student using an internet café in Harare to access their materials and classes).

Potential Ideas and Commitments Ethics (in no particular order)

1.	Being clear, in plain English, our use of data and that of affiliated 2nd party platforms/organisations
2.	Can we support more businesses owned by underrepresented groups and those with a proven track record of strong EDI practices and policies?
3.	User testing as part of the procurement processes – do we test assistive technologies with our platforms and systems?
4.	Can we transform our institutional document templates to request consideration of EDI issues and representation?
5.	Students should have clear and empowering ways of raising or reporting inaccessible or non-inclusive provision without fear of reprisal. When this is raised, we should have the appropriate staffing resource to respond.
6.	Where can we make strategic investments in staff to support our commitments?
7.	We need joined up oversight of decisions on data ethics at university level, including policies and procedures for overseeing ethical use of data for both research but also institutional data.
8.	We should improve processes and protocols for staff to get ethical approval for use of data/digital.

3   Draft Research Vision and Objectives

Vision

"The University will empower everyone engaged in our research activities to benefit from digital technologies by providing an inclusive, innovative, and resilient digital research environment shaped by the needs of our communities, and supporting our commitment to research excellence, integrity, and impact."

As a core pillar of the University's mission, research spans an unusually wide range of disciplines and communities that create, disseminate, and curate knowledge to benefit society. It thrives on the diversity of those engaging in our research activities, from academic, technical, support staff and students to our partners in academia, industry, government, and local, national, and global publics.

Our commitment to leadership in the adoption of data and digital in research and innovation is demonstrated by major initiatives such as the Data-Driven Innovation Programme. Digital tools, data, and advanced information technologies have an enormous potential to strengthen the excellence of our research and the growth of those driving and participating in it, provided we enable our communities to use technology in the service of their ambitions, practices, and collaborations.

It is essential that our strategy for digital research puts at its centre researchers and those supporting their work centre, recognising the diversity of skills, needs, and ways of working within our communities.

We propose the adoption of three core objectives, each accompanied by example actions that could be taken to further their achievement.

Objective	Details
Digital as an enabler for research excellence	The ways in which we adopt and support new technologies must be driven by the needs of researchers, informed by the strategies pursued by their communities, and fit for purpose in the research environments within which they are deployed. Investments in our digital estate need to be based on research strategies and opportunities and prioritised based on evidenced need. **Potential actions** •*Create new ways of capturing activity and opportunities for growth through digital.* We will mobilise academic expertise and leadership to better focus our attention on the successful areas we can learn from, and on those where the greatest opportunities for digital to enable future growth to present themselves. •*Enhance our ability to incorporate digital in research strategy, planning, and delivery.* We will improve processes to treat digital as a core resource deployed on research activity, to ensure digital requirements are taken into account when resourcing new initiatives and support structures.
Digital research services that work for everybody	We will provide a digital environment that ensures every researcher can identify, access, and competently use the technologies most suitable to their work, and is appropriately supported in exploiting digital technologies for their research initiatives and collaborations. **Potential actions** •*Ensure our digital research tools are visible to, accessible, and understood by all researchers.* Strengthen awareness raising and signposting of training, induction and guidance. Embed information sources in research units and central repositories. •*Enhance support mechanisms "at the coal face" of research* We will enhance support for digital research at the point of use, focusing resources. Embedding widely understood processes, maintaining consistency of provision and

Objective	Details
	pooling of resources. Forming diverse collaborating teams eliminating "arms-length" relationships between different units.
Leading innovations in digital research	We aim to be a leader in the adoption of new research methodologies fuelled by the use of data, advanced techniques to process and analyse this data, and new computational capabilities developed by technical disciplines and deployed for the research and innovation across the entire institution with its partners. **Potential actions** •Establish a roadmap for the future of our digital research capabilities. This will help us understand what strategic investments are needed. •Establish a strategic and coordinated approach to investment. We will establish a strategy development, engagement, and delivery plan that ensures the University's overall research ambitions are supported by improved adoption, support, and innovation approaches in the medium- to long-term.

4   Draft Digital Services Vision and Principles

Digital Services are defined as those services that, from the user's perspective, are consumed through a wholly digital process. There may be some non-digital processes involved behind the scenes to complete the service, but those will not be visible to users.

Vision

The University of Edinburgh will deliver digital services that make life easier for our users and enable them to achieve their goals by providing a personalised, accessible, intuitive and joined-up experience in the simplest possible way.

Design Principles

These design principles will help guide digital service owners and designers to shape their services and set expectations for qualifying services within the University.

Stakeholder consultation broadly agreed with the proposed principles and suggested some others which have been incorporated in the final set below.

1.	**Designed around the people who use the service.**	Designed around the people who use the service, not our organisational structures and work collaboratively across structures to deliver them.
2.	**Accessible and inclusive.**	Accessible and inclusive, with no one left behind. They are designed to meet the University's expectations for equality, diversity and inclusion
3.	**Secure by design.**	They are secure by design and protect the user's information
4.	**Consistent.**	University digital services should have a consistent look and feel utilising a standard but flexible design system
5.	**Simple and Intuitive.**	Services are intuitive with the minimum possible steps to complete and supported by digital skills training where necessary
6.	**Responsive.**	They change and adapt with our user needs

7.	**Personalised.**	Services are aimed and targeted at our users based on what we already know about them with responses to users as individuals
8.	**Data driven.**	Uses data to help define the problem and to drive improvements in our services.
9.	**Continually improving.**	Services gather feedback at the point of use and that feedback is used to inform changes or updates

Potential Actions

We will develop this further for the Digital Strategy, identifying the high-level actions necessary to achieve our vision. We are interested in feedback on actions that you feel the University should take to achieve the vision around Digital Services.

5   Draft Digital Estate Vision and Principles

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The Digital Estate is a key strategic asset for the University and is the underpinning infrastructure and systems that power our Digital Environment. It includes such diverse elements as Blackboard Learn, the network, tools such as Microsoft Teams and information security systems that ensure we stay safe and secure online. Supporting this range of diversity is challenging in terms of resources required and in certain areas we have duplication resulting in increased costs. The cost of maintaining and integrating the current estate is growing and will be unsustainable longer term.

A good digital experience is key to student and staff satisfaction along with making the University more resilient to future shocks. A good digital experience is now an expectation of normal daily life. The University must live up to this expectation and correctly prioritise our Digital Estate to ensure it is met.

Vision for the future

"The University of Edinburgh will deliver a world-class digital estate that is integrated, seamless, rationalised, accessible, financially sustainable and flexible that helps to transform the University and underpins University Strategy 2030. It will fuse seamlessly with the physical estate to deliver a consistent and integrated user experience."

High level guiding principles we will follow to deliver our vision
1.	Designed for the people that use it, informed by and supporting their needs, using data to derive actionable insights in an innovative but ethical manner.
2.	Innovation is encouraged and embraced
3.	As simple as possible in design – intuitive for users to navigate, easy to adapt to, easy to deploy and support
4.	Financially sustainability is planned in so that maintenance and continual improvement can be delivered
5.	Appropriately considered open-source alternatives
6.	Follows standards yet allows agility and flexibility along with being responsive to technological developments
7.	We build and operate in an ethical manner and build in scalability & security

8.	Use common technologies and platforms where possible while taking into account the needs of specialise areas who need to drive their own agenda forward and be supported to do so.
9.	Appropriately considers open-source alternatives
10.	Balance the efficiencies of central control with enabling areas to drive forward their own agenda.
11.	Supports accessibility and inclusion in all its forms and support the participation of students, staff and visitors

Potential Actions

- Review and adapt governance processes and routes to ensure the Digital Estate delivers on the University's vision and principles through Strategy 2030 and the Digital Strategy.
- Develop, evolve and follow an overall roadmap and plan for the Digital Estate.
- Where business priorities allow, rationalise our portfolio of central business systems by moving as far as possible towards integrated suites from a few vendors. Rationalise across colleges and schools where appropriate so that we can focus on priority demands and needs
- Adopt the increased use of core systems provided as a service with each application considered on their merits of adopting the software as a service model.

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Senate Education Committee

17 November 2021

Curriculum Transformation Programme Update

Description of paper

1. A summary of the Curriculum Transformation Programme progress since September 2021.

Action requested / recommendation

2. Senate Education Committee is asked to note the information presented. No specific action is required although members' observations, or comment, on any of the items would be welcome.

Background and context

3. This paper provides a summary of progress since a verbal update was received by Senate Education Committee in September from the Vice-Principal Students.

Discussion

A. Looking back at progress since Programme inception

i. Institutional engagement

The Curriculum Transformation Programme has been live for almost seven months and within that time steady progress has been made in a number of key areas. From the inception of the Programme there has been a strong commitment to engagement with the University community, inclusion, transparency and collaboration and the Curriculum Hub has already become a central tool helping to achieve this. There have been over 36k site visits (>2.3k unique visitors) to the Curriculum Hub since launch in April 2021. Monthly meetings with the Curriculum Transformation Reference Group and Directors of Teaching Network continue and both are receiving good attendance and engagement. The Programme has also facilitated the second Curriculum Transformation Forum Mixer for colleagues keen to know more and keep in touch with developments and the next one is planned for February 2022. Predominant focus remains on raising awareness of this Programme and creating meaningful opportunities for engagement and dialogue with colleagues across the institution – including exploration of Visions for the Edinburgh Graduate.

ii. Shaping the vision for our future Edinburgh Graduates.

Previous update papers to SEC have noted that the first significant phase for this Programme is the shaping of the vision for the future Edinburgh graduate. Whilst the completion of this key milestone is not anticipated until the end of Q1 2022 there

have been many positive and constructive contributions made (and continue to be) for consideration in the development of the interim statement on the vision for future graduates from a skills, values and attributes perspective including:-

- Reaching the end of their series of sessions the **Digital Education** Workstream will produce their position paper on the shape and place of digital education within the context of curriculum and its implication for the vision later this month
- The **External Engagement** Workstream has launched a recent graduate survey, the analysis and insight from which will contribute to the future vision
- In the context of Future Skills consideration for example of interdisciplinary skills, data, communication and literacy skills
- **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion** – the Curriculum Transformation Programme Board in a recent workshop exercise took the opportunity to baseline ED&I in the current curriculum against a leading sector standard. Some of the output from this workshop will contribute to the shaping of the vision for our future graduates
- Further to a number of visioning conversations undertaken by members the **Climate and Sustainability** group, the Curriculum Transformation Board recently considered and recommended specific elements for consideration within the graduate vision
- The **PGT group** will produce a summary of their thinking and recommendations early in the New Year
- Colleagues within the Programme Team are also drawing in reviews, reports and research from across the sector. This includes an analysis of contributions to Teaching Matters, the Learning & Teaching Conference and QA reports.
- Contributions continue to be received from attendance at/organising specific meetings with student groups, College and School representatives with a mix of academic and professional service colleagues.
- See: https://uoe.sharepoint.com/sites/CurriculumTransformation/SitePages/Edinburgh-Graduate.aspx for further information for further information on this work.

iii.   Additional areas

In addition to that noted above the Programme has made progress in the following areas, each of which adds further understanding, definition and direction for future stages:-

- The production of a baseline statement capturing the current breadth, depth and complexity of our current curriculum offer

- Active progression with regards to internship recruitment and flexible secondment opportunities for colleagues to directly support Programme activities
- Consideration of medium and longer term Programme timelines with specific emphasis on ensuring benefit to our current student population where possible
- Bringing Widening Participation as a theme more actively into considerations of the Vision of the Edinburgh Graduate & Curriculum Design Principles - pro-active engagement with the Widening Participation Strategy
- Early thinking around the development of an approach to Curriculum Transformation Programme Evaluation
- Progressing the development of the Student Engagement Strategy Group

B. Looking ahead to Spring 2022

The Programme is at the later stages of the initial exploration phase for the Edinburgh Graduate Vision. The Edinburgh Graduate Vision will remain a live and open conversation as we move through the different stages of the Curriculum Transformation Programme however we are at the stage where we can start drawing together these different insights.

A major part of this will be enabled by the symposium planned for Workstream and Group members (participating in A. ii. Above) at the end of November. This will be a working meeting that will take the Programme a significant way towards the production of a draft vision ready for consultation. The session will be on campus with a major focus on group work and co-creation.

The objective is to have completed the drafting of the interim statement of the vision for the Edinburgh Graduate before the winter break so that it can be shared with SEC in early 2022 alongside a wider institutional consultation and engagement exercise working up to final approval by SEC and UE in Spring 2022.

Resource implications
4. None as a result of this paper

Risk management
5.   There are no specific risk implications associated with this paper

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals
6. The Curriculum Transformation Programme is actively exploring the concept of sustainability in the context of the Programme and will provide an update to Senate in due course.

Equality & diversity
7. The Curriculum Transformation Programme is actively exploring Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the context of the Programme and will provide an update to Senate in due course

Author
Name Amanda Percy   **Presenter**
Date 10/11/2021   *Name*

Freedom of Information - This paper is Open.

Senate Education Committee

17 November 2021

Student Experience Update

Description of paper
1. This paper was originally taken to the 9 November 2021 meeting of University Executive and provides an update on progress with student experience initiatives.

Action requested/Recommendation
2. Senate Education Committee is asked to comment on and note the update.

Background and context
3. As highlighted in previous Executive discussions, there is a need for a relentless focus by the University's leadership on improving the student experience, following many years of poor results in surveys such as the National Student Survey (NSS). While this leadership focus must go wider than the Executive, student experience will remain a standing item on the Executive agenda for the foreseeable future.

4. Court has recently emphasised the high strategic priority it places on improving student satisfaction measures and in particular its desire to see a greatly increased pace of change in this area.

5. Also as highlighted previously, the most recent NSS results show that the University's efforts in this area over recent years have not led to demonstrable improvement in overall student satisfaction. There is therefore a need for a revised and refreshed student experience strategy.

6. At the same time, the University cannot wait for the development of a new strategy to address significant areas of concern, and the Executive has previously endorsed a focus on three short term areas of significant:
   - Assessment and Feedback
   - Student support / Personal Tutors
   - Student Mental Health and Wellbeing

7. This short paper updates Executive on progress with the above short-term priorities as well as on the development of a refreshed strategy. It also introduces for consideration some further thinking on the issue of governance, leadership and accountability for the quality of student experience.

Discussion
Assessment & Feedback
8. An Assessment & Feedback Task Group has been established under the co-convenorship of Professor Tina Harrison and Dr Sabine Rolle, reporting to the Curriculum Transformation Board. This work is being led by the Assistant Principal and Learning & Teaching Deans. Work has begun on developing **assessment & feedback principles** for the University and on recommendations for a single Common Marking Scheme. Engagement and consultation events are being planned

by the Group, including the Directors of Teaching Network and other Groups throughout the Academic Year.

9. There will be an accompanying roadmap for enhancements in areas of policy, common marking schema, regulations and system enhancements to be taken forward through Senate Education Committee and the Curriculum Transformation Programme as appropriate.

The Student Support Project (formerly the Student Support and Personal Tutors Project)

10. Executive approved the initiation of the Student Support and Personal Tutors project at its meeting on 12 October 2021. As noted at the time, in-year funding has been approved for the project which will see 10 Schools/Deaneries across the University moving to a new model of student support from September 2022, with the remaining Schools / Deaneries moving to the new model by September 2023. Since October the project board (convenor: the Vice-Principal Students) has had its first meeting. The Board approved a project name change to the Student Support Project in recognition of the fact that the personal tutor scheme would disappear as part of the project.

11. Key actions/progress made:
- University Executive approval of model and high-level 2 stage implementation and delivery costs
- Engagement with College leads and Senate Education Committee
- Project team to support delivery of model recruited (all starting by 1 November)
- Project Board and governance structures in place
- Reference Group created to bring together School/Deanery leads on a regular basis and review proposed policy and process changes.
- Unions notified via Partnership Meeting of proposed model. Formal Disclosure to be completed by end-Dec
- Initial Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) drafted and reviewed
- Policies and regulations review work started
- Roles and Skillsets review work started
- EdWeb and Sharepoint information pages updated. "Launch" communication planned

12. Focus for the month ahead:
- School engagement – Especially with the 9 Schools due in Phase 1 (by Sept 2022), directly and via existing groups such as Directors of Teaching Network
- Staffing models for academic cohort leads and Wellbeing Advisors to be developed
- Roles and skillsets documentation to be developed
- Policy and regulation proposed changes to be put to Reference Group (then APRC)

Mental Health and Wellbeing

13. As noted at October's Executive, a number of in-year enhancements are already in train this year to enhance student mental health and wellbeing support, including:

- For the first time delivering same day/ drop in appointments for students with our Student Counselling Service.
- Recruiting two new posts into the team to support survivors of gender-based violence. (Three BAME counsellors have also been recruited into the Student Counselling Service in direct response to student demand).
- Recruiting additional Living Well Co-ordinators into the Residence Life team.
- The Director of Student Wellbeing is also looking to appoint 3 wellbeing advisors in year in order to support cases being escalated from Schools.
- Engaging with a third party-provider to increase capacity for student counselling at peak times.
- Improving the model of support provided by our Mental Health Mentors to reduce waiting times, and increasing the volume of support provided.
- Following enhancements made last year to support students during the pandemic.
- Continuing to invest in The Listening Service so it can operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (including over bank holidays).
- Continuing to invest in the delivery of pro-active wellbeing checks, carried out by specialist mental health staff, to support students at greater risk.

14. A new Student Mental Health Strategy has also been developed, following comprehensive engagement and consultation, and approved by Senate Education Committee. The new strategy focused on four key areas namely Leadership; Mental Health Promotion; Mental Health Support; and Impact. The Director of Student Wellbeing is currently developing a prioritised action plan to accompany the strategy.

Development of a refreshed student experience strategy
15. At the August meeting of the Academic Strategy Group (ASG), thoughts on the challenge of student experience were varied, including:
- Impact of increased student numbers
- Prioritising the estate
- Community building in itself also helped by and linked to estate improvements
- The benefits of a "cradle to grave" care approach
- Heads of School - accountability and willingness to act
- The need for consistency and agreed baseline measures
- How staff spend their time eg workforce models
- Resources needed - (additional) Professional Services and academic?

16. However ASG was united in its view that the University must aspire to delivering an outstanding student experience in line with the University position as one of the top 40 institutions in the world.

17. At the August Executive Away Day it was agreed "(overall) there needed to be a 'relentless focus' on all aspects of the student experience, with relationships at the heart, with a clear direction and set of actions agreed, implemented and monitored."

18. At October's Court meeting, after a lengthy discussion Court agreed to emphasise the high strategic priority it places on improving student satisfaction measures and in particular its desire to see a greatly increased pace of change in

this area. Court offered support to the senior leadership team in advancing this change.

19. The Executive Standing Committee on Student Experience met on 15 October and reviewed the in-year plans being taken forward under previous Student Experience Action Plan. The Committee also had a wide-ranging discussion on the future direction of travel for the student experience strategy, including governance. Key points noted were:
- The strong link between student and staff experience that is crucial to take into consideration in defining the student experience vision.
- The move to a 5-year planning horizon will help to articulate the University's needs and understand how to possibly phase investments.
- Whether a focus on student experience was the correct approach or whether in fact the focus should be on "the kind of place we want to be".
- The necessity for greater accountability at all levels of the University for delivering on measurable student experience improvements. It was noted that subsidiarity is a possible way forward whereby the strategy is defined by the centrally and the implementation is handled locally with flexibility yet fidelity to the framework.
- Whether Senate committees were well placed to take forward the wide-ranging actions and improvements that are needed. A University task-force might be a more appropriate structure.
- Overall the need for a clear student experience strategy, including a roadmap, clear communication and investment plan along with resourcing and accountability.

20. Three external companies have been approached and asked to quote for assistance with development of the refreshed student experience strategy plan and an associated roadmap of actions. Bringing in an external consultant is likely to bring benefits both in terms of external insights and in dealing with challenge of developing a vision and refreshed strategy by early 2022. We expect to have appointed a consultant from the three by the time of our next update.

Risk Management
21. Failure to address student experience issues caries reputational risk, continues to affect the University's standing in national league tables and may impact on admissions and recruitment.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals
22. N/A

Equality & Diversity
23. N/A

Next steps & Communications
24. Work will continue on the above initiatives. There will be a further update on both short- and medium-term actions at December's Executive.

Consultation
25. N/A

Further information
26. *Author*

Gavin Douglas
Deputy Secretary, Student
Experience

Presenter

Professor Colm Harmon
Vice Principal, Students

Freedom of Information
27. Open paper

Senate Education Committee

17 November 2021

National Student Survey (NSS) 2022 Optional Questions

Description of paper
1. This paper presents the proposed optional questions for the National Student Survey (NSS) 2022. These questions will be asked after the core questionnaire and specifically of students at the University of Edinburgh.

2. The data generated from the NSS contributes to improving the quality of learning, the student experience and student satisfaction.

Action requested / recommendation
3. For approval. SEC is asked to consider and approve the proposed banks of questions to be included in the NSS 2022.

Background and context
4. The NSS is an annual survey of final year undergraduate students and takes place between early February and end of April each year. In Scotland, participation in NSS is a condition of the SFC's funding for higher education providers. Institutions in Scotland are required to promote the NSS.

   The survey consists of 27 core questions. Each institution is also given the opportunity to ask additional questions which can be taken from a list of suggested banks (see Appendix) and/or questions which have been created internally.

Discussion
5. For the last 4 years, the University of Edinburgh has opted to include a bank on *Employability and Skills* and for the last 2 years has also asked a bank on *Student Safety*. **It is recommended that these questions are no longer included**.

6. With the ongoing work around and focus on assessment and student support, and with the University being asked to show demonstrable progress in both these areas, it is recommended that the banks below are included this year. By asking bank B9 (Welfare Resources and Facilities) over the coming years, there will be the opportunity to monitor this before, during and after the implementation of the new student support model. The Deputy Secretary – Student Experience and the Students' Association President have been consulted on this proposal.

7. ***B9. Welfare Resources and Facilities***
   1. There is sufficient provision of welfare and student services to meet my needs.

2. When needed, the information and advice offered by welfare and student services has been helpful.

B11. Assessment
1. Teaching staff test what I have understood rather than what I have memorised.
2. Assessment methods employed in my course require an in-depth understanding of the course content.

Resource implications
8. No resource implications

Risk management
9. Not included

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals
10. This responds to Goal 4: Quality Education. The data from the NSS is used to improve the experience of students at the University.

Equality & diversity
11. Not included

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed
12. If agreed, the questions will be included in the NSS 2022. The process for including and reporting on these questions will be overseen by Marianne Brown, Interim Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling.

Author
Sarah-Jane Brown
9th November 2021

Presenter
SEC Convener

Freedom of Information
Open

Appendix - National Student Survey 2022 - Banks of Optional Questions

B1. Personal Development
    1. The course has helped me to present myself with confidence.
    2. My communication skills have improved.
    3. As a result of the course, I feel confident in tackling unfamiliar problems.

B2. Students' Union (Association or Guild)
    1. The Students' Union (Association or Guild) had had a positive impact on my sense of belonging to the university or college.
    2. The Students' Union (Association or Guild) has had a positive impact on the local community.
    3. The Students' Union (Association or Guild) has helped me develop useful life skills.

B3. Careers
    1. As a result of my course, I believe that I have improved my career prospects.
    2. Good advice is available for making career choices.
    3. Good advice is available on further study opportunities.

B4. Course Content and Structure
    1. All of the compulsory modules are relevant to my course.
    2. There is an appropriate range of options to choose from on my course.
    3. The modules of my course form a coherent integrated whole.

B5. Work Placements
    Did your course involve any work placements?
    a. Yes (ask all questions in this section)
    b. No (skip this section)

    1. I received sufficient support and advice from my institution about the organisation of my placements.
    2. My placements were valuable in helping my learning.
    3. My placements have helped me to develop my skills in relation to my course.
    4. My placements have helped me to develop my general life skills.
    5. The taught part of my course was good preparation for my placements.

B6. Social Opportunities
    1. I have had plenty of opportunities to interact socially with other students.
    2. I am satisfied with the range of clubs and societies on offer.
    3. I am satisfied with the range of entertainment and social events on offer.

B7. Course Delivery
    1. Learning materials made available on my course have enhanced my learning.
    2. The range and balance of approaches to teaching has helped me to learn.
    3. The delivery of my course has been stimulating.

4. My learning has benefited from modules that are informed by current research.
5. Practical activities on my course have helped me to learn.

B8. The Physical Environment
1. Security has been satisfactory when attending classes.
2. My institution provides an appropriate environment in which to learn.

B9. Welfare Resources and Facilities
1. There is sufficient provision of welfare and student services to meet my needs.
2. When needed, the information and advice offered by welfare and student services has been helpful.

B10. Workload
1. The workload on my course is manageable.
2. This course does not apply unnecessary pressure on me as a student.
3. The volume of work on my course means I can always complete it to my satisfaction.
4. I am generally given enough time to understand the things I have to learn.

B11. Assessment
1. Teaching staff test what I have understood rather than what I have memorised.
2. Assessment methods employed in my course require an in-depth understanding of the course content.

B12. Learning Community
1. I feel part of a group of students committed to learning.
2. I have been able to explore academic interests with other students.
3. I have learned to explore ideas confidently.
4. Within my course, I feel my suggestions and ideas are valued.
5. I feel part of an academic community in my college or university.

B13. Intellectual Motivation
1. I have found the course motivating.
2. The course has stimulated my interest in the field of study.
3. The course has stimulated my enthusiasm for further learning.

B14. Entrepreneurial opportunities
1. If I was interested in starting my own business, I know where I could find support in my institution.
2. My Higher Education experience has helped me develop skills that could help me run my own business in future.
3. As a result of my Higher Education experience, I am more likely to consider running my own business in the future.

B15. Employability and skills
1. My Higher Education experience has helped me plan for my future career.
2. My institution offered activities and resources designed to prepare me for the next step in my career.

3. The skills I have developed during my time in Higher Education will be useful for my future career.

B16. Environmental sustainability
1. My institution encourages good environmental practice.
2. My course has encouraged me to think about environmental sustainability.
3. I have had opportunities to take part in activities supporting environmental sustainability.

B17. Student safety
1. I feel safe to be myself at university/college.
2. My institution takes responsibility for my safety.

Policy for the recruitment, support and development of tutors and demonstrators

THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Purpose of Policy

The Policy sets out requirements for the recruitment, support and development of tutors and demonstrators.

Overview

The Policy covers a range of aspects of recruitment, support and development of tutors and demonstrators, including: arrangements for contracts and payment; roles and responsibilities; mandatory induction and training; non-mandatory training and development; and resolving problems.

Scope: Mandatory Policy

The Policy applies to all tutors and demonstrators at the University.

Contacts (HR issues)	Corporate Human Resources and College Human Resources
Contact (Educational issues)	Academic Services
Contact (Training and development issues)	Institute for Academic Development

Document control

Dates	**Approved**: July 2017	**Starts:** 1 Sept 2017 (full implementation 2018-19)	**Equality impact assessment:** June 2017	**Amendments:** Sept 2021	**Next Review:** 2021/22

Approving authority	Senate Education Committee
Consultation undertaken	Combined Joint Consultative and Negotiating Committee Schools Colleges Edinburgh University Students' Association UCU Focus groups of tutors and demonstrators
Section responsible for policy maintenance & review	Academic Services, Institute for Academic Development and Human Resources.
Related policies, procedures, guidelines & regulations	https://www.ed.ac.uk/human-resources/recruitment-guidance
UK Quality Code	UK Quality Code Chapter B3 (Learning and Teaching)
Policies superseded by this policy	Code of Practice for Tutors and Demonstrators
Alternative format	If you require this document in an alternative format please email Academic.Services@ed.ac.uk or telephone 0131 651 4490.
Keywords	Tutors, demonstrators, induction, training

Policy for the recruitment, support and development of tutors and demonstrators

Tutors and demonstrators are integral members of their course teams. The following framework is designed to ensure that tutors and demonstrators contributing to our on-campus and on-line courses receive appropriate support and guidance for the task and that they are well supported in providing excellent quality teaching. Those providing tutoring and demonstrating services comprise a heterogeneous group which includes postgraduate research students, post-doctoral research fellows and practitioners from various professional fields.

1. Recruitment processes

1.1 Recruitment of tutors and demonstrators must be in line with the University's recruitment and selection policies and procedures. Schools must provide fair and equal opportunities to become tutors or demonstrators to those with the relevant knowledge and skills who may be interested, although the opportunities will vary across Schools and in some specific circumstances, the University's recruitment procedures may allow variations for certain categories of post.

1.2 The recruitment process must be completed in time to allow tutors and demonstrators to manage their commitments and to be given a formal induction to their roles before their duties commence (see section 5).

1.3 Recruitment and selection for posts must adhere to the University's Conflict of Interest policy.

2. Contracts and Payment

2.1 This section applies to those who have a contract to deliver tutoring and demonstrating only, rather than those who may undertake some tutoring or demonstrating as part of their wider role.

2.2 Tutors and demonstrators must receive a contract which must be issued and accepted before the tutor or demonstrator commences duties. Payment for duties will be made in line with University pay and reward processes.

2.3 Employees are engaged on standard University of Edinburgh conditions of employment and must ensure they familiarise themselves with employee policies relevant to their post.

2.4 Tutors and demonstrators will be asked to undertake duties which are consistent with the grade at which they are paid. The relevant generic or specific job descriptions will set out these duties.

2.5 Tutors and demonstrators must be paid for all contact hours and such time as the School specifies is necessary to fulfil all their duties (see 3.1), in line with the relevant work allocation model. Tutors and demonstrators must also be paid for their formal induction and mandatory training associated with the contracted teaching and demonstrating (see section 5), and any School meetings at which attendance is mandatory (see section 3).

Policy for the recruitment, support and development of tutors and demonstrators

2.6 For tutors and demonstrators who are current students, employment is offered for a fixed period of time related to the period of the programme of study. Tutors and demonstrators who are not current students may be offered employment on a fixed-term or open-ended basis. For fuller information please see the Appendix in the [Fixed Term Contracts Reason Codes](#).

2.7 For postgraduate research students registered at the University, tutoring and demonstrating (or any other employment at the University) must not impede the successful completion of the students' own degrees and must not contravene any conditions their funding body applies regarding the number of hours of paid teaching or other employment that they can undertake. Full-time postgraduate research students must work no more than an average of 9 hours per week across the academic year and must discuss any proposed employment with their principal supervisor.

2.8 For students on Tier 4 visas, constraints on employment set by the UK Home Office will apply. Heads of School[1] are responsible for complying with University procedures which ensure that Tier 4 visa holders are not contracted to work in excess of the limits imposed by their visa.

2.9 Payment for tutoring and demonstrating cannot be included in a scholarship but must be paid separately through a contract as above on the appropriate grade for the work.

3. Role and responsibilities

3.1 Tutors and demonstrators may contribute to a range of duties, and must be paid for all hours of work that the School has specified are necessary to fulfil these duties (see 2.5), which may include, but are not restricted to, the following:
- Seminars and workshops;
- Tutorials;
- Formative and summative marking and assessment of work (see 3.5-3.7);
- Laboratory and other practical classes;
- Field trips;
- Meetings with students (office hours);
- Giving and receiving feedback;
- Teaching administration, including mandatory course and team meetings; and
- Preparation for tutoring/demonstrating.

Allocation of tasks

3.2 It is the responsibility of the Course Organiser, or a suitably delegated member of staff, to allocate tasks to tutors and demonstrators, to provide guidance on the scope

[1] Hereafter, 'Head of School' may refer to the Head of School or suitably delegated member of staff. Schools should identify delegated staff members and communicate these to tutors and demonstrators via the key contacts information (see Appendix).

Policy for the recruitment, support and development of tutors and demonstrators

of and time required for particular tasks, and to supervise all tasks undertaken. The School should set out a fair and transparent process for allocating tasks and hours of work. The Course Organiser is responsible for ensuring that tasks allocated are consistent with the job description, appropriate to the grade, and reasonable within the time allocated. The School must set out a clear, published, timeframe for allocating tasks and hours, so that tutors and demonstrators are informed of their work well in advance of commencement.

3.3 Should the Course Organiser, or a suitably delegated member of staff, deem it appropriate on an occasional basis for tutors and demonstrators to undertake limited tasks that are not normally applicable to their grade, but are thought to be useful for development reasons, the Course Organiser must provide appropriate levels of supervision for these tasks and provide the tutor or demonstrator with feedback on their performance. Where the Course Organiser identifies a substantial, on-going need for work done above the level normally undertaken by tutors and demonstrators, they must seek advice from the College HR Team on how to proceed.

Pastoral support
3.4 While tutors and demonstrators can act as a convenient first point of contact for students who wish to discuss personal problems, their role is to direct students to more specialised sources of pastoral support. Formal induction should include guidance on appropriate people within the School (e.g. a Personal Tutor) or University support services to whom students can be referred, and on relevant local procedures.

Involvement in assessment and feedback
3.5 The Head of School is responsible for appointing markers who contribute to the assessment process. Where the Head of School appoints tutors or demonstrators to undertake assessment and feedback duties, the Course Organiser has responsibility for allocating these duties and for ensuring that the type of tasks and the manner in which they are undertaken are in accordance with the [University's Taught Assessment Regulations](#).

3.6 Where tutors and demonstrators are allocated assessment and feedback duties, the Course Organiser is responsible for supporting and overseeing their work. This will include briefing tutors and demonstrators in advance on how to conduct all relevant aspects of the assessment and feedback process.

3.7 The Course Organiser has responsibility for ensuring that appropriate moderation processes are in place and for informing tutors and demonstrators of these arrangements. Typically, Course Organisers will organise more robust moderation processes when marking is undertaken by tutors and demonstrators.

4. Access to facilities and resources

Policy for the recruitment, support and development of tutors and demonstrators

4.1 Tutors and demonstrators must be given access to all facilities and resources that the Head of School specifies that they require to fulfil their duties, and a summary of these must be included in the formal induction (see section 5). Tutors and demonstrators must also be given the opportunity to be included in applicable fora designed to consult and liaise with staff members within the Schools in which they tutor or demonstrate.

5. Mandatory induction and training

5.1 Tutors and demonstrators must not commence their duties until the School has provided them with necessary formal induction on all core aspects of their role. Schools must have a formal induction plan and mandatory content is set out in the Appendix.

5.2 The School must determine the mandatory training which tutors and demonstrators must undertake in relation to the courses on which they are assigned to tutor or demonstrate. Mandatory training, and other ongoing training relating to tutoring and demonstrating generally may, in some circumstances, be delivered separately to the formal induction and may continue after tutoring or demonstrating duties have been commenced. Heads of School must recommend a necessary amount of training, taking account of the level at which tutors and demonstrators are teaching, and their experience.

6. Support, Feedback and Review

6.1 It is the responsibility of the Head of School to ensure that tutors and demonstrators are adequately supported in their roles and that their work is monitored satisfactorily. As well as the support provided by the Course Organiser, Schools may provide additional support to tutors and demonstrators, and information on sources of support and guidance must be communicated as part of the formal induction.

6.2 Feedback makes a valuable contribution to tutors' and demonstrators' experience and development. It is important that tutors and demonstrators receive constructive and relevant feedback on their performance in a timely manner and this feedback may be received through various channels.

6.3 Schools are responsible for providing tutors and demonstrators with a formal annual review of their development and progress. For tutors and demonstrators working 0.2 FTE or more this will take the form of an individual meeting, which should be undertaken by the Course Organiser or other suitable member of staff. For tutors and demonstrators defined as low-hours employees (working less than 0.2 FTE), alternative arrangements apply, see: Low hours employees' guidance. If tutors and demonstrators are currently postgraduate research students, reviews of their development and progress in tutoring and demonstrating must be separate from the postgraduate research annual review process.

Policy for the recruitment, support and development of tutors and demonstrators

7. <u>Non-mandatory training and development</u>

7.1 It is valuable for tutors and demonstrators to be given the opportunity to develop beyond their current tasks and the annual reviewer, or suitable alternative, must provide the opportunity to discuss with them the availability of any optional training which will allow this development. This training might include courses or briefing meetings organised by the School or the Institute for Academic Development (IAD).

8. <u>Resolving problems</u>

8.1 If tutors and demonstrators experience any difficulties relating to their duties, they should make an appointment with the key contact outlined by the Head of School in their induction. Where tutors and demonstrators who are current students experience issues in balancing work with studies, they should speak to their principal supervisor in the first instance.

Policy for the recruitment, support and development of tutors and demonstrators

APPENDIX

Formal Induction Plan

Each School must form an induction plan for tutors and demonstrators which must include the following:

Key contacts

- Whom tutors and demonstrators should contact in case of any queries about the course (e.g. Course Organiser), their development, their contract or pay (e.g. School office staff) (advise two different people in case of absence or conflict).
- An introduction to all key people in relevant formal roles in the School, including those in a supporting or guiding role.

Contracts, pay and duties

- How many hours tutors and demonstrators are expected to work (including detail of preparation time, marking time, teaching time).
- The tasks for which tutors and demonstrators will be paid.
- How much tutors and demonstrators will be paid for this work, when they will be paid, and how they will be paid.

Course and subject specific information (as relevant to specific roles)

- Course content and processes.
- The facilities and resources that are available to tutors and demonstrators.
- How administrative tasks related to teaching operate for the course/subject
- Detailed marking criteria (where tutors are involved in assessment).
- Feedback or review arrangements that are in place and when these processes will occur, including how tutors and demonstrators may provide feedback on their experiences.

Roles and responsibilities

- The expectation of tutors and demonstrators in terms of teaching and assessment responsibilities.
- The role of tutors and demonstrators in relation to pastoral support for students, including information regarding the key staff in the School with a role in providing pastoral support, local procedures for referring students, record keeping and confidentiality issues.

Relevant policies and procedures
- This Policy document.

Policy for the recruitment, support and development of tutors and demonstrators

- Arrangements for making tutors and demonstrators aware of reasonable adjustments that they need to make for students with disabilities.
- Information about any teaching-related accessibility, equality, and diversity policies (e.g. Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy).
- Any confidentiality or data rules or processes within the School.
- Relevant health and safety guidance.
- Any School handbooks or other documentation for tutors and demonstrators.
- All relevant employment policies.

Training and development
- Mandatory training activities.
- Additional development opportunities (e.g. Institute for Academic Development provision and support, including workshops, and support towards Higher Education Academic accreditation)
- Sources of guidance on best practice and teaching methods
- Advice on how to structure and organise preparation time.

Policy for the recruitment, support and development of tutors and demonstrators

List of policies linked in the document:

Recruitment Policies:
https://www.ed.ac.uk/human-resources/recruitment-guidance

Policy on Conflict of Interest:
https://www.ed.ac.uk/human-resources/policies-guidance/a-to-z-of-policies-and-guidance

Pay and reward processes:
http://www.ed.ac.uk/human-resources/pay-reward

Pay scales:
http://www.ed.ac.uk/human-resources/pay-reward/pay/pay-scales

Fixed-term contracts – reasons:
https://www.ed.ac.uk/human-resources/policies-guidance/a-to-z-of-policies-and-guidance

Conditions of employment:
https://www.ed.ac.uk/human-resources/policies-guidance/conditions-service

Taught Assessment Regulations:
http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/taughtassessmentregulations.pdf

Low Hour Employees:
http://www.ed.ac.uk/human-resources/learning-development/annual-review/guidelines/line-managers-reviewers/low-hour-employees

Senate Education Committee

03 November 2021

Summer 2022 Exam Diet – Practical Implementation

Description of paper
1. This paper outlines proposals for the practical implementation of the summer 2022 exam diet.

Action requested / recommendation
2. Senate Education Committee (SEC) is asked to approve the proposed approach to the summer 2022 exam diet.

Background and context
3. Plans for the December 2021 exam diet were discussed and signed off at the May and September 2021 meetings of SEC.
4. A preliminary discussion about the arrangements for the summer 2022 exam diet took place at the September 2021 meeting of SEC. Members noted that:
    a. many students would be apprehensive about any return to on-campus exams.
    b. appetite to return to on-campus exams varied across the University.
    c. holding on-campus exams should be permitted only where there was good rationale for doing so eg. to fulfil Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements, or to address concerns around academic integrity.
    d. it would be important to have a robust process in place for judging whether or not an on-campus exam was necessary for any given course.
5. SEC agreed that an exams sub-group should be established to discuss these issues in more detail and to make proposals around the practical implementation of the summer 2022 exam diet.
6. An exams sub-group was therefore established and met on 11 October 2021.
7. College representatives on the group subsequently consulted Schools about:
    a. Appetite to hold on-campus exams in the summer 2022 diet
    b. Draft criteria for assessing whether or not an on-campus exam should be permitted.

Discussion
8. The exams sub-group recognised the importance of:
    a. the University not adopting a position now in relation to the summer 2022 exam diet that it later needed to reverse due to ongoing uncertainty around COVID-19.
    b. offering students as much stability and consistency as possible in academic year 2021/22 following a difficult period.
    c. the University not losing, and instead building on the assessment good and best practice that had emerged since March 2020.
9. In this context, it accepted at the outset SEC's steer (at its September 2021 meeting) that on-campus exams should be the exception and not the norm in the summer 2022 diet.
10. The Head of Timetabling Services advised the sub-group that there are strong arguments for not having an on-campus resit diet: this avoids students having to make expensive travel and accommodation arrangements to attend exams in Edinburgh in August, and avoids the University having to secure resit venues around the world. The sub-group therefore proposes that the resit diet should be online exams or alternative

assessments only. This will require any courses scheduling on-campus exams in the summer diet to offer an alternative assessment in the resit diet.

11. The University's long-term aim is to diversify assessment, and the prominence of large-scale examinations will be discussed as part of the Curriculum Transformation Programme. The sub-group therefore proposes that, where programmes and courses have already identified alternative forms of assessment that can be used successfully in place of exams in summer 2022, they should continue with these arrangements. These programmes and courses should also be encouraged to retain this approach in future years.

12. It is proposed that, where programmes and courses have stated in the DPT that assessment in summer 2022 will take the form of an exam, this exam should take place online, unless exceptionality can be demonstrated.

13. The following criteria for judging whether or not a programme or course is exceptional and therefore needs to hold an on-campus exam are proposed:

    An on-campus exam will be considered:

    Either:

    - where an on-campus exam is required to satisfy established professional or accrediting body requirements.

     Or:

    - where there are justifiable concerns about academic integrity / misconduct that can only be addressed by offering an on-campus exam; **and**
    - the exam is Honours-level / in later years of study(unless an exceptional case can be made for an on-campus, pre-Honours exam eg. to meet accrediting body requirements); **and**
    - the exam accounts for 50% or more of the total course mark; **and**
    - there is a clear plan outlined for the way in which students will be supported as they prepare for the exam, recognising the lack of on-campus exam experience and the significant anxiety that a return to on-campus exams will cause for some; **and**
    - the on-campus exam can reasonably be accommodated in line with the mitigation measures the University has in place to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, such as room occupancy restrictions.

14. Where programmes and courses are of the view that they can demonstrate exceptionality and satisfy the above criteria, it is proposed that requests for on-campus exams, including detailed justification, are submitted to the relevant College Office for consideration.

15. These requests should be sent to the College Office in the form of a single, collated School submission covering all relevant courses. Prior to submitting, Schools should check that all requests for on-campus exams have been considered carefully at both course and programme-level to ensure that they makes sense within the wider assessment strategy.

16. Colleges will report all approved requests for on-campus exams to SEC.

Resource implications

17. Initial consultation with Schools suggests that appetite for on-campus exams is relatively small. Provided eligibility criteria are strictly applied, Timetabling and Examinations would seek to plan for the accommodation of all approved requests.

18. In order for Timetabling and Examinations to plan resources for Summer 2022, requirements for all on-campus exams will need to be confirmed by **Friday 10 December 2021 at the latest**, and earlier if possible.

19. Should it not prove possible for Timetabling and Examinations to accommodate all approved requests, requests will be prioritised, with highest priority being given to those courses where an on-campus exam is required to satisfy PSRB requirements.

Risk management

20. The proposed approach mitigates risks associated with the summer 2022 exam diet. By proposing that on-campus exams are the exception and not the norm in summer 2022, it avoids the risk of the University adopting a position now that it may later need to reverse due to ongoing uncertainty around COVID-19. The approach also provides as much stability and consistency for students as possible in academic year 2021/22 and is supported by the Edinburgh University Students' Association.

Equality & diversity

21. The proposed approach provides as much stability and consistency for students as possible in academic year 2021/22, and will be particularly beneficial to those students with assessed needs. The approach is supported by the Students' Association.

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

22. College Offices will communicate the agreed approach to their Schools. The approach will be implemented by College Offices and Timetabling and Examinations. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the approach will be undertaken by SEC.

Author
Philippa Ward (on behalf of the exams sub-group)
Academic Policy Officer
3 November 2021

Freedom of Information Open

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

7 October 2021

Student Experience: Delivering a new model of student support

Description of paper

1. This paper summarises the work done to date on both:
    a. reviewing the existing personal tutor and student support system, and
    b. proposing a new model of student support to address concerns about the current system.

Action requested/Recommendation

2. SEC are asked to note the findings presented in this paper and to approve the proposal to move to a new system of student support in two waves, with 9 schools moving to the new system in September 2022 and the remainder in September 2023.

Background and context

3. In 2017 and 2018, a number of reviews/surveys identified that, while personal tutor and student support provision was effective in some schools, there remained scope for improvement in the overall provision of support for students.

4. The University subsequently commissioned a review of the existing arrangements for student support and personal tutoring as part of the then Service Excellence Programme. A small review team of professional service and academic leads led this review, reporting to a Design Group (chaired by – initially - SVP Charlie Jeffrey, subsequently VP Students Colm Harmon) which in turn reported in to the Service Excellence Programme Board.

5. The review led to the development of the so-called "Evolved Model" of Student Support which was presented to Senate Education Committee in Dec 2019. SEC approved the proposed model.

6. At the onset of the COVID pandemic, all work on the project was halted. However the University is now in a position to restart the work, and indeed it was a clear recommendation from the 2021 Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) that the University should make accelerated progress in this area.[1] Implementation of this project has been identified as one of a number of immediate priorities in discussions to date about the institutional response to both ELIR and the 2021 National Student Survey findings.

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[1] The University is recommended to "make significant progress in implementing plans to ensure an effective approach to offering personal student support. In doing so, and recognising the extended period of time that the University has been developing its approach to personal tutoring, it is asked to reflect on whether the current timescale for implementation of the institutional Student Support and Personal Tutor Plan in 2023-24, is sufficiently ambitious." (ELIR report, 2021)

7. Given the time that has elapsed since the pausing of the project in February 2020, and the fact that the Service Excellence Programme Board has been stood down, the proposed model is now being brought back to Senate Education Committee for information and a further chance to comment.

Discussion

8. <u>Current State Assessment</u>
The team carried out an initial Current State Assessment (in August 2019) which identified that there are lots of examples of positive models of personal tutoring and student support across the University, which are appreciated by both staff and students. However there were concerns about:

- consistency of provision (and therefore equity of support);
- how easy or challenging it was for students to navigate the University, given the diversity of roles and responsibilities, with the risks of serious wellbeing cases falling through cracks;
- whether staff carrying out student support work as academics or professional services staff were adequately recognised, rewarded, developed and promoted;
- to what extent personal tutors were able to engage in supporting students in line with the original role purpose (to assist students in regularly reviewing their academic progress and performance ; to encourage students to reflect on their learning, both within and beyond the formal curriculum, and how it contributes to their future development and career; to help students to feel part of a community of learners) vs carrying out a largely transactional series of administrative activities;
- to what extent the student support structures were adequately linked to induction and orientation.

The review team concluded that "*[The] review has found many examples of personal tutors and student support staff working hard to support students to flourish during their time at the University of Edinburgh. But it also shows the urgent need for action to ensure that support structures at the University of Edinburgh are clear for all involved; that our system supports the development of inclusive communities of staff and students, appropriately developing and valuing individuals; and that students have reliable and equitable access to a high standard of support*."

9. <u>Consultation</u>
Over Autumn 2019 the team developed and consulted[2] on a number of different models for the future of student support at the University, drawing on their review of the literature and a number of visits to peer institutions in the UK and North America.

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[2] The team hosted 35 events, met in person with over 200 students and staff, received over 200 online responses, and attended a range of university, college and school-wide updates to provide information on the project.

This led to the development of the so-called "Evolved Model" of Student Support as presented in Dec 2019 to Senate Education Committee.

10. The Evolved Model
The aim of the model is to ensure that all taught students have access to consistent levels of timely, professional, empathetic support covering both academic and pastoral matters from within their School. The model proposes:

- Moving from an academic personal tutor system to a professional service-led adviser system in each school, (existing student support teams will transition into these roles as part of new Student Experience Teams, but new roles will also be needed to meet demand);
- As a consequence, freeing up academic time from personal tutor duties to focus on other areas (where possible) including student contact time as part of their wider teaching duties;
- Embedding specialist mental health and wellbeing support in each school as part of the Student Experience Team;
- Maintaining the role of Senior Tutor to assist with complex and challenging cases;
- Strengthening the academic role of Programme Director to create "cohort leads", with specific responsibility for providing advice and guidance on programme matters and building a sense of belonging amongst members of the programme cohort; and
- Strengthening the current Peer Assisted Learning Schemes by ensuring the PALS leads are all treated as paid roles (fractional student employees).
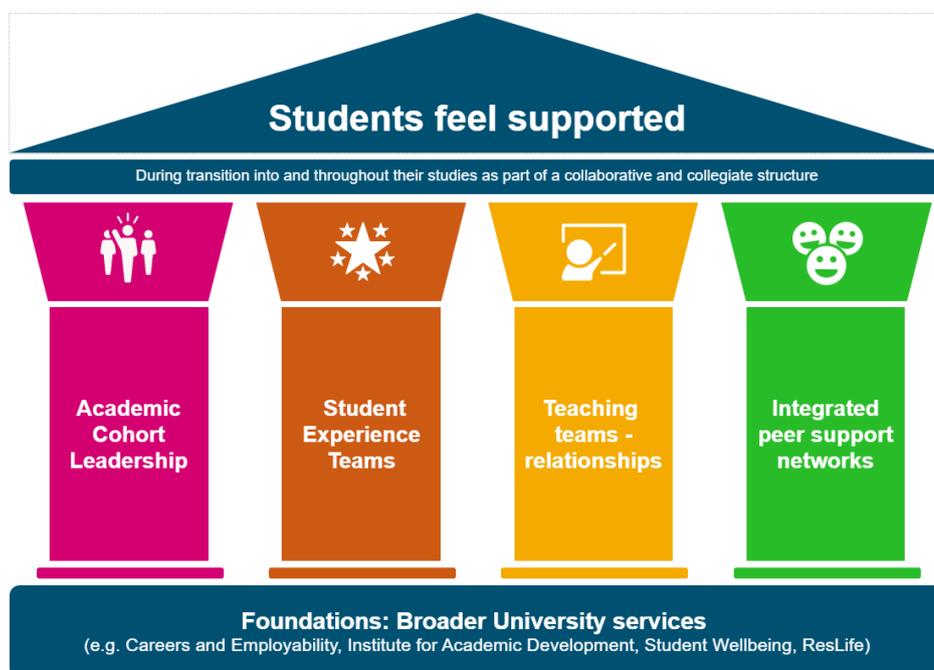

Students feel supported
During transition into and throughout their studies as part of a collaborative and collegiate structure

| Academic Cohort Leadership | Student Experience Teams | Teaching teams - relationships | Integrated peer support networks |

Foundations: Broader University services
(e.g. Careers and Employability, Institute for Academic Development, Student Wellbeing, ResLife)

Image 1: The Evolved Model of Student Support

11. <u>Functional specification</u>

The project team has recently developed a functional specification that sets out the student perspective of student support that we aim to deliver through the evolved model:

- **Academic Guidance and Support -** As a student, I will have appropriate academic and skills support from the University. This means:

    - I will have support in building a good **understanding of my core programme**, with access to specialised subject-related guidance, advice on my degree programme and help with course selection
    - I will have **support in my learning**, including regular contact with the academics who teach me
    - I will have support through **induction and key transitions** during my university lifetime
    - I will have opportunities to meet and collaborate with other students, helping to shape **a sense of belonging** to my degree programme, and the wider University
    - I will have time and opportunities for **reflecting on my learning and academic progress**
    - I will have access to academic support from my **peers**

- **Personal and Wellbeing Support** – As a student, I will have appropriate personal and wellbeing support. This means:

    - I will have support from a **named individual who knows who I am.** They will be my first point of contact and will proactively reach out to me at key times in my studies. If they are unavailable, I will still have access to a wider student support team
    - I will have access to individual and group **personal development opportunities** to allow me to make the most of my studies and face any challenges that occur during my time at the University of Edinburgh
    - I will have support with my overall **wellbeing,** and if I need specialist support, I will be helped in navigating specialist services and relevant support networks

12. <u>The evolved model –costs</u>

Moving to the evolved model will require investment in additional professional service posts in schools. While academic workload will reduce as a result, this is not expected to result in short-term savings as the workload reduction is fractional (eg. 100 hours per year per academic). Therefore the move to the evolved model is an investment case.

13. <u>Delivering the Evolved Model – Project Plans</u>
    The three Colleges have already identified 9 schools who are to take part in the first wave of implementation:
    - CAHSS: Business School, Economics, HCA, SPS,
    - CSE: Biological Sciences, Chemistry, Engineering Informatics.
    - CMVM: Biomedical Sciences

    These schools will initially work to consider the requirements of the functional specification and consider how they can meet those requirements in line with the structures set out in the evolved model. Where there is a justifiable need for variation (for example, a PSRB requirement with regard to clinical mentors in Medicine; a desire to generate efficiencies by sharing support structures across 2 or more schools) the School will bring these proposed variances to the Project Board for approval.

    In-year funding has been agreed for the project costs and will be administered through the Strategic Change Unit. A project team is being established, consisting of a Senior Design Lead (Rosie Edwards), a small number of other Design Leads, a project manager, HR colleagues, a Business Analyst and a Change Manager.

    It is proposed that a steering group is set up to have oversight of delivery, to be chaired by the VP Students, with academic and professional services representation from all 3 colleges, alongside the Deputy Secretary (Student Experience) and the Director of Strategic Change. In addition, a reference group will be established to bring together on a regular basis the leads from each school involved in the first wave as well as members of the project team.

Risk Management

14. Failure to address ELIR recommendations around student support may lead to a judgement of "limited effectiveness" in a future ELIR review, which would have significant reputational impact. Failure to address student support issues also caries reputational risk, continues to affect the University's standing in national league tables and may impact on admissions and recruitment.

Equality & Diversity

15. There is the opportunity through development of a new model of student support to both recruit a diverse group of advisers and to ensure that all student advisers are fully and regularly trained in EDI issues. Providing accessible and inclusive support has the potential to help eliminate discrimination; advance equality of opportunity and foster good relationships between different groups of students. The appointment of specialist mental health and wellbeing advisers in each

school offers particular opportunities to strengthen the support for students who have a mental health disability.

Next steps & Communications

16. Subject to final approval by both Executive and any feedback from Senate Education Committee, we will stand up the project team and governance and make an institution-wide announcement as part of the project launch later in October.

Author and Presenter
Gavin Douglas
Deputy Secretary, Student Experience

Freedom of Information

Open paper