

Senate Education Committee

Thursday 18th January 2024 2.30-4.30pm

Hybrid meeting: Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House and Microsoft Teams
and via Microsoft Teams

1. Attendance

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

2. Minutes of Meeting held on 9th November 2023

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 9th November 2023, with minor amendments to sections 4.3 and 4.4.

3. Convener's Communications and Matters Arising

- **Recent Curriculum Transformation Programme session for Senate & SEC members**

The Convener thanked members for attending and contributing to the CTP session held earlier in the week. A member of SEC informed the Committee that they and other elected members of Senate had compiled a response to the CTP discussion which will be presented to Senate at its February meeting.

Action: Committee Secretary to circulate the response from elected members of Senate to SEC.

- **Quality Enhancement and Standards Review outcomes**

The Committee were informed that the QESR report from QAA Scotland had been received and the outcome was that of confidence in the University's management of quality and standards. There is, however, a sense of urgency with some key recommendations, including assessment and feedback.

The report will be made publicly available on 24th January 2024, and the University will publish a response to the content of the report.

A reshaped ELIR oversight group, which reports to both SEC and SQAC, will take forward the recommendations from the external review.

4. Substantive Items

4.1 Committee Priorities

This item was brought forward in the agenda due to the availability of the Convener, and discussion addressed two papers; the mid-year reflection on committee priorities and the proposed revision to SEC plan of activities for 2024. The Convener outlined that the priorities of 2024/25 are yet to be decided and the discussion of the committee will feed into the priorities for the coming year. In setting priorities, the Committee were reminded to consider how those priorities relate to the Committee remit, and to consider what is achievable within scope and resourcing.

The presenter of the proposal to revise priorities set out three key areas; NSS results, lost learning and the Tutors and Demonstrators policy. The discussion of these items included the following points:

- It is hoped that revised priorities will allow SEC to discuss issues raised by colleagues in the wider Senate, and issues that can be raised from grassroots upwards.
- Sharing good practice and successes in relation to improving NSS scores was felt to be helpful to Schools. Lots of this comes through in annual quality processes, but information sharing is not always effective.
- It was noted that clear communication in plain English and information sharing is vital to the efforts to drive improvements across the University.
- The impact of lost learning may vary across Schools and Colleges; it would be valuable for Schools to have the opportunity to relay what they would find helpful and useful.
- A member of the Committee raised concern that the account of T&D work and policy in the paper included factual inaccuracies. It was clarified that the working group completed their work and implementation activities, and the dialogue with UCU will continue.
- Following this clarification, it was agreed that the Convener would check with HR as to the training arrangements for T&Ds.
- It was acknowledged by the Convener that NSS results and Tutors & Demonstrators policy is embedded in recommendations from both ELIR and QESR, and are institutional strategies.

Action: Convener to consult with HR in regards to the minimum training standards for Tutors & Demonstrators, and report back to the Committee.

Action: Deputy Secretary, Students to continue to provide updates on work undertaken to improve NSS results to the Committee.

4.2 Online Data Protection Training

The Data Protection Officer was in attendance to speak to this paper. The Committee were asked to approve auto-enrolment of students into online data protection training through Learn Ultra, following changes to the system which has meant that students are no longer able to self-enrol. It was confirmed that auto-enrolment does not mean mandatory, and there is no mandate for students to complete this training.

It was highlighted during discussion that an unintended consequence of courses listed as essential, although not mandatory, risks overwhelming students with too many proposed courses. There was some concern around how best to communicate who should take essential courses, and the need for more guidance around this.

It was also highlighted that there is no way to track the completion of these courses, and that is a concern when students are required to have completed the course as part of their studies if they are gathering data. It was noted that a function such as a “completed” button at the end of the course to track completion would transform the impact of these types of courses.

Action: Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Division of Information Services to follow up with course design team to explore feasibility of a tracking function.

The Committee approved the request for Online Data Protection Training to be added to the suite of essential courses on Learn Ultra.

4.3 Student Support Model update

This paper was presented for noting, with questions to be submitted to the author (not in attendance) outside of the meeting. The Committee were informed by the Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling that data gathered so far has come from staff and focus groups with students and student advisors. The long-term monitoring will involve an evaluation model which is in development with staff from SPS.

Members of the Committee raised the following questions and points around the new student support model:

- Reports of issues at time of enrolment, with not enough student advisors to manage the practicalities in School offices.
- Concern around the role of cohort leads, with some student reporting that they miss the 1:1 academic support contact that was previously provided by PTs.
- There may be heightened importance on the dissertation relationship that students will come to have in the later stages of their programme.
- Is there a correlation between the change in student support and increase in ESC cases?
- What measures are in place to identify and communicate with students who are not engaging in the early stages of their programme?
- The rise in complex cases referred to Wellbeing Advisors highlights the need for oversight of serious, ongoing issues and risk of pressure on the service.
- Members would welcome an audit of the new model to understand how well it is working.
- There is room for flexibility within the new model, and some ownership lies with Schools to build in aspects which they find most valuable for their students.

Action: Committee Secretary to share details of this discussion with the paper author (Deputy Secretary, Students).

4.4 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) 2024 Institutional Questions

The committee approved the proposed institutional questions for the 2024 PTES survey.

4.5 Doctoral College*: Postgraduate Researcher Experience Survey College Responses (closed item)

This item was presented by the representative of CSE for PGR for noting and comment. During discussion, it was noted that supervisory relationships received positive feedback, although the sense of community and issues with research culture are identified as consistent areas for improvement across all Colleges. Initiatives are underway to improve community and encourage interdisciplinary work across Schools and there is some funding available to support this work. The Committee were informed of the recently published Community Building Guide which aims to support efforts to build a sense of community.

A member of the Committee highlighted that the University must give PGR students a reason to come to campus, especially those who do not work in labs or studios. The lack of postgraduate social and study space affects how students use campus. There is also the impact of competing demands on PGR students, such as time spent in employment, training or on secondment. Funding also has an impact on the student experience, as some PGR students do not have secure funding for the duration of their PhD and there are some who are self-funding. It is important that students are equipped to consider whether self-funding is the right course for them.

The EUSA Academic Engagement and Policy Coordinator informed the Committee that representation and student voices are areas of concern for PGR students, and EUSA is undertaking work to improve PGR representation.

The Doctoral College is working on the Research Cultures Action Plan with the Institute for Academic Development, and this will make recommendations in relation to the PGR student experience.

5. For information/noting

- **Assessment & Feedback Task Groups**

The Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) requested that the Committee review the task groups working on assessment and feedback (the Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group and the Assessment and Feedback Guidance, Procedures, Data, Systems and Evaluation (AFGPDSE) Group) and disband the latter, which had a more operational focus. This proposed change is in response to the QESR visit and its recommendations around assessment & feedback.

The Committee approved the proposal to dissolve the AFGPDSE Group and reconstitute the Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group with a refreshed membership and remit focused on delivering the outcome of the QESR and longer-term ambitions for assessment and feedback. The Group will continue to report to SEC with a revised terms of reference and membership.

6. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

Sinéad Docherty
Academic Services
January 2024