

The University of Edinburgh

Internal Periodic Review

**14 week response report**

**Internal Periodic Review of:** Edinburgh College of Art

**Date of review:** 23 and 24 March 2023

**Date of 14 week response:** 5 December 2023

**Date of year on response:**

The School/Subject Area is responsible for reporting on progress with all recommendations, including those remitted to other areas of the University for action. If any recommendation has been fully addressed please record the action taken and date completed. Any barriers to progress should be highlighted on this report.

Recommendation no	Recommendation	Timescale for completion	Comment on progress towards completion and/or identify barriers to completion	Completion date
1	<p><b>Student Support/EDI</b> The review team recommends that ECA carries out cost of attendance analysis across all programmes and follows this with equality impact assessment to ensure equity of access and equity of outcome for students. The high financial cost to students involved with some disciplines may impact upon sustainability and upon accessibility for some demographics and deter students from widening participation backgrounds. Cost of attendance should be clearly communicated to students so that they understand additional programme costs.</p>	<p>May 2024 (initial scoping exercise)</p> <p>December 2024 (formal ECA Cost of Attendance Policy)</p>	<p>ECA recognises this issue, and thanks the Review Panel for drawing attention to it. We are aware that there are many sides to the issue, and that the lived experience of students across ECA can be varied in terms of how formal expectations are defined vs perceived.</p> <p>The ECA UG Student Convener (i.e., lead Student Representative) has taken this on as a core area of focus during a/y 2023–24. The issue has been discussed at length at the October 2023 meeting of the ECA SSLC.</p> <p>We propose to undertake a scoping exercise, in collaboration with our Student Reps, during 2023–24. This will be to set out the components required to create a formal ECA Cost of Attendance Policy, which will formally set out baseline requirements for all programmes to adhere to across ECA. This work will be conducted in collaboration with colleagues involved in issues around sustainability and environmental impact, with a view to seeing greater use of upcycling, recycling, and less environmentally intensive use of materials and resources.</p>	
2	<p><b>Assessment and Feedback (remit item1)</b> The review team recommends that ECA develop systematised assessment rubrics, in consultation with students, to ensure it can demonstrate how assessment of process and product is achieved.</p>	<p>(1) May 2024 (sharing of assessment and rubric designs for staff on the ECA Handbook)</p> <p>(2) May 2024</p>	<p>The ECA Education team have discussed this recommendation at length to try to understand exactly what is being asked. We must confess that we remain not wholly clear on how this recommendation is envisaged to be implemented in practice, in a context of a School that routinely operates several thousand distinct coursework assessments each year.</p> <p>That said, we do recognise that the use of assessment briefs with closely matched rubrics varies in how they are implemented across ECA. This no doubt includes good and less strong practice, and some of the latter examples clearly came through to the Review Panel during the Review Visit. One direction in which we are keen to follow up on this recommendation is in relation to student</p>	

		(3) a/y 2024–25	<p>involvement in assessment design, including in rubric design. This is a very lively topic across UoE at present, framed in terms of (a) Curriculum Transformation, and (b) a backdrop of poor scores for the University as a whole in national student surveys. The necessity for urgent work in this area is compounded by the new and expanding challenge of machine learning derived content synthesis ('generative AI', as it's also known).</p> <p>Given the broadness of the recommendation, we elect to focus on (1) gathering examples of good practice from across ECA and making these available on the ECA Handbook for staff to use in developing and updating assessments, and (2) revising our staff-facing guidance on the involvement of students in curriculum development and, (3) monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the previous point to ECA Education Committee.</p>	
3	<p><b>Tutors</b></p> <p>The review team recommends that ECA professionalise and systematise employment of tutors on guaranteed hours contracts. The review team considered that there is a risk of not being able to recruit sufficient tutoring staff which in turn presents a risk to programme delivery.</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>(but also ongoing as part of wider UoE-level governance work pertaining to hiring/ support of tutors other GH-type staff)</p>	<p>Two documents are provided as appendices to this 14-week report, which outline the workflow for determining tutor needs, and the formal HR hiring process. These are both now in operation at ECA, with the documents and indeed work in this area conducted mainly by the ECA Office (includes Finance/HR).</p> <p>That said, there is a significant UoE-wide project now underway about tutors and demonstrators, led by Prof Anthony Macioca. This is off the back of the past two quite challenging ELIRs for UoE, in which various shortcomings in this area were identified (i.e., systemic issues across UoE). It has been suggested that there is a good background policy in this area (<a href="https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/tutorsdemonstrators_policy.pdf">https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/tutorsdemonstrators_policy.pdf</a>) but that the policy is not being implemented in practice in a consistent way. Furthermore, a recent paper at UoE Senate Education Committee (Summer 2023) sought to tighten up the governance of tutor/demonstrator hiring and support at institution-level. All of this provides context to what is really a UoE-level matter, in terms of HR policy and practice.</p>	
4	<p><b>Student Support (remit item 2)</b></p> <p>The review team recommends that the College works with ECA to provide clarity on boundaries of roles for staff involved with student support and wellbeing within the new student support model. The College should also ensure that support is in place for staff involved in dealing with casework issues.</p> <p><u>Note:</u> This item was jointly addressed to ECA and to CAHSS. Our "comment towards</p>	<p>Initial work is complete.</p> <p>However, ongoing QA and refinement of the new model is ongoing and will remain so for the</p>	<p>ECA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In advance of the new SSM rollout in September 2023, separate training was provided for professional service and academic staff. Professional service staff, and in particular Student Advisers, received training from the central-UoE SSM team, focussed mainly on matters relating to student wellbeing and escalation. It was noted by ECA, and some other Schools, that this centrally-provided training did not draw very much attention to the more core, administrative aspects of the new Student Adviser role, nor to some of the key University digital systems that they would be required to use. ECA provided some training on these areas, via our Student Support Managers, though it must be noted that the volume of material to cover in the available run-in to launch of the SSM</li> </ul>	

	<p>progress” is therefore split into two parts, from ECA and CAHSS, respectively.</p>	<p>next 18-24 months as the model beds in. This includes issues around boundaries, roles, and remits.</p>	<p>was highly pressured. Initial feedback from some Student Advisers, at the time of this 14-week report, suggests some concern about the ‘true’ nature of their role, relative to how they understood it from the initial high-level job postings, and indeed from the centrally-provided training. This remains an issue of live and ongoing discussion in ECA and across the University.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In-person training for ECA Cohort Leads was provided in late August 2023, focussed on the core operational aspects of the new model (e.g., roles and responsibilities in the wider SSM ecosystem, the expected split of their time between individual and cohort-level support, academic/pastoral boundaries). This training was developed wholly within ECA, and was followed shortly afterwards with the launch of a comprehensive ECA Cohort Lead Handbook (this document is included in full as an Appendix to this 14-week report).</li> </ul> <p>CAHSS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The responsibilities for key roles within the new model of student support has been a regular discussion point at the CAHSS Student Support Model Implementation Group meetings, and also with the central UoE Student Support Team and one key recommendation has been to ensure availability of training for “Understanding Boundaries” for Student Advisers and Cohort Leads. There has also been a considerable improvement in the understanding of the threshold for referral of students to the Wellbeing Service.</li> <li>It is clear that more work needs to be done and Schools, College Office, and the central project team are currently focussing on a review of the Student Adviser task list in order to better understand the administrative demands of this role. We acknowledge that support for staff involved in casework issues is an area that needs to be investigated further and had hoped to pilot some new approaches in 2023-24 but time and resource constraints are a significant barrier to taking this forward. This is something the University must address collectively for all staff involved in front line student support and case management roles.</li> </ul>	
5	<p><b>Student Voice</b> The review team recommends that ECA consider a structured approach to enhancing how it involves the student voice. As noted above, there are opportunities for greater involvement of student voice in projects. There is an expectation that the student voice is structured into any review of assessment</p>	<p>Complete: ECA Student Voice Policy updated for 2023–24, including input of lead ECA Student</p>	<p>In response to the review team’s critique of the scope of the ECA Student Voice Policy, we note that the decision not to extend a School-wide approach to the Student Voice beyond those aspects that require compliance with EUSA guidelines and University policy was strategic, and ECA do not intend to change this approach. This is because ECA Subject Areas, which differ considerably in size, structure and ethos, operate different Subject-Area level Student Voice mechanisms whose effectiveness is evidenced by the national student surveys, in which ECA scored in line with UoE, the Russell Group and UK average on</p>	

and feedback. The staff survey carried out by ECA on assessment is a useful way of identifying self-perception but does not address any underlying student issues, such as understanding of the criteria for assessment and ensuring equity of experience.

Reps, in Oct 2023

ECA has updated guidance for academic staff developing and updating curricula, laying out necessity to involve students early on in the process

opportunities to give feedback, 8% above UoE average and in line with the Russell Group on clarity on how feedback was acted on, and considerably above UoE, Russell Group and UK averages on students' perception of staff valuing their feedback in the NSS; and above UoE and Russell Group averages (UK average not available) on feedback opportunities on the PTES. Indeed, Programme Representatives who were consulted on revising the ECA Student Voice Policy in the spring and summer of 2023, supported the approach of Subject Area-specific Student Voice mechanisms, not least because it affords flexibility for Programme Reps, who typically serve year-long terms, to effect immediate change. We also note that, staff reactions to ECA-managed alignment of Programme Representative recruitment practice to EUSA guidance in 2022-23 strongly suggested that the introduction of School-wide approaches beyond aspects governed by UoE and EUSA policy carries the risk of alienating Subject Area staff, whose work is essential to successful engagement with the Student Voice.

That said, ECA is continuing to carry out School-level enhancement-focused work in the Student Voice domain. A staged approach to Programme Representative recruitment, developed jointly with students and first trialled in 2023, yielded the highest number of Programme Reps and most comprehensive representation ECA has seen to date. The ECA Director of QA and Curriculum Approval, and the ECA Student Development Team, are currently working with the ECA UG School Convener (i.e., lead student representative) on building a strong community of Programme Reps and supporting them in developing expertise in areas of special interest in order to facilitate targeted engagement with ECA and Subject Area committees, sustained engagement across the year and sharing of workload among Reps, in an approach that draws on EUSA's Vice Principals model. We hope to include the new ECA PGT School Convener in this work, too.

As regards involving students in 'any review of assessment and feedback', in ECA's IPR, which investigated assessment from different perspectives across its two SSRIs, student consultation was integral to SSRI 1. SSRI 2 was not conceived as a comprehensive review of assessment but the initial step in the roll-out of the UoE's new Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities. Engaging staff in reflecting upon the AFPPs was intended as a basis for subject-specific interpretation and subsequent implementation of the AFPPs in consultation with students. Moreover, whilst we considered student consultation on SSRI 2, we had to acknowledge that robust student consultation on both SSRIs was not feasible within the timeframe (Dec-Feb) as well as in the context of industrial action and issues with student engagement in 2022-23 that were also noted by other Schools.

			<p>Robust data yielded by the UG and PGT student surveys – one of the core student feedback mechanisms – attest to remarkably high student satisfaction with assessment at ECA. ECA scored above UoE, Russell Group and UK universities averages on both fairness of marking and assessment demonstrating student learning in the NSS, and very significantly above UoE and Russell Group averages (UK averages not available) on clear marking criteria and fairness of assessment in the PTES.</p> <p>In the meantime, students have participated in review of assessment and feedback at Subject Area level; e.g., student consultations have resulted in reducing the scope of traditional dissertation components on the existing and future MA Landscape Architecture programmes as well as on the new BA Fine Arts, resulting in major programme changes and informing programme design. Student consultations on assessment diversification in response to NSS feedback are currently taking place in History of Art. Furthermore, as a member of the ECA Board of Studies, the ECA UG Convenor endorsed Design’s approach to breaking down large portfolio submissions into lower-stake smaller components and advised on summative feedback timelines.</p> <p>ECA acknowledge that there is further scope for increasing the consistency of involving students in the review and design of assessment and feedback and hope that the earlier-mentioned ongoing work with the School Convenors and Programme Reps will help drive this. However, we are also mindful that the Student Voice is constituted independently. I.e., the ECA Student Conveners and Programme Reps are entitled to set their own priorities and focus their attention on other matters, which, in the case of our current UG School Convener include review of the Special Circumstances Policy and cost of attendance.</p>	
6	<p><b>Postgraduate Research Supervision</b> The review team recommends that ECA consider whether there are appropriate mechanisms in place for supporting postgraduate research students if a change in supervision arrangements is indicated following annual progression review.</p>	April 2024	<p>The PGR team thanks the review panel for this recommendation. Our current mechanisms are supported by the functions within the annual review paperwork within existing University systems (students are asked, specifically: do you require a change in supervisory team – yes/no?) and in the review meeting itself.</p> <p>Students do change at this point in the year more than any other stage (and staff also can request change), but this is not a common occurrence. We are mindful however, that students may feel that this request is challenging in terms of roles and responsibilities of the staff involved and their relationship to the student.</p> <p>We plan in this forthcoming year (March/April 2024) to bring this discussion into our annual review training for both students and supervisors (held separately) to give the students the language and support to deal with potential change. We</p>	

			<p>will also consider the options of the role of Chair in the review process. Currently only 1st year reviews require a Chair, we will investigate this in terms of need/workload and appropriateness of response.</p>	
<p>7</p>	<p><b>Employability/Graduate attributes</b>  The review team heard evidence that students across all levels of provision (undergraduate, postgraduate taught, and postgraduate research) recognise that their future careers are unlikely to be within their disciplines. Students identified a gap in information on employability and a lack of clarity on the skills they are developing. The review team notes that this is an issue for arts across the sector and that a stronger narrative on the intangible impact of arts students on their locales and communities needs to be developed. This would demonstrate the value of students’ approach to work and life and impact on their communities. The ECA Plan and Education Strategy could provide a mechanism for more clearly articulating this. The review team recommends that ECA consider ways of making explicit to students the life-wide learning that they are acquiring through their studies.</p>	<p>Cohort Leads and Cohort Building Events: Throughout a/y 2023–24</p> <p>Student Development Team: Throughout a/y 2023–24 (needs analysis and initial testing of the waters), leading to a more concrete strategy by August 2024.</p>	<p>The ongoing UoE Curriculum Transformation Programme is seeking to address the likelihood that current and future graduates may have a work life that straddles or covers multiple types of employment/careers. Strategic curriculum design including, for example, a broader experience at pre-honours, and the addition of new cross-UoE “challenge courses” to widen monocular curricula. While many of ECA’s programmes do directly prepare students for a particular vocation, e.g., Architecture, Graphic Design, Fashion, and have tangible and successful employment histories, we are aware that many of our graduates may work in jobs (related or unrelated to their studies) to make money to facilitate and enable them to practice as artists, musicians, designers, curators, etc.</p> <p>One way to ensure a sense of a social role (impact on their communities) is to acknowledge this more legibly and to ensure curriculum development embeds an awareness of the ‘what for’ reality of a degree programme that reaches beyond the aspiration of the degree title as a viable career. Recent developments in Art, aligned to the new integrated UG BA Fine Art programme seek to address an extended understanding of how a Fine Art education can prepare students for a social role across a myriad of contexts.</p> <p>In terms of implementing tangible enhancements to processes that will help to embed issues around employability and graduate attributes, this is something that ECA has done a lot of work on over the past 2-3 years, through developing and refining standards at its School Board of Studies (i.e., where new/changed curricula are signed-off at ECA-level). The ECA Board of Studies has been requiring Course Organisers to clearly link course-specific skills and knowledge to the University’s Graduate Attributes Framework (which account for transferable skills and ‘life-wide’ learning) in the student-facing course information for several years, and with particularly acute focus since 2022–23. Indeed, ECA has been surfaced as an exemplar at UoE-level for its work in this area at recent meetings of the UoE Directors of Teaching Network, and Quality Assurance Forum.</p> <p>In terms of the specific recommendation that “ECA consider ways of making explicit to students the life-wide learning that they are acquiring through their studies”, we feel quite strongly that this <i>is</i> well embedded already in many programmes. However, we agree that it is always possible to do more of this, and to make work in this area more impactful. Our primary route to implement this in practice will be through cohort-level activities that form a core strand of the new UoE Student Support Model (see also recommendation #4). The ECA</p>	

			Cohort Lead Handbook provides a myriad of examples of how Cohort Leads can engage their student cohorts in considering wider aspects of their learning and career development, specifically in terms of going beyond existing course-level activities. In addition, our new Student Development Team, also part of the new SSM rollout, has been tasked to look at this specific issue, including in relation to peer support. As recently as November 2023 a cross-programme industry/alumni event was organised involving Graphic Design, Product Design, and Illustration.	
8	<p><b>Space</b> The review team identified a potential risk of separation with dedicated space leading to isolation and recommends that ECA consider the risks of spaces becoming or remaining siloes.</p> <p>The review team recommends that ECA consider ways of supporting and maintaining student-led and other community building activity. Postgraduate research students particularly appreciated access to studio space as being a game-changer and would welcome more informal opportunities for creating contact and community, for example through exhibiting work in process.</p>	<p>ECA Capital Project completion (2027)</p> <p>Ongoing SSM rollout (throughout a/y 2023–24)</p>	<p>ECA notes that this recommendation seems in direct contradiction with one of the commendations given to ECA in the Review Report (#8: The review team <i>commends</i> ECA on the careful development of space allocation related to need. Students appreciate the availability of studio space and recognised the opportunities this provides for community building.).</p> <p>Nevertheless, ECA recognises that space allocation and usage is an issue of great importance to many staff and students. We do not envisage any significant change to the strategic allocation of space in the next 2–3 years, until the ECA Capital Project delivers its refresh of teaching space at Lauriston, including more cross-programme and collaborative working space.</p> <p>In terms of community building, we would refer to recommendation #4 above, and the significant cohort building aspects embedded into the new Student Support Model.</p>	
	Please report on steps taken to feedback to students on the outcomes of the review	<p>The IPR Report was shared with all ECA students via the ECA Handbook (internal SharePoint). It was also flagged at the first meeting of the ECA-wide Staff-Student Liaison Committee in October 2023.</p> <p>Several of the recommendations (e.g., #1, #5) are going to lead to close collaborative working with students, and in particular with Student Representatives.</p>		