Minutes of the Meeting of the Senatus Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) held at 2pm on Wednesday 21 September 2016 in the Board Room, Chancellor's Building, Little France

1. Attendance

Present:

Professor Sian Bayne	Director of Centre for Research in Digital Education (co-opted member)
Professor Sarah Cunningham-Burley	Assistant Principal (Research-Led Learning)
Mr Patrick Garratt	Vice President (Academic Affairs), Edinburgh University Students' Association (ex officio)
Ms Rebecca Gaukroger	Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions (ex officio)
Ms Shelagh Green	Director, Careers Service (co-opted member)
Professor Tina Harrison	Assistant Principal (Academic Standards and Quality Assurance)
Dr Elaine Haycock-Stuart	Director of Learning and Teaching, School of Health in Social Science (co-opted member)
Professor Peter Higgins	Representative of Social Responsibility and Sustainability
Ms Melissa Highton	Convener or Learning Technologies Advisory Group (ex officio)
Professor Charlie Jeffery (Convener)	Senior Vice-Principal
Mr John Lowrey	Dean of Undergraduate Studies (CAHSS)
Ms Tanya Lubicz-Nawrocka	Edinburgh University Students' Association, Academic Engagement Co-ordinator (ex officio)
Dr Antony Maciocia	Senior Lecturer, School of Mathematics, CSE (co-opted member)
Dr Velda McCune	Deputy Director, Institute for Academic Development (Director's nominee) (ex officio)
Professor Graeme Reid	Dean of Learning and Teaching, CSE
Professor Neil Turner	Director of Undergraduate Teaching and Learning, CMVM
Mrs Philippa Ward (Secretary)	Academic Policy Officer, Academic Services
Mr Tom Ward	University Secretary's Nominee, Director of Academic Services (ex officio)

Apologies:

Professor Judy Hardy	Director of Teaching, School of Physics and Astronomy, CSE
Ms Nichola Kett	Academic Governance Representative, Academic Services
Professor Anna Meredith	Director for Postgraduate Taught, CMVM

In Attendance

Dr Hazel Christie	Institute for Academic Development
Ms Roshni Hume	Academic Services
Mr Gavin Douglas	Deputy Secretary – Student Experience
Mr Barry Neilson	Director of Student Systems

The Convener welcomed members to the first meeting of the academic session, and particularly those who were new to the membership.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2016 were approved.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 Support for Disabled Students (item 5.1)

It was reported that a memo had been sent to Schools in June asking them to ensure that all staff were aware of and were implementing fully the Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy. 19 Schools had confirmed that this had been done.

4. Convener's Communications

4.1 Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) – Update

The Convener advised members that he was convening a Universities Scotland working group which was considering the way in which Scottish institutions might engage with the TEF. It was recognised that the Scottish quality enhancement framework and higher education system were equivalent to but different from those applying in England, and that this distinctiveness needed to be taken into account. Discussions were continuing about the way in which a subject-level TEF might be implemented.

5. For Discussion

5.1 Strategic Issues Regarding Academic Policy Development, Implementation and Supporting Business Processes

The Director of Student Systems advised the Committee that the Student Administration and Support Strand of the Service Excellence Programme had been undertaken by the University to review key administrative processes supporting the student journey. A methodology using two primary phases had been adopted:

- Phase 1 – a Current State Assessment (CSA)
- Phase 2 – an Options Identification Phase

The CSA primarily involved mapping activity, and had resulted in the following key findings in relation to the implementation of policy and guidance:

- Policies and guidance are implemented flexibly at School-level resulting in multiple approaches.
- There is a disjoint between historic University structures and new governance requirements, creating a complicated decision-making environment and therefore inefficiency;
- There is a lack of clarity about the delineation of roles and responsibilities between academic and administrative staff, and variation in practice in this respect across Schools.

The Director of Academic Services reported that a second exercise had been undertaken to explore whether there might be potential to simplify the University's learning, teaching and assessment-related policies and practices. Light-touch benchmarking against four comparator institutions and some internal mapping had been carried out. The benchmarking had shown the University's approach to academic policy and regulation to be broadly equivalent to that of comparator institutions. Internal mapping had mirrored the findings of the Service Excellence Programme, namely that there is duplication at many levels, and that this can have a negative impact on the student experience.

LTC recognised that change was necessary and expressed the view that there was appetite for this at both College and School-level. It was suggested that the University could work towards having fewer policies that were implemented consistently across all Schools. Exceptions could be permitted for individual Schools where clear pedagogical reasons existed, but these should be written into the policy from the outset. Members agreed that the way in which consultation with Schools regarding policy development was conducted was important, and that clear feedback on the outcomes of consultation needed to be provided.

Actions:
- Director of Student Systems to feed LTC's comments into the Service Excellence Programme.
- Secretary to add further discussion on this topic to a future LTC agenda.

5.2 Student Survey Review – Draft Recommendations

Members were reminded that in March 2016, LTC had approved a proposal to review the existing suite of student surveys. The paper provided a high-level summary of the draft recommendations coming out of this review.

LTC agreed that the recommendations were not sufficiently far-reaching. Members expressed doubt about retaining the Edinburgh Student Experience Survey and the International Student Barometer, and were keen to introduce better ways of collecting feedback at programme-level. There was strong support for finding alternative means of gathering feedback.

Actions: Student Survey Unit to consider:
- ways in which further simplification might be achieved in relation to the University's suite of student surveys;
- ways in which more feedback might be gathered at programme-level;
- and alternative means of gathering feedback from students.

5.3 Online Assessment and Feedback Report

Members considered the findings of an analysis of the issues around moving to online assessment and feedback. The following issues were discussed:

- the technology used - multiple different systems were in use, resulting in it being difficult to act in a consistent way across the University. Concerns were raised about the use of Turnitin as an online assessment and feedback tool.
- the resistance of some staff to moving to online assessment and feedback.
- in some subject areas, online assessment and feedback was not considered the best way to support the pedagogy.
- the difficulties associated with measuring turnaround times, and the need for greater definition about what a 15-day turnaround time means.
- The success, to date, of moving to fully online assessment and feedback within the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. Outcomes within this College would continue to be monitored by LTC.

Action: LTC to continue monitoring the outcomes of introducing fully online assessment and feedback within CAHSS.

5.4 Feedback on Assessment: Turnaround Times (Semester 2, 2015/16)

The paper reported on Schools' turnaround times for providing feedback on assessment in Semester 2, 2015/16. LTC noted that:

- due to limitations of the data, which was being collected in multiple ways, it was not possible to make robust comparisons between Schools.
- there was no clear correlation between turnaround times and student satisfaction score in the National Student Survey.
- Schools were becoming increasingly resistant to collecting the data on account of the amount of time and staff resource involved.

LTC agreed that:

- despite the difficulties associated with the task, Schools would continue to be asked to collect the data on turnaround times.
- Taught Assessment Regulation 15 on feedback deadlines would be modified to give Schools clear guidance on how it applies to moderation and the return of marks.
- further work would be done to establish methods of looking at assessment across programmes to ensure that these are spaced in the most beneficial way for students.
- work would be done to see if the data on turnaround times could be collected by alternative, less time-consuming means. The possibility of including a turnaround times question in the Evasys questionnaire was considered.

Actions:
- Academic Services to continue collecting data on feedback turnaround times.
- CSPC to be asked to review TAR 15, and specifically to include guidance on how it applies to moderation and the return of marks.
- Assistant Principal Assessment and Feedback to accelerate work relating to the consideration of assessment across programmes.
- Director of Student Systems to consider whether it might be possible to collect information on feedback turnaround times via Evasys.

5.5   National Student Survey 2016: Results and Responses

Members noted that the results of NSS 2016 were disappointing. Some students had reported extremely poor experiences during their time at University, particularly in relation to the quality of feedback received, the support provided by Personal Tutors, some aspects of teaching organisation, and the perception that research is prioritised over teaching. LTC agreed that the University should have a zero tolerance approach to these things.

Much had been done over the previous year to try to address some of these issues including making changes to annual review and reward and recognition processes. However, the extent to which these changes were being implemented was unclear due to the devolved nature of the institution. LTC agreed that Schools needed to be held accountable for implementing these changes. Heads of Schools needed to be supported in delivering the cultural, strategic and operational changes needed to ensure a consistent, high-quality student learning and teaching experience. Heads of Schools also needed to be supported in addressing staff under-performance as a matter of priority.

The Committee endorsed the urgent actions outlined in the paper namely:

- Engagement – introducing measures to bring about greater day-to-day engagement between staff and students.
- Communications – introducing a more sustained and creative approach to communicating with students to ensure that excellence is celebrated and the University's commitment to teaching is obvious.
- Feedback and response – ensuring that all Honours-level students experience two feedback and response events in advance of the NSS survey.
- Lecture capture – accelerating the introduction of a reliable and comprehensive lecture capture system.

Members also discussed:

- including within the communications campaign the idea that teaching and research go hand-in-hand.
- recognition and reward for excellent course organisers and teaching administrators.

- the potential benefit of developing a statement of what it means to be a University of Edinburgh employee, highlighting the importance of both research and teaching.
- ways in which a more personal experience might be developed for final year students.
- the perception generated by having a large number of tutorials taught by postgraduate tutors.
- the importance of ensuring that all postgraduate tutors receive adequate guidance. (It was noted that Researcher Experience Committee was initiating a review of the Code of Practice on Tutoring and Demonstrating and that LTC would have an opportunity to comment in due course.)
- the need for the University to reflect continually to ensure that teaching is an unambiguous priority at all levels of the institution.

5.6 Lecture Recording

Members noted the business case which had been approved by correspondence and would now be taken to the University Court. Paper G2 outlined the various policy strands that would need to be considered in order to implement lecture recording at the University. LTC approved the proposal that a sub-group of the Committee be established to oversee the development of lecture recording policy. Members agreed that:

- there should be a wide and open consultation process on the content of the policy.
- the policy should include guidance on the action to be taken if a student who has contributed to a lecture has concerns about the content being made public.
- the policy should include clear guidance on the action to be taken if sensitive information is being discussed.
- careful thought should be given to the branding of the system.
- it was also important to think 'beyond the lecture', recognising that there are many other forms of teaching.

Action: Assistant Principal Online Learning to establish a sub-group of LTC to oversee the development of lecture recording policy.

5.7 Final Report of Task Group to Review the Academic Year Structure

The Committee noted the paper which had been approved by correspondence over the summer, and considered the recommendations on page 10 of the report. It was noted that LTC had previously agreed flexible use of the week between Teaching Blocks 3 and 4 in both 2016/17 and 2017/18.

5.8 Proposed / Indicative School Plans for Use of the Week Between Teaching Blocks 3 and 4 in 2016/17

The paper contained a brief overview of proposed School plans as at September 2016 for the use of the week between Teaching Blocks 3 and 4 in 2016/17. Only one proposal for the Festival of Creative Learning was listed. However, it was thought that Festival proposals were more likely to be driven by individuals and therefore that, by consulting Schools about their plans, they had not been captured. The Secretary would aim to gather additional information on Festival of Creative Learning proposals.

Actions:
- Secretary to gather additional information on Festival of Creative Learning proposals.
- LTC to review the success of the week in 2016/17 at its May 2017 meeting.

5.9 Building a Vision for Digital Education

The paper sought approval to establish a working group to consider how the future of digital education should be designed at the University of Edinburgh. Members welcomed the participatory, design-led approach outlined. Given that a two-year timescale was proposed, the Committee suggested that additional milestones be identified. The importance of tying the vision for digital education to the broader vision for the curriculum was discussed.

LTC approved the establishment of the working group and the closure of the existing Distance Education Task Group. A diagram of relevant committee architecture would be brought to the November meeting of LTC for information.

> **Actions:** Assistant Principal Digital Education to:
> - establish a working group to consider how the future of digital education might be designed;
> - close the existing Distance Education Task Group;
> - and produce a diagram of relevant committee architecture for digital education and related policy for the November meeting of LTC.

5.10 Draft Learning and Teaching Strategy

The Convener advised members that the aim was to produce a two-page strategy to drive learning and teaching activities across the University. It was proposed that this strategy should supersede existing College-level strategies.

LTC endorsed the draft strategy, but proposed that:

- it should be more clearly student-centred.
- a commitment to co-creation of learning and teaching should be expressed.
- it should be more explicit about research-led teaching.
- the strategy should discuss 'developing and enhancing' rather than 'reviewing and enhancing' the curriculum.
- further thought be given to the postgraduate taught-related information within the strategy.

Colleges and Support Groups would consult their constituencies with a view to finalising the strategy at the November meeting of LTC.

> **Action:** Colleges and Support Groups to consult their constituencies about the draft strategy.

6. For Approval

6.1 Guidance to Support the Use of Peer Observation of Teaching

LTC considered the revised guidance produced by the Institute for Academic Development on Peer Observation of Teaching. Members endorsed both the approach to peer observation set out in the guidance and the content, subject to minor amendments to the text. It was agreed that the revised guidance should replace the existing, Academic Services' guidance.

The guidance would now be taken to College Learning and Teaching Committees for consultation, and specifically, to gain a view on whether peer observation of teaching should be mandatory and how often it should take place.

> **Actions:**
> - Institute for Academic Development to take revised guidance to College Learning and Teaching Committees for consultation.

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

6.2 Proposal to Develop a Student Partnership Agreement

The paper was presented by the Students' Association Vice-President Academic Affairs who advised the Committee that the introduction of a similar agreement at the University of Dundee had proved extremely successful. LTC approved the proposal to develop a Student Partnership Agreement for Edinburgh, and were content with the membership of the working group that would be drawing up the agreement. It was hoped that it might be possible to launch the agreement at the February 2017 meeting of Senate.

Action: Students' Association Vice-President Academic Affairs and Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance to begin drafting the agreement.

7. For Noting / Information

7.1 Report from Learning and Teaching Policy Group (LTPG)

The report was noted.

7.2 Edinburgh University Students' Association Priorities 2016/17

LTC expressed support for the priorities outlined in the paper, and particularly welcomed the focus on student mental health.

7.3 Academic and Pastoral Support Policy Update

The update was noted.

7.4 Leading Enhancement in Assessment and Feedback Update

The report was noted.

7.5 EU Referendum Result – Strategic Implications for Learning and Teaching

The paper was noted.

7.6 Report from Knowledge Strategy Committee

The report was noted.

7.7 Enhancement Themes Update

The update was noted.

8 Any Other Business

8.1 Estate Developments

Members recognised that it was essential for estates developments to be driven by learning and teaching strategy. The Convener would consider how the business of Learning and Teaching Committee might best articulate with that of Space Strategy Group.

Action: Convener to consider how LTC and Space Strategy Group business might articulate.