

Minutes of the Meeting of the Senatus Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) held at 2pm on Wednesday 25 May 2016 in Room 235, Joseph Black Building, Kings Buildings

1. Attendance

Present:

Dr Elaine Haycock-Stuart	Director of Learning and Teaching, School of Health in Social Science (co-opted member)
Ms Erin Jackson	Distance Learning Manager, School of Law, CHSS (co-opted member)
Professor Charlie Jeffery (Convener)	Senior Vice-Principal
Ms Nichola Kett	Academic Governance Representative, Academic Services
Ms Tanya Lubicz-Nawrocka	EUSA Academic Engagement Co-ordinator (ex officio)
Dr Margaret MacDougall	Medical Statistician and Researcher in Education (co-opted member)
Dr Antony Maciocia	Senior Lecturer, School of Mathematics, CSE (co-opted member)
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 Sarah Cunningham-Burley	Assistant Principal (Research-Led Learning)
Ms Rebecca Gaukroger	Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions
Ms Shelagh Green	Director, Careers Service (co-opted member)
Professor Tina Harrison	Assistant Principal (Academic Standards and Quality Assurance)
Professor Peter Higgins	Representative of Social Responsibility and Sustainability
Ms Melissa Highton	Convener of Learning Technologies Advisory Group (ex officio)
Mr John Lowrey	Dean of Undergraduate Studies, CHSS
Dr Gale Macleod	Dean of Postgraduate (Taught), CHSS
Dr Velda McCune	Deputy Director, Institute for Academic Development (Director's nominee, ex officio)
Professor Anna Meredith	Director for Postgraduate Taught, CMVM
Professor Wyn Williams	Director of Teaching, School of GeoSciences, CSE
Ms Imogen Wilson	EUSA Vice President (Academic Affairs) (ex officio)

In Attendance

Ms Laura Cattell	Head of Widening Participation
Dr Hazel Christie	Institute for Academic Development
Mr Gavin Douglas	Deputy Secretary – Student Experience
Mr Patrick Garratt	EUSA Vice President (Academic Affairs) (Elect)
Professor Susan Rhind	Assistant Principal Assessment and Feedback
Ms Anne-Marie Scott	Digital Learning Applications and Media
Dr Jon Turner	Director Institute for Academic Development
Ms Sheila Williams	Director Student Disability Service

The Convener thanked co-opted members with terms of office ending in August 2016 for serving on the Committee. The co-opted membership of the Senate Standing Committees in 2016/17 would be considered by Learning and Teaching Policy Group (LTPG).

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 March January 2016 were approved.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) (item 4.1)

It was noted that the Government White Paper and Technical Consultation had been published. The establishment of the Office for Students (OFS) as the regulator for all Higher Education providers in England had been confirmed, as had the implementation of a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) to assess the quality of teaching.

There would be three TEF ratings:

1. meets expectations
2. excellent
3. outstanding

In year one (2016/17), all providers with any form of successful QA award would receive a rating of 'meets expectations'. Institutions would need to apply to qualify for the two higher bands. The process would be metrics-based.

Key points for the University of Edinburgh were:

- Devolved institutions would be able to enter into year one of the TEF.
- Edinburgh performs highly in some of the metrics to be included in the TEF, but not across the board. High performance in one area would not offset poor performance in another, and results will be averaged over a three year period.
- Universities Scotland Learning and Teaching Committee was discussing ways in which Scotland might engage with the TEF. It was hoped that it might be possible to define an alternative Scottish route to TEF accreditation based on Scotland's existing Quality Enhancement Framework.

3.2 Review of the Academic Year (item 5.4)

Members were reminded that the Review of the Academic Year Working Group had considered 3 options:

1. Starting Semester 1 earlier – ruled out on the basis that it may impact negatively on student recruitment.
2. Reinstating a 3-term structure – discounted on the basis that it would be time-consuming to implement with limited benefits.
3. Examining Semester 1 courses after Christmas.

Staff and students had been consulted on option 3, with a high response rate. The consultation would close at the end of May. Initial analysis of results suggested that both staff and students were strongly opposed to examining after Christmas, and staff were concerned about the lack of a spring / Easter break in the proposed model. A final decision would be taken at an additional meeting of LTC on 29 June 2016.

4. Convener's Communications

4.1 University and College Union (UCU) Industrial Action

The Committee noted that strike action was planned for 25 and 26 May 2016, and Union members were being instructed to work to contract with effect from 25 May 2016. A group, convened by the Deputy Secretary Student Experience, was considering the potential impact on exam boards and graduations. Staff working to contract were being asked to prioritise the marking of final year exam scripts. The Union was also instructing External Examiners to resign their positions on exam boards, and the University was taking steps to manage this.

5. For Discussion

5.1 Support for Disabled Students

Review of Support for Disabled Students

The Deputy Secretary Student Experience advised members that the Principal had initiated a review of support for disabled students in response to student concerns about the current arrangements. Priority areas for consideration were:

- the accessibility of the estate
- implementation of adjustments

In addition, the accessibility of online materials and the use of interruption of studies to assist disabled students would be considered.

Review of Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy

The Director of the Student Disability Service spoke about the value of the Policy and noted that it was considered an example of best practice by other Scottish and Russell Group institutions. However, further work needed to be done on raising staff awareness of the Policy and ensuring full implementation, particularly in light of forthcoming changes to financial assistance for disabled students, which would place the onus on the University providing a more inclusive learning environment.

LTC agreed that work to increase awareness of the Policy amongst staff should be through Heads of Schools. Heads of School would be asked to ensure that key colleagues, including those involved in Student Staff Liaison Committees, were familiar with the contents of the Policy and also with guidance on producing accessible teaching materials at <http://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/help-consultancy/accessibility/creating-materials>. EUSA would encourage new class representatives to discuss problems and failure to comply with the Policy (for example, failing to use a microphone or a microphone not working) with lecturers. The work being done to improve the University's arrangements for lecture capture were noted, and it was agreed that the Assistant Principal Assessment and Feedback would give further consideration to how to approach alternative forms of assessment for disabled students.

Actions:

1. Communication to be sent to Heads of Schools to raise awareness of the Policy and of the guidance on producing accessible teaching materials – Academic Services
2. EUSA to encourage new class representatives to discuss problems and failure to comply with the Policy with lecturers.
3. Assistant Principal Assessment and Feedback to give further consideration to how to approach alternative forms of assessment for disabled students.

5.2 Widening Participation

LTC noted that the paper provided a summary of the recommendations within the final report of the Commission on Widening Access and outlined challenges and opportunities.

The Head of Widening Participation presented on Edinburgh's Widening Participation successes and opportunities for change. It was noted that the development of a University-wide Widening Participation Strategy was planned. The University was thinking creatively about the opportunities for change, although the challenges associated with the targets recommended by the Commission on Widening Access were recognised. Careful consideration would be given to the retention of Scottish students and alternative modes of delivery to meet the widest possible audience.

5.3 Lecture Capture

The Committee considered two papers:

1. a high level overview of the lecture capture options available to the University of Edinburgh
2. and comparative information on lecture capture at other universities.

Lecture capture had clear benefits for particular groups:

- those with diverse backgrounds
- non-native English speakers
- those with additional support needs
- those with very heavy timetables

It was popular with students, and there was substantial evidence to suggest that lecture capture did not impact on attendance. LTC therefore endorsed the proposal to equip around 300 centrally-supported rooms with lecture capture equipment, providing the capability to capture up to 90% of lectures. A full business case would need to be worked up. An open tender process would be used to drive down the cost.

A policy on the use of the technology would be developed, including details of the circumstances under which staff would be permitted to opt-out of using it. A clear communications strategy for both students and staff would be necessary. The University would need to find short-term solutions to facilitate lecture capture in academic session 2016/17.

Actions: Learning, Teaching and Web Services Division to begin work on the development of a Lecture Capture Policy.
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5.4 Report of Innovation in Teaching and Learning Working Group

The Committee noted that the report was the output of three meetings of the Working Group between March and May 2016. LTC approved the Working Group's proposals, namely:

- that a scoping exercise be undertaken to inform the development of a framework for fostering and embedding innovation. It would consider ways in which current enablers of innovation might be enhanced and barriers overcome. In this context, the Committee agreed that mainstreaming the funding for the Principal's Teaching Award Scheme (PTAS) would be given further consideration. The scoping exercise would be facilitated by an Institute for Academic Development (IAD) secondment.
- that further work be done on the introduction of an extended portfolio of University-wide courses through the scoping exercise.
- that the week between Teaching Blocks 3 and 4 be used for a broader range of purposes in Academic Years 2016/17 and 2017/18. Schools would be encouraged to use the week in the way that best suited their staff and students, and the emphasis would be on offering space within the curriculum. In order to secure and build on the legacy of Innovative Learning Week (ILW), a 'Festival of Creative Learning' would be launched. This would comprise a programme of events and activities running throughout the academic year, along with a curated, week-long programme of events in February. The Festival would continue to be supported by IAD, and the importance of spreading innovative activity across the academic year, as opposed to focussing on a single week would be highlighted. Schools would be able to choose whether or not to participate in the Festival. Heads of School would be asked to share their plans for the week in Semester 1 of 2016/17 and 2017/18 and report on their experiences in May 2017 and 2018. Members

considered a draft communication to Schools on the changes, and agreed that this would be circulated following minor editing.

Actions:

1. Convener to give further consideration to the mainstreaming of PTAS funding.
2. Communication to Schools on the use of the week between Teaching Blocks 3 and 4 to be circulated following minor editing.

5.5 CHSS Programme Pathways Project

The paper provided an update on the Programme Pathways Project. Members noted that this project aimed to simplify degree offerings within the College of Humanities and Social Science whilst ensuring that students were still offered flexibility and choice. Ideally, students should have the ability to develop a main subject alongside one or two additional pathways or 'escape routes'.

LTC agreed that there would be benefit in having a broader discussion, involving all three Colleges, about curriculum frameworks and space in the curriculum. A group would be established to review the 'Models of Degree Type' policy.

Actions: To be referred to the Secretary of the Curriculum and Student Progression Committee for further consideration.

5.6 Assessment and Feedback

The Committee was reminded that in 2015, it had agreed that it would be essential to measure both feedback turnaround times and the quality of feedback. The paper proposed a 3-tiered model for measuring the quality of feedback at individual, course and programme level. LTC supported the model, but recognised the difficulties associated with delivering it, particularly at programme level. Members also discussed:

- the importance of staff development in this area;
- concerns about the wording of the current EvaSys questions and policy, and the need to address these before the model could be implemented;
- the potential to gather additional information through LEAF and Staff-Student Liaison Committees.

It was agreed that the Assistant Principal Assessment and Feedback would take the model to the Directors of Teaching network and College Deans for consideration of next steps.

LTC also endorsed the proposed strategy for the future of LEAF and focus on developing staff and student assessment and feedback literacy.

The Committee considered the examples of potential opt-outs from the 15 day feedback turnaround regulation within paper G2. It was agreed that the 15 day regulation would remain the general benchmark, but that the examples of pedagogical rationales for opt-out would be added to the guidance around the regulation for 2017/18. In the meantime, Colleges would be asked disseminate the examples to their Schools.

Actions:

1. Assistant Principal Assessment and Feedback to discuss EvaSys questions and policy with the Director of Student Systems; consider the potential to gather additional information on the quality of feedback through Staff-Student Liaison Committees and LEAF; and consult on the model to decide on next steps.

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| 2. Secretary to refer additional guidance around 15 day feedback turnaround regulation to CSPC for addition to the regulation in 17/18. College Deans to advise Schools of the additional guidance for 15/16. |
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5.7 Student Mental Health Issues: An Overview and Update for LTC

The Committee noted the paper, which provided an update on work undertaken by the University in the last two years to enhance support for students with mental health issues. Further work was planned to ensure that the University was responding proactively in this area, and a medium-term strategy would be developed and brought back to LTC for consideration in 2016/17. LTC agreed to take responsibility for the longer-term governance of this area.

5.8 Learning and Teaching-Related Content of School Annual Plans

The Committee received the learning and teaching-related content of School Annual Plans for all three Colleges. It was agreed that in 2016/17, in order to better join up School and Senate Committee planning, Schools would be asked to feed back on progress against key Senate Committee priorities over the course of the year. The Director of Academic Services and Learning and Teaching Policy Group would give further consideration to the way in which this would be implemented.

Actions: Director of Academic Services to refer to LTPG.

5.9 Learning Analytics Project – Progress Report

Members were advised that a two year project with a commercial partner was being undertaken to interrogate the benefits of learning analytics for the University of Edinburgh. Alongside the project, the University would develop a Learning and Teaching Analytics Policy. The importance of the Senate Committees inputting into the development of this Policy and receiving regular updates from the Learning Analytics Governance Group was recognised. The Policy would need to cover all provision, not just online distance learning, and careful consideration would need to be given to wider University communications in this area.

6. For Approval

6.1 Academic and Pastoral Support Policy

LTC approved the revised Policy, subject to minor amendments and further discussion about overall responsibility for the pastoral support of tutees. Members proposed that pastoral support should be within the Core Purpose for the Personal Tutor role, and the group responsible for reviewing the Policy would discuss this further.

Actions: Academic and Pastoral Support Policy review group to discuss where overall responsibility for the pastoral support of tutees lies.
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7. For Noting / Information

7.1 Report from Learning and Teaching Policy Group (LTPG)

The report was noted.

7.2 Initial Findings from the EUSA Teaching Awards Analysis Project

LTC welcomed the initial findings of the Analysis Project, noting that the full report would be available in the summer. The Committee supported the idea of disseminating the report widely. It would be featured on the Teaching Matters website, and Court would be made aware of it through the EUSA President's report. A digest would also be sent to Principal's Strategy Group.

Actions: EUSA Academic Engagement Co-ordinator to disseminate the report.

7.3 Senate Committee Planning – Approach for Next Session

The Committee noted the approach to Senate Committee planning for the next session.

7.4 Enhancing Teaching Performance Working Group - Report

Members noted the report.

7.5 Enhancement Themes – Update

Members noted that a resilience networking lunch would be taking place in the near future. More information was available from Nichola Kett, Academic Services.

7.6 Knowledge Strategy Committee Report

The report was noted.

7.7 Strategic Plan 2016-21 – Update

Members noted the draft and were asked to pass additional comments to Governance and Strategic Planning.

8 Any Other Business

8.1 Tutors and Demonstrators

Members noted that the Code of Practice on Tutoring and Demonstrating was currently owned by LTC. It was agreed that Researcher Experience Committee would now take the lead on this and would undertake an exercise to revise the Code of Practice. LTC would have the opportunity to comment on the revisions at a later stage.

LTC also agreed that a University-wide response was needed to perceived inconsistencies in the employment terms of postgraduate tutors.