LTC: 28.09.15
H/02/25/02

Minutes of the Meeting of the Senatus Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) held at 9am on Monday 28 September 2015 in the Board Room, Evolution House

1. Attendance

Present:

Professor Sarah Cunningham-Burley	Assistant Principal (Research-Led Learning)
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 of Learning Technologies Advisory Group (ex officio)
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
Mr John Lowrey	Dean of Undergraduate Studies, CHSS
Ms Tanya Lubicz-Nawrocka	EUSA Academic Engagement Co-ordinator (ex officio)
Dr Antony Maciocia	Senior Lecturer, School of Mathematics, CSE (co-opted member)
Dr Gale Macleod	Dean of Postgraduate (Taught), CHSS
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)
Professor Wyn Williams	Director of Teaching, School of GeoSciences, CSE
Ms Imogen Wilson	EUSA Vice President (Academic Affairs) (ex officio)

In Attendance:

Ms Pauline Jones	Governance and Strategic Planning
Mr Barry Neilson	Director Student Systems

Apologies:

Mr Gavin Douglas	Deputy Secretary – Student Experience
Dr Margaret MacDougall	Medical Statistician and Researcher in Education (co-opted member)
Professor Ian Pirie	Assistant Principal (Learning and Development) (ex officio)
Professor David Weller	Director for Postgraduate Taught, CMVM

The Committee thanked Professor Sue Rigby for all her work in the area of learning and teaching at the University of Edinburgh, and wished her well in her new role.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 May 2015 were approved.

3. Matters Arising

All matters arising were covered later in the agenda.

4. Convener's Communications

The Convener reported that the Principal's unambiguous priority going forward was the student experience, teaching and learning. As such, the Senior Vice-Principal would be devoting two thirds of his time to these areas.

5. For Discussion

5.1 Developing the Strategic Plan 2016-21

Ms Pauline Jones, Governance and Strategic Planning, advised members that she was seeking views on ways in which the student experience, learning and teaching might feature in the next iteration of the Strategic Plan. It was noted that the Plan had both internal and external audiences and that the final product would need to speak to both. The University Court had agreed that the Plan should reflect that which was distinctive about the University of Edinburgh. Members identified the following distinctive aspects of our teaching and learning provision:

- the flexibility offered by a four-year Scottish degree programme;
- the fact that Edinburgh offers more programmes and courses than any other UK institution;
- sector-leading online, distance learning provision;
- and excellence in research, leading to the potential for excellent, research-led teaching.

Members highlighted the importance of co-creation and community engagement, and discussed framing the student experience in terms of the graduate attributes it develops.

5.2 Student Experience, Teaching and Learning at the University of Edinburgh

The Senior Vice-Principal advised the Committee that the paper was the product of a series of conversations he had held since taking responsibility for learning and teaching. Members recognised that, whilst the National Student Survey 2015 results showed some improvement as compared with the 2014 results, the pace of change was too slow. Additional, faster improvement would be necessary to avoid potential reputational risk.

4 issues were considered to be contributing to the University's ongoing weaknesses in the areas of the student experience, teaching and learning:

1. The absence of clarity of leadership – a disconnect had developed between line management and learning and teaching structures.
2. The institutional priority attached to learning and teaching - the perception that the institution prioritises research over teaching.
3. A 'cycle of negatives' – poor performance in the NSS year on year had resulted in a negative message around learning and teaching, with insufficient focus on the positive work being done.
4. Complexity – the perception that our regulations, Quality Assurance processes and approaches to assessment are over-complicated.

The following actions would be taken to address these issues:

1. Greater clarity would be brought to leadership structures. As such, regular meetings of the Principal, Senior Vice-Principal, Heads of College and the University Secretary dedicated to learning and teaching would take place to give overall direction. In addition, a 'Learning and Teaching Policy Group', building on the existing Senate Committees' Conveners' Forum, would be established to give clear strategic

leadership across the University on learning and teaching issues. The pivotal leadership role of Heads of School would also be recognised through a periodic programme of School-level discussions led by the Senior Vice-Principal, and through additional Academic Strategy Group meetings dedicated to learning and teaching.

2. Better ways of measuring performance in the area of learning and teaching would be developed. Outstanding teaching would be rewarded, and poor performance addressed.
3. The best learning and teaching practice would be identified, celebrated and disseminated.
4. Wherever possible, the regulation and organisation of teaching and assessment would be simplified.

Members discussed:

- whether it would be possible to find all the additional time required to improve teaching through simplification of processes;
- the importance of finding reliable metrics to monitor teaching performance;
- the essential role played by 'those on the ground', for example, first year course organisers;
- the need to consider workload models;
- the fact that the University uses a number of different platforms to support learning and teaching, which adds to complexity. However, it was noted that, in the short-term, attempting to address this would add to and not reduce complexity;
- the importance of a successful Personal Tutor experience to raising students' perceptions of what we offer; and
- the crucial role played by Heads of Schools.

5.3 National Student Survey 2015

The Committee noted that, as compared with 2014, the National Student Survey 2015 showed overall improvement and increased response rate. However, the University was still performing poorly as compared with other Russell Group comparators and the sector as a whole. There was wide variation across Schools, and our weakest performing measures, 'Assessment and Feedback' and 'Academic Support' were those that correlated most strongly with overall student satisfaction.

It was agreed that the University still had significant work to do in this area and that the pace of change needed to increase. Leadership, community and communication were considered to be key. The Convener advised members that he would be working with Communications and Marketing on the University's communications around learning and teaching.

Members also discussed:

- concerns that some of our graduates lack confidence, possibly on account of assessment and feedback practices;
- the need to make better use of the Edinburgh Student Experience Survey to identify and address key student issues; and
- the need to improve NSS performance if we are to continue to attract the best students.

5.4 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey 2015

It was noted that there was little longitudinal data available for PTES as the survey had changed significantly in 2014. Results for 2015 were almost identical to those achieved in 2014, relative performance was broadly in line with the UK and Russell Group averages, and

participation rate was good. However, as with the NSS, there was significant variation across Schools, and it was felt that the University was not yet using the Survey's data to full advantage.

Members discussed:

- improvements in performance in the dissertation question. It was noted that this may have been the result of changing the timing of the survey for 2015. Members therefore agreed to continue with this timing going forward.
- the benefits of separating the responses of on-campus and distance education students;
- the potential benefit of holding an Academic Strategy Group meeting early in the new year to discuss postgraduate taught provision, and PTES in particular;
- the potential benefit of looking at correlations between PTES and other available data sets.

Action: Secretary to:
- discuss timing of future PTES surveys with Student Survey Unit
- add PTES to the agenda for the November 2015 meeting of LTC, with a view to this discussion forming the basis of an Academic Strategy Goup meeting in the new year. (Dean of Postgraduate (Taught), CHSS, to take the lead on this item.)

5.5 Use of Student Data to Help Enhance Learning and Teaching, the Student Experience and Operational Effectiveness

Members agreed that dashboards of student data of the type described would be extremely beneficial, and fundamental for Heads of Schools if they were being asked to bring about real change in the area of learning and teaching. The importance of using a consistent data set, minimising flexibility, and aligning with key performance indicators in the Strategic Plan were highlighted. It was recognised that any Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) introduced might require the University to publish a different set of metrics.

Learning and Teaching Committee endorsed this as a high-priority project, noting that it would have significant resource implications. The Director of Student Systems was asked to continue developing prototypes and to give further consideration to resource issues.

Action: Director of Student Systems to continue developing prototypes and to give further consideration to the resource implications of this project.

5.6 Feedback on Assessment: Measures of Quality and Turnaround Times

Members were advised that the paper summarized the findings of internal benchmarking of approaches to measuring the quality of feedback. It had been found that some Schools were monitoring the quality of feedback, but not in a consistent or systematic manner. The Committee noted that external benchmarking would be carried out in due course, and that the newly appointed Assistant Principal Assessment and Feedback would be involved in all future work.

The Committee discussed:

- the purpose of measuring the quality of feedback, namely to address cases where students were receiving no or poor quality feedback;
- the possibility of introducing peer observation of feedback;

- the importance of providing strong mentorship in feedback for new staff and those taking on additional teaching responsibilities; and
- managing student expectations of feedback.

Members agreed that it was essential to measure both feedback turnaround times and quality of feedback. Some systems development and business process change would be desirable to facilitate this. The Directors of Student Systems and Academic Services were asked to take this work forward with the Assistant Principal Assessment and Feedback. They would bring recommendations on next steps and information on Planning Round implications to the November meeting of the Committee.

> **Action:** Directors of Student Systems and Academic Services to take work forward with the Assistant Principal Assessment and Feedback, and to bring recommendations on next steps and information on Planning Round implications to the November meeting of the Committee.

5.7 Grade Point Average (GPA) Briefing Paper

The Committee was advised that, in practice, the University was already providing students with GPAs when requested. It was therefore agreed that the University should seek to develop an on-demand GPA service, based on a minimal adoption model. Proposals to take this forward would be developed and costed, taking into account implications for associated work on EUCLID Assessment and Progression Tools.

Those involved were confident that it would not be difficult to agree the algorithm for calculating GPA. The way in which special circumstances were treated would need to be considered, and this would be taken forward by the Director of Academic Services and Curriculum and Student Progression Committee.

The importance of ensuring that the introduction of GPA did not discourage students from being experimental in their curricular choices was discussed. The Committee registered its thanks to Dr Maciocia for developing the GPA scale that had been adopted by the HEA.

> **Action:** Directors of Student Systems and Academic Services and Dr Maciocia to develop and cost proposals for introducing an on-demand GPA service, based on a minimal adoption model. Director of Academic Services and Curriculum and Student Progression Committee to consider the treatment of Special Circumstances under GPA.

5.8 Innovative Learning Week

Members were reminded that at the May 2015 meeting of LTC, it had been agreed that Innovative Learning Week would continue for 2015/16, and that the 'ILW + Pop Up' model would be used. The paper invited the Committee to discuss the future of Innovative Learning Week (ILW) and future mechanisms for encouraging innovation in learning and teaching beyond 2015/16.

The Committee agreed that an additional week should be retained in Semester 2 between Teaching Blocks 3 and 4 in 2016/17. The purpose of the week would be discussed by a sub-group and agreed in due course.

> **Action:** Director of Academic Services to establish a sub-group to discuss the purpose of the week between Teaching Blocks 3 and 4 in 2016/17.

The Committee also discussed:

- long-term concern about the asymmetry of Semesters 1 and 2;
- the value of innovation and innovators. It was agreed that, regardless of the future of ILW, space should be made for innovation, and innovators should be supported and rewarded for their efforts.

5.9 Annual Planning Round Guidance

Committee members discussed the supplementary guidance that it had previously issued to Schools on the learning and teaching-related content of their Annual Plans. It was agreed that it would be issued again for the forthcoming Planning Round and that Schools would also be asked to consider the Student Experience through the Thematic Vice-Principals planning process.

Action: Secretary to ensure that the 'Guidance on the Learning and Teaching Content of School Annual Plans' is circulated for use in the forthcoming Planning Round.

6. For Approval

6.1 Higher Education Achievement Record – Procedures for Making Changes to Section 6 Categories of Achievement

Learning and Teaching Committee approved the proposed procedures for making changes to HEAR Section 6 Categories of Achievement.

7. For Noting / Information

7.1 EUSA Priorities 2015/16

The Committee noted the paper and the key objectives of the EUSA Vice-Principal (Academic Affairs), particularly assessment issues, enhancement of the Personal Tutor System and equality and diversity issues.

7.2 Report from the LTC Distance Education Task Group

It was reported that the Task Group was in an intensive phase of activity. It was working closely with the Director of the Learning, Teaching and Web Services division on early-life support for distance education programmes. The Task Group was also discussing marketing and improving support for those staff involved in distance education.

7.3 Leading Enhancement in Assessment and Feedback (LEAF) Project Stage Review Report

Members noted that the Project's Research Assistant would be employed until the end of 2016. A large number of programmes had been recruited for the academic year 2015/16, and the project team was well ahead with planning. Themes were emerging, and a key Project output would be LEAF events, allowing staff who had participated in the process to feed back and share best practice. The Committee was extremely satisfied with the progress that was being made with this Project.

7.4 Enhancing Student Support Post Project Review Report

It was reported that all Project Deliverables were now complete. Further work would now be done to embed consistency and enhance the Personal Tutor System. This would include measuring performance. Going forward, oversight of the System would be the responsibility of a sub-group of Quality Assurance Committee.

7.5 Enhancement Themes – Update

Members noted that an email update would follow.

Action: Ms Kett to send Enhancement Themes update email.

7.6 Teaching Excellence Framework

The Committee was advised that a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) was likely to be introduced in England. It was unclear at this stage which metrics would be included, but the pace of change was very fast. The introduction of a Framework would have implications for Scottish institutions.

7.7 Student Recruitment Strategy

The Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions advised members that the University did not currently have a Student Recruitment Strategy and was therefore aiming to develop one by February 2016. A Steering Group, convened by the Senior Vice-Principal, had been established. Four separate work streams would feed into the work of the Steering Group.

7.8 Annual Report of the Senate Committees

The Report was noted.

7.9 Guidance for Senate Committee Members on Authoring Papers and Other Aspects of Committee Business

The Guidance was noted.

8. Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 18 November 2015 at 2.00pm in the Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House.

Philippa Ward
Academic Services
1 October 2015