

MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE SENATUS ACADEMICUS held at
Informatics Forum on 30 September 2015

Sederant: Professors C Abbott, J Ansell, S Anderson, D Argyle, R Bhopal, E Bomberg, J Bradshaw, C Breward, H Cameron, S Clark, C Clarke, I Clarke, S Cooper, HOD Critchley, S Cunningham-Burley, J Danbolt, P Davies, J Fawcett, P Foster, C French, D Gasevic, I Gordon, J Hardy, T Harrison, K Heal, P Higgins, C Jeffery, J Kallestrup, K Kamenev, A Lascarides, F Mackay, M Massimi, JD Moore, AF Murray, J Norman, C Pulham, IBM Ralston, JL Rees, G Reid, C Sangwin, J Silvertown, K Sawin, A Tate, S Tudhope, W Williams, Drs J Goodare, K Kaminer, D Livingstone, J Lowrey, M Michou, F Moreira, S Morley, P Murison, J Murray, C Nash, P Norris, G Palattiyil, SC Riley, I Seiferheld, P Smith, J Turner, IM Viola, P Walsh, S Warrington, Messrs H Dingwall and A Verhoeven

Associated members: Mr J Boyle, Ms R Zhou, Ms K Heil and Ms I Wilson,

In attendance: Mr T Angus, Dr T Bailey, Dr P Bailey, Mr R Bartlett, Ms B Bovenzi, Mr N Bradley, Dr A Brown, Ms M Brown, Ms S Buckingham, Dr P Camp, Dr K Carter, Dr T Challand, Dr S Chan, Dr S Coleman, Ms E Cooper, Ms M Craft, Mr A Craig, Dr R Crauford-Smith, Ms L Crow, Professor Cumming, Ms F Curle, Ms L Dalziel, Ms L Dawson, Mr G Douglas, Ms L Elliot, Dr A English, Mr E Serafin Esquivel, Professor Farrall, Dr A Fox, Dr B Franke, Ms J Gardiner, Ms R Gaukroger, Ms M Gibson, Mr C Giles, Dr S Goldwater, Dr A Graham, Ms S Graham, Ms F Hale, Ms K Harris, Ms T Harvey, Dr E Haycock-Stuart, Mr N Heatley, Ms N Helliwell, Ms L Henderson, Ms M Highton, Ms J Holtan, Ms J Hoy, Dr K Hughes, Ms T Ironside, Ms L Isbel, Ms A Jones, Ms P Jones, Ms S Kemp, Ms N Kett, Dr M Kirkup, Ms A Laidlaw, Dr P Lamont, Mr N Lent, Ms Z Lewandowski, Ms S Lincoln, Ms T Lubicz-Nawrocka, Dr A Maciocia, Dr E Macpherson, Ms S McAllister, Mr G McCabe, Dr V McCune, Mr N McGillivray, Dr R McIntosh, Dr E Mijers, Dr F Mill, Mr R Millar, Professor N Mulholland, Dr J Murray, Mr B Neilson, Dr H Newbery, Ms G Nicoll, Mr J Nisbet, Dr S Ogle, Ms N Osborne, Ms K Osterburg, Mr G Overton, Ms AM O'Mullane (minutes), Dr F Parry, Ms S Pearson, Dr C Phillips, Mr C Robertson, Ms AM Scott, Dr P Sheail, Mr Shearer, Ms D De Silva-Williams, Dr P Skehel, Ms J Smith, Ms S Smith, Mr J Stapp, Dr E Stevenson, Dr J Stewart, Ms H Stringer, Ms P Ward, Mr T Ward, Dr R Weller, Ms S Williams

The moment of reflection was delivered by Imogen Wilson, EUSA Vice Principal Academic Affairs.

Professor Charlie Jeffery, Senior Vice Principal, conveyed apologies and a message on behalf of the Principal: The Principal's top priority this academic year is the student experience and learning and teaching. The Principal thanked all those involved in the recent induction of new students.

PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION: STRATEGY FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

1. Learning and Teaching: an Unambiguous Priority

Professor Charlie Jeffery set out initial findings from this year's National Student Survey results (NSS). There was some improvement in the NSS results 2015 as compared to the 2014 results, with Overall Satisfaction up two per cent and Assessment and Feedback up four per cent. The response rate also increased over this period. These were important achievements and should be communicated to the academic community and professional staff. Improvement needs to continue and at a faster pace in order to avoid potential reputation risk. The pattern of performance across the Schools needs to be more uniform. These matters will be discussed further with Heads of Colleges and Schools.

Professor Jeffrey noted that recent discussions indicated four limitations on progress:

1. A disconnect had developed between line management and learning and teaching structures with a loss of clarity in purpose in how the University addresses challenges in the area of learning and teaching and the student experience;
2. The institutional priority attached to learning and teaching – the perception that the institution prioritises research over teaching;
3. Complexity of processes – the regulatory and quality assurance framework are perceived as over-complicated;
4. A tendency to focus on negatives around NSS results with insufficient focus on the positive examples of high quality learning and teaching practice.

The following actions would be taken to address the identified challenges and place learning and teaching as an unambiguous priority:

1. Deliver greater clarity of leadership on learning and teaching at all levels. Regular meetings of the Principal, Senior Vice-Principal, Heads of College and the University Secretary dedicated to learning and teaching will precede Principal Strategy Group. A “Learning and Teaching Policy Group” will be established, building on the Senate Committees’ Conveners’ Forum, to give clear strategic leadership across the University on learning and teaching issues. New Assistant Principals will be appointed to support the learning and teaching agenda. The pivotal leadership role of Heads of School will 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. Clarify expectations of high performance - better ways of measuring performance in the area of learning and teaching will be developed, outstanding teaching will be rewarded and poor performance addressed.
3. The best learning and teaching practice will be identified, celebrated and disseminated.
4. Where possible, processes will be simplified.

In order to achieve a clarity of purpose around learning and teaching, a university-wide conversation about the University’s values for learning and teaching will take place in the Autumn.

2. Strengthening our Culture of High Performance in Teaching

Professor Jane Norman, Vice Principal People and Culture, discussed supporting high performance in teaching and learning at the University. There is a perception that teaching has a comparatively low status to research. There were various reasons for this perception, which included:

- Historically the University did not have the policies and processes to reward and recognise teaching;

- The organisation has spent a significant amount of time discussing Research Excellent Framework (REF) and its predecessors for reputation and income generation reasons;
- It has been easier to quantify quality research rather than quality teaching;
- The University has not excelled at celebrating its successes in the area of excellent teaching;
- Poor teaching has not always been challenged and help has not always been provided to improve performance.

Strategies for strengthening the University's Culture of High Performance in Teaching included:

1. Ensuring that the Annual Review was a quality conversation that helped an individual to perform to the best of their ability;
2. Encourage the use of relevant Exemplars of Excellence in Student Education by applicants for their promotion to either Senior Lecturer or Chair;
3. Embed a culture of continuous enhancement. Encourage staff to engage with the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) framework for learning and teaching which is accredited by the Higher Education Academy. The Edinburgh Teaching Award is embedded in the University's CPD framework. Increasingly stakeholders, including students and statutory bodies, expect lecturers to have a teaching qualification.

3. Student Experience, Learning and Teaching in the Next Strategic Plan

Pauline Jones, Head of Strategic Performance and Research, Governance and Strategic Planning, presented on the preparation of the next Strategic Plan. The current plan, which runs out at the end of 2016, has been successful as a unifying document of the University and as an articulation of our ambitions to our external stakeholders. Drafters of the Strategic Plan were seeking views on the ways in which the student experience, learning and teaching would feature in the next iteration of the Strategic plan, which will run from 2016-2021.

She noted that discussions have already taken place with senior managers and committees in September. University Court agreed that the Plan should reflect what was distinctive about the University of Edinburgh. Senate was asked to advise on:

- What needed to change for the university to be truly excellent in education?
- Is the excellence of the student experience really separate from excellence in education?
- What is unique about the University's offer to students?

Discussion:

Reward and recognition of learning and teaching

- As a research-led institution, the University has struggled to recognise the equal standing of teaching. However, the University's policies for promotion and the

exemplars of excellence for teaching are facilitating the recognition and reward for excellent teaching.

- Teaching is perceived to lack visibility in contrast to research excellence. This perception can be associated with the difficulty in evidencing quality in teaching.

Supporting improvement of learning and teaching

- Individuals will need tools to support them in their development. The Institute for Academic Development provide strategies to assist staff in improving performance in teaching.
- HR policies must be optimised to support managers (e.g. Heads of School) as they engage in this activity of supporting improvement of learning and teaching.
- Peer observation can be a useful tool for identifying best practice and poor performance.

Assessment and feedback

- Assessment is a crucial driver of student learning. Students in their future roles will encounter complex interdisciplinary problems. Assessment practices should prepare students for this.
- Peer assisted learning teaches students how to give and use feedback.
- Professor Susan Rhind has been appointed as Assistant Principal, Assessment and Feedback.

Strategy for learning and teaching

- A culture change is required to restore learning and teaching as an unambiguous priority and a vibrant learning community will assist with achieving this culture change.
- This year, the University experienced problems in the allocation of appropriate teaching spaces in advance of the start of the academic year. This experience highlighted the importance of having an appropriate estates infrastructure for teaching, and of prioritising the importance of student experience as well as efficient use of space.
- Planning for resourcing the learning and teaching experience should also take into consideration personnel resources, including those who support the delivery of teaching.
- Students are co-producers of their own learning and are a critical enabler for learning and teaching. This should be recognised in the next strategic plan.
- Central to this excellence in both education and student experience is the importance of personal tutoring system. The personal tutoring system will need to continue to improve and become more consistent.

Recommendations for the structure of the next Strategic Plan

- There should be a heading included in the next Strategic Plan on the student experience and learning and teaching as this communicates to internal and external stakeholders the values and priorities of the University.
- The excellence of the student experience is not separate from excellence in education.
- The current strategic plan treats students in a homogenous manner; the University teaches at three different levels: undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research. Each has different student experiences and views on their student experience. Indicators of success may need to take this into consideration and be holistic.

Simplification and standardisation of processes

- Simplifying processes may ultimately free up more time for teaching. However, simplification requires change management which will also be time-demanding in the short term.
- There have been a steady introduction of new initiatives in recent years. It was noted that, while these were necessary and worthwhile, there is initiative fatigue.

FORMAL BUSINESS

1. Report of E-Business conducted between 8 -16 September 2015

No comments were received in relation to E-Senate business. All items were therefore approved or noted as required.

2. Special Minute

The posthumous Special Minute for Professor Mahnke was adopted.

3. Higher Education Governance Bill

Senate noted the update from Sarah Smith, University Secretary, on the Scottish Government's draft legislation on Higher Education Governance. Senate discussed specific aspects of the draft legislation that will have a direct impact on Senate and its functioning. Senate will be kept updated on developments.

4. Senate Membership

Senate noted the new Senate membership.

5. Teaching Excellence Framework

Senate noted the update from Tom Ward, Director of Academic Services, on plans to introduce a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) in England. It was unclear at this stage what form the proposed TEF will take. While it is clear that the proposed TEF will be underpinned by metrics of excellence in teaching, it is not yet clear which metrics will be used as indicators of excellence. The introduction of a TEF is likely to have implications for Higher Education Institutions in Scotland, for instance it is likely to increase the importance of the University's performance in relation to the indicators contained in the TEF.

6. EUSA's Priorities for 2015/16

Senate noted the update from Imogen Wilson, Vice President Academic Affairs, on EUSA's Priorities for 2015/16. Senate welcomed the priorities, in particular, in relation to assessment.

7. Recommendation of the Honorary Degrees Committee

Senate approved the recommendation for the award of an Honorary Degree.