



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Electronic Senate

Report of Electronic Business of Senate conducted between Wednesday 26 April – 10 May 2023

Confirmed Report

A full summary of comments raised via e-Senate can be accessed at [e-Senate comments](#) (EASE login required).

1. Resolutions (e-S 22/23 3 A)

Senate considered the draft Resolutions below and offered no observations.

No. 8/2023: Undergraduate Degree Programme Regulations

No. 9/2023: Postgraduate Degree Programme Regulations

2. Conferment of the title of Professor Emeritus / Emerita (e-S 22/23 3 B)

Senate agreed to confer the title of Professor Emeritus / Emerita on those professors listed in the paper and no comments were received.

3. Communications from the University Court (e-S 22/23 2 C)

Senate formally noted the communications. Comments were received from three members.

Item 2: Principal's Report

One member extended their congratulations to the long-serving staff and expressed their discontent with the report of "an impasse reached" with Acas on pay. They reflected on Senate's expectations that the Principal publicly push on pay as reflected in its approval of some motions contained within Paper S22/23 4D at its 29 March 2023 meeting.

Item 3: People and Money

Two members expressed concern at the reported dissemination for the report and indicated that Senate should have access to the report, and at a minimum the academic-related elements of the review.

One member emphasised their expectation for an update on the academic-related elements of the report, expressing doubt about the University Executive taking Senate's motions approved by Senate at the 29 March 2023 (Paper S22/23 4C) seriously. They raised concern that the external review commissioned by Court is going forward, calling for information on the structure and its alignment with the expectations outlined in the People and Money paper approved at Senate's 29 March 2023 meeting.

Item 5: Engineering Hub

One member welcomed the decision to proceed with the new Engineering Hub building citing poor-quality buildings and overcrowding as issues which currently impact on the School.

Item 6: Update on Research Excellence Framework (REF) Planning

One member expressed concern regarding plans to increase the weight of REF-related evaluations in staff promotion and appointment decisions. They expressed concern that

REF is an unstable and unreliable standard and emphasised the importance of the University's recent moves to take a holistic approach and put submissions in proper perspective.

Item 7: Development & Alumni Annual Report; Donations and Legacies; Alumni Activities

One member highlighted the interest of alumni in the University's actions during periods of industrial action and suggested that the Development and Alumni Office assess the impact of strike related measures on alumni faith and donations.

Item 8: Student Pulse Survey Update

One member raised doubt regarding the ongoing suitability of the Student Pulse Survey considering the low response rates, students reporting survey fatigue as well as potential impact of the Pulse Survey on the response rates to the PTES and PRES surveys. The member recommended that any review of the Pulse Survey be undertaken in consultation with Student Representatives.

Another member queried the response rate and the target response rate in the Student Pulse Survey.

Item 9: Update on arrangements for Senate and Senate Standing Committee Elections, and proposed amendment to Senate Election Regulations

One member expressed concern regarding Court's decision not to adopt a proposed amendment to the Senate Election Regulations which was approved by Senate at its 8 February meeting on the basis of advice provided by Legal Services. The member identified two factual errors which they considered significant, regarding what Ordinance 212 states regarding elected members and regarding the relationship between elected Senate terms and the terms of Senate Assessors. The member acknowledged Court's authority to make this decision irrespective of legal advice.

The comments were passed to the author of the paper.

4. College Academic Management Structure 2023/24 (e-S 22/23 3 D)

Senate noted the College Academic Management Structure 2023/24 and one member provided comments.

The commenter expressed confusion regarding the action requested in the paper and suggested this be reviewed for future versions. They also queried the differences in Dean roles and titles between Colleges and whether there is value in a consistent structure across the university and that in future the paper summarises what each role is intended to accomplish relevant to Senate's work.

The comments were passed to the author of the paper.

5. Report from Knowledge Strategy Committee (e-S 22/23 3 E)

Senate noted the report of the Knowledge Strategy Committee and two members provided comments.

Two members expressed support for the University's Generative AI Guidance with one member noting the guidance is sensible and well-informed. Both members expressed support for students being aided in understanding the pedagogically appropriate resources and how tools such as generative AI may be used, including the potential pitfalls and challenges which these tools present.

One member also recommended that teaching staff be adequately supported to incorporate these tools into their teaching.

One member identified shortcomings, outlining that certain approaches included in the guidance, such as those used with Wikipedia, have had a mixed or poor record in the past. They highlighted challenges in conveying the concept of original work to students, as well as the inadequacy of messages to students regarding referencing which may be exacerbated by the unreliability of citations from generative AI systems. The commenter stated that greater emphasis needs to be placed on 'hidden plagiarism', the copyright risks and unknown biases observations, and suggesting that in many cases students should be discouraged from using generative AI for coursework.

One member expressed concern with the commitment to Learn Ultra ahead of the Curriculum Transformation review of digital infrastructure is complete. They believe this represents a missed opportunity to rethink the digital estates needs and indicated that there was a lack of clarity on whether time and support has been budgeted for the wider Learn Ultra implementation.

One member stated that Senate should have sight of the updates on People and Money received by the Knowledge Strategy Committee in line with the expectations outlined in the People and Money paper approved at Senate's 29 March 2023 meeting.

One member advised the University to take note of the lessons learnt from Carnegie Mellon's controversies related to Internet of Things (IoT) and sensor installation, and highlighted the importance of thorough community engagement and recommended small opt-in pilots before a wider rollout.

Another member highlighted the potential benefit of accessing data from IoT systems for various research teams across the University and urged the University to take this opportunity to support its world class research work. They specifically mentioned the Institute of Energy Systems within the School of Engineering as an area likely to be interested in utilising the data provided via these systems.

The comments were passed to the author of the report.