

The University of Edinburgh
Senate Education Committee

Thursday 9th May 2024, 2-5pm
Hybrid meeting: Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House
and via Microsoft Teams

1. Attendance

| Present: | Position: |
|----------------------------|---|
| Professor Colm Harmon | Vice Principal, Students (Convener) |
| Professor Tina Harrison | Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) (Vice-Convener) |
| Nikos Avramidis | PGR Student Representative |
| Professor Laura Bradley | Representative of CAHSS (Postgraduate Research) |
| Professor Mary Brennan | Representative of CAHSS (Learning and Teaching) |
| Marianne Brown | Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling |
| Lucy Evans | Deputy Secretary, Students |
| Shelagh Green | Director for Careers and Employability |
| Professor Paddy Hadoke | Representative of CMVM (Postgraduate Research) |
| Carl Harper | Vice President (Education), Students' Association |
| Professor Sarah Henderson | Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching – PGT) |
| Dr Melissa Highton | Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Division of Information Services; Assistant Principal (Online and Open Learning) |
| Professor James Hopgood | Senate Representative |
| Dr Lisa Kendall | Representative of CAHSS (Learning and Teaching) |
| Nichola Kett | Director of Academic Services |
| Professor Jason Love | Head of School, CSE |
| Professor Antony Maciocia | Representative of CSE (Postgraduate Research) |
| Callum Paterson | EUSA Academic Engagement and Policy Coordinator |
| Professor Jo Shaw | Head of School, CAHSS |
| Professor Mike Shipston | Head of Deanery, CMVM |
| Professor Tim Stratford | Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching) |
| Dr Tamara Trodd | Senate Representative |
| Professor Patrick Walsh | Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching) |
| Patrick Jack | Committee Secretary, Academic Services |
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| Apologies: | |
| Professor Sian Bayne | Assistant Principal Digital Education |
| Dr Shane Collins | Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions |
| Professor Jamie Davies | Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching – UG) |
| Professor Velda McCune | Deputy Director, Institute for Academic Development |
| Dr Susan Morrow | Senate Representative |
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| In attendance: | |
| Dr Hazel Christie | Head, CPD Framework for Learning and Teaching |
| Professor Catherine Bovill | Co-Director, Institute for Academic Development |

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| Lauren Harrison | Senior Project Officer (Students) |
| Teresa Ironside | Director of Data Science Education, Bayes Centre |
| Lindsay Jack | Director of Student Experience, Edinburgh Law School |
| Kirsten Roche | Careers and Employability Lead, Careers Service |

2. Minutes of meeting held on 7th March 2024

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 7th March 2024.

3. Matters Arising

- **Curriculum Transformation – Challenge Courses**

Members referenced concerns by Senate about undergraduate challenge courses, with regard to directions regarding the approval and role of challenge courses at both the central University and College levels, as well as the role of Senate Education Committee (SEC).

Members noted that activity is underway in each of the Colleges to develop challenge courses and questioned whether this was in conflict with the recommendation at Senate regarding School ownership. In response relevant members of SEC noted how this matter was being progressed in Colleges. Within CAHSS, consultation with Schools and relevant committees has been initiated. Specific existing courses have been identified as potentially being piloted as challenge courses during 2024/25. However, a decision is yet to be made on developing a formal College strategy for CTP. Colleagues within CSE are considering piloting challenge courses as an opportunity to examine how they interact with existing programmes. Proposition papers relating to CTP will be presented to Management and Education Committees within CSE, but they do not propose to establish new policy. CMVM are working to develop new courses which meet the remit of a challenge course.

The Convener clarified that Senate had agreed that challenge courses will not be mandatory within programme archetypes. Conceptually however, challenge courses should be regarded positively and could potentially be expanded from pre-honours into honours years. It is the responsibility of the Colleges to consider how to develop and embed challenge courses within their curricula as appropriate; there is no University-level policy or strategy that dictates what Colleges can or cannot do within this context. Many SEC members are also on the University's CTP Board and work is ongoing to stress-test programme archetypes. It was also noted how clearly some programmes will continue to not have the appropriate curriculum 'bandwidth' to accommodate students electing to take challenge courses - for example the need to meet external accreditation requirements. Colleges will continue to consider these issues as CTP work moves forward and this will inform and be informed by future discussions and subsequent resolutions at both Senate and SEC.

4. Substantive Items

4.1 Student Experience Update: 'Watch That Gap' Project Report

The paper was presented by the Director of Student Experience within the Edinburgh Law School. Committee members were informed that the report uses the University's definition of student carers and EUSA's definition of student parents. The project sought to capture the experience of those students who were experiencing difficult personal circumstances but did not qualify for exceptional circumstances. Although the report focuses on student parents and carers, the report's outcomes apply to other broad student cohorts. The report identifies areas of good practice, such as the Edinburgh Cares team and how they support students, as well as the ESC team and creative initiatives within Schools. It is queried however whether the University places too much expectation on students to be able to navigate the support resources available to them, and whether access to support can in some instances take too long. In terms of what more can be done to address this as an institution, the report recommends a bespoke package of modifications such as the earlier release of timetables and the availability of recordings across all lectures. The recommended modifications are intended to be a starting point for wider work in the longer term around equipping staff to best support students.

Committee members raised the following comments:

- The population of online students and how they could benefit from this work should be considered.
- It would be particularly useful for PGR students if they were not required to further evidence caring responsibilities, for example school holidays, when submitting interruption of study requests.
- It would be positive to see actionable outcomes as a result of this work, such as evaluating the future appropriateness of the ESC case management system.
- Intersectionality is important. Staff should be aware that caring responsibilities for students can fluctuate between academic years.
- There is different practice across Schools and SCQF levels with regard to lecture recording. Making lecture recordings universal could be very challenging in some settings, such as in areas where small group teaching is dominant.
- To what extent have we reflected on the understanding of international students considering themselves as carers? How will this work communicate itself to international students?

Members were informed that the intention moving forward is that this work will be differentiated from the University's Widening Participation team and Disability and Learning Support Service. While specific colleagues will lead on taking this work forward, it should be communicated that this wider responsibility applies to all staff at the University. The Deputy Secretary, Students highlighted the importance of clear actions being identified to take forward this work collectively across the institution. Staff are welcome to share this report with students, with the caveat that it is made clear that the recommendations are currently being finalised.

4.2 Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030: Update on Development

The Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) presented the paper, informing members that while the strategy is still being refined, approval in principle is sought for the strategy's three central areas of focus and their direction of travel. Approval in principle would facilitate further development of the strategy, as well as progress how to implement the key focus areas and measure their success. Wide consultation has already taken place with feedback being taken into consideration, such as making explicit the strategy's focus on staff. The aim is to bring the finalised strategy back to SEC at its first meeting of 2024/25 for formal approval.

The Committee approved the draft strategy in principle and noted the following comments:

- The ringed diagram (p.5) received positive feedback, particularly around its clarity and granularity.
- A holistic depiction of staff would be welcomed, supporting staff awareness of how their research and teaching underpins the strategy.
- In terms of staff agency, it would be helpful if staff felt sufficiently supported in developing new curriculum proposals and navigating approval processes. It was noted that staff agency should be taken forward across a number of areas and is incorporated into the existing People and Research & Innovation strategies.
- While the strategy takes account of CTP, it also addresses curriculum development in its broadest sense. Some but not all elements of the strategy will be delivered via CTP. For example, the curriculum being challenge-led is a key ethos of the strategy, however, while challenge courses being able to promote this, it is not solely dependent on the introduction of challenge courses. This enables Schools and Colleges to deliver on the strategy in addition to CTP.
- The wording of "*curriculum for the 21st century*" was queried, given that almost a quarter of the century has now passed.
- Consideration could be given to whether the strategy states ambitions around staff teaching qualifications, taking in to account the QAA Quality Code and the number of staff who have achieved AdvanceHE fellowships.

Members were provided with a link to the SharePoint site for further details around the development of the strategy. Moving forward, the Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) highlighted that she would be happy to discuss the strategy in more details with Schools should they require any further information relating to the strategy.

4.3 Graduate Outcomes Survey Annual Report

The Committee was presented with an annual update on the UK-wide Graduate Outcomes Survey of graduate destinations. The University is obliged to undertake this survey and graduates are contacted by HESA 15 months after completion of their programme. 4,700 graduates responded for 2023, representing a 40% response rate. The response rate has declined, primarily due to HESA no longer telephoning international graduates. Data for 2023 is difficult to compare to recent years due to the Covid pandemic and industrial action. Graduate employment has remained resilient in spite of this, with 95% in employment or further study and unemployment rates falling. It was noted that graduates from particular demographics are facing barriers to highly skilled employment post-graduation, particularly those with a widening participation marker or those with a disability.

The Convener noted that the Academic Strategy Group had previously received this report and discussed the variation in data between Schools. Members discussed addressing career readiness amongst current students and how best to provide graduate support via expanding making transitions personal to every year group. Comments were raised around whether students could be surveyed on career readiness each academic year, whereby data can be shared with Student Advisors who can subsequently discuss feedback and forward-planning with individual students. It was noted whether the intentionality of student development teams in terms of scaffolding support could be further enhanced.

Committee members noted that while some Schools already facilitate students meeting employers and organise student placements, it would be helpful if good practice across the University was visible. It was further noted that there has been a trend in some Schools whereby investment in student development and management of relevant skills are empowering students to feel more confident in their direction of travel. Some Schools are enlisting the support of the Careers Service to help embed relevant skills in the curriculum from the 1st year of undergraduate programmes onwards.

4.4 Update on Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Framework for Learning & Teaching

The Committee was provided with an update on the CPD Framework for Learning and Teaching, noting that the Framework had been reaccredited in 2023 by AdvanceHE against the new professional standards framework. The University of Edinburgh is one of the first higher education institutions within the UK to be reaccredited. The Framework is working well, with participation across all elements of the CPD Framework returning to pre-pandemic levels. Staff who are not completing CPD provision are often citing difficulty to allocate sufficient time to CPD and would appreciate time commitments and recognition for learning and teaching CPD activity to be built into workload allocation models (WAMs). It was highlighted that this should also apply to staff without WAMs.

The Committee was informed that there is spare capacity on the new Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PgCAP) programme and members were encouraged to share details with their colleagues, particularly teaching fellows and new lecturers. It was noted that lower enrolments on the PgCAP could be attributed to a greater extent of activity during standard working hours which makes it difficult for staff to commit to completing the programme. Volunteer trained assessors are also being sought. There is a strong appetite for more local mentoring schemes as part of the Edinburgh Teaching Award. Mentor training typically takes place during teaching time however alternative timings could be explored.

4.5 Postgraduate Research Culture Action Plan

The Committee was informed that the PGR Culture Action Plan builds on and contextualises the commitments made to the improvement of research cultures through the University Research Cultures Action Plan (RCAP). The University's new Postgraduate Research Lead will have oversight of the action plan. The action plan and its outcomes have been aligned under the five main drivers of RCAP, some of which are granular and more straightforward to implement, whereas others are broader and more likely to be longer term actions. Results

from the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) indicated that research culture is an area for development within the University, which requires proactive enhancement work. Comments on the action plan were sought from SEC members to be fed back via the Doctoral College.

The Committee flagged that the provision of student support for PGR students was a noticeable omission from the University's student support model and that the Committee should emphasise the need to address this within the action plan. It was noted that PGR had been overlooked when the University created RCAP, which in itself demonstrates an issue with PGR culture given that PGR students were not at the heart of this work. The Committee discussed the use of peer support amongst PGR students, with feedback indicating that junior PhD students would appreciate peer support from senior PhD students, and whether more local peer-support networks could be established. In terms of supervisory practice, it was noted that some Schools involve the PGR Director in year 1 reviews. However, while efforts are being made to develop more consistent guidelines to address common issues, it will be difficult to implement a universal solution as many PGR leads are already required to manage very high workloads.

Committee members discussed space resource for PGR students, with it being noted that many PGR students have fed back negatively on the use of hot-desking. It was queried whether a new central space could be created specifically for the use of PGR students. Members noted that a new Space Advisory Group has been established which will audit all central spaces and identify whether there is any availability for PGR students, as well as optimising space. The Old Kirk Project is also being revisited.

The Committee encouraged Schools to utilise annual monitoring as a process to evaluate PGR provision and that this should be made explicit within the action plan.

4.6 Student Partnership Agreement 2024-25

The Committee noted the content of the proposed University of Edinburgh Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) and its priority areas for 2024-25. The priority areas are supported by SPA Funding which is available for small partnership projects involving students and staff. It was highlighted that priorities have been adapted to reflect increasing concerns around wellbeing, mental health, cost of living and accommodation challenges.

The Committee endorsed the SPA and approved the agreement for 2024-25.

4.7 Senate Standing Committees Annual Internal Effectiveness Review

The Committee was presented with plans for the annual review of Senate Standing Committees' effectiveness, in alignment with the Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance. As a result of the review, Registry Services will seek to use responses to help develop and track key performance indicators. The review process will evaluate effectiveness across four broad areas. Registry Services are aiming to undertake benchmarking in relation to how other higher education institutions conduct this exercise.

In terms of further consultation, the Committee suggested that members of staff external to the committee are surveyed. Staff resource within Academic Services would need to be considered should further consultation be undertaken, however consultation via the University's Directors of Teaching Network may be the optimal route to conduct this if required. It was further noted that student members would need to be consulted prior to demitting their roles if possible. It was queried whether metrics are available regarding engagement with the Senate Committees' Newsletter. While feedback on the Newsletter has been positive, metrics will need to be checked.

Action: Academic Services to consider surveying staff external to the committee and timing of the survey to ensure Sabbatical Officers are able to contribute.

Action: Academic Services to confirm if engagement metrics regarding the Senate Committees' Newsletter are available.

5. Items for Information / Noting

5.1 Committee Priorities 2024/25

The Committee noted the proposed SEC priorities for 2024/25 and provided no further comments. The Standing Committees' proposed priorities will be reported to Senate later in May 2024 for endorsement.

5.2 Membership and Terms of Reference 2024/25

The Committee noted the SEC membership and terms of reference for 2024/25. SEC membership will be presented for approval to Senate later in May, with Senate representatives to be confirmed following the Senate elections process.

5.3 Tutors & Demonstrators Update

Committee members received a verbal update on tutors and demonstrators, noting that this is a key priority action from the Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR). A central sub-committee will be created to oversee the governance underpinning this staff cohort. This will be a sub-committee of the Staff Experience Committee as this is primarily an HR responsibility, and discussions have been held with the Convener of that Committee to help organise the approval of the sub-committee in June 2024.

Members were informed that Schools are to be consulted on their plans relating to the recruitment and training of tutors and demonstrators in order to explore what would be required for University-wide baseline training. Some training models are already in place within Colleges and efforts will be made to build upon these existing models. The uptake of training across Schools will be monitored. One School is developing an online system to develop and monitor training and the sub-committee will work with ISG to explore rolling this system out more widely across the University.

The Committee discussed the need to produce data around identifying PGR students who teach that have undertaken training, in order to better understand the scale of the issue, as well as respond to the relevant QESR recommendation. It was noted that practical steps could be taken during 2024/25 to achieve this. A more systematic process could subsequently be introduced from 2025/26. While the QESR recommendation only focuses on PGR students who teach, this workstream will cover all tutors and demonstrators, irrespective of whether they are a PGR student. Comments were noted around how standardising training could help address the inequity of training provision across Schools. While there is an initial focus on training, longer term consideration will take place with regard to recruitment and fair access to teaching across the University.

5.4 Assessment and Feedback Groups

The Committee was informed that the Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group had not met since the last meeting of SEC. Assessment and feedback is however also being considered by the External Quality Review Oversight Group, specifically around the QESR recommendation regarding feedback turnaround times and quality of feedback. Members noted that work to embed the moderation of feedback quality within moderation processes is being taken forward by Colleges. The Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) and the Deputy Secretary (Students) are in discussion with Internal Audit colleagues to explore whether the methodology underpinning feedback audit work carried out within the Deanery of Molecular, Genetic and Population Health Sciences can be rolled out more widely across the University.

The Committee noted that positive discussions have been held with Colleges in relation to assessment and feedback data monitoring. School teaching offices which have supported the capture of initial data relating to feedback turnaround times were thanked as this has helped identify where action should be focussed moving forward. The Deputy Secretary (Students) highlighted that a note of thanks had been passed on to College Office teams but welcomed suggestions of other colleagues to send thanks on to such as Heads of School or Heads of teaching administration within Schools.

5.5 Generative AI

The Committee noted QAA Scotland's event taking place on 11 June, exploring the current picture of assessment in an AI world across Scotland and beyond. A link to register for the event was included in the meeting agenda. Members noted that a similar presentation was recently provided at a town hall event within the University and that it would be useful to invite the speakers to a future meeting of SEC.

6. Any Other Business

Members who were stepping down from SEC at the end of 2023/24 were thanked for their input. Senate representatives were also thanked and the constructive value of representatives from Senate on SEC was noted.

The Committee discussed moving to holding four 3-hour meetings per year from 2024/25. It was noted that moving from five to four meetings will help with agenda planning and

progressing actions, as there will be more time available in between meetings. The Committee supported this approach.

7. Date of Next Meeting

Dates of SEC meetings for 2024/25 are yet to be confirmed however it is anticipated that the next meeting will take place on Thursday 12 September, 9am – 12noon.

Action: Academic Services to confirm 2024/25 meeting dates and issue invites to members.