

The University of Edinburgh

Senate Quality Assurance Committee

Thursday 5th December, 2pm –5pm

Hybrid meeting: Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House & Microsoft Teams

A G E N D A

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| 1. | Welcome and Apologies | |
| 2. | Minutes of the previous meeting To approve: <ul style="list-style-type: none">September 2024 | SQAC 24/25 2A |
| 3. | Matters Arising <ul style="list-style-type: none">Convener's communicationsExternal review updateStudent Data Monitoring Task Group updateIPR Forward Schedule update | Verbal Update |
| SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS | | |
| 4. | Annual Reports 2023-24: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Academic AppealsStudent Conduct To discuss. Closed papers - disclosure would constitute a breach of the Data Protection Act as individuals may be identifiable. | SQAC 24/25 2B SQAC 24/25 2C Closed papers |
| 5. | College Annual Quality Reports 2023-24 <ul style="list-style-type: none">College of Arts, Humanities and Social SciencesCollege of Medicine and Veterinary MedicineCollege of Science & Engineering To discuss and approve recommended actions. | SQAC 24/25 2D |
| 6. | Short Online Courses Annual Update 2023-24 To note. Closed paper - commercial in confidence. | SQAC 24/25 2E Closed paper |
| 7. | Learn Ultra Evaluation To review and consider recommendations. | SQAC 24/25 2F |
| ITEMS FOR INFORMATION/NOTING | | |
| 8. | Self-Evaluation Action Plan (SEAP) For information. | SQAC 24/25 2G |

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| 9. | Committee Priorities 2024-25 To note. | SQAC 24/25 2H |
| 10. | Internal Periodic Review: Reports and Responses* The Committee is invited to approve the IPR reports and responses published on the Committee SharePoint. | SQAC 24/25 2I |
| | | |
| 11. | Any Other Business | |
| 12. | Date of next meeting Thursday 20 th February 2025, Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House and Microsoft Teams | |

The University of Edinburgh
Senate Quality Assurance Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on
Tuesday 10th September 2024, 2-5pm
Hybrid meeting: Argyle House Meeting Room 14
and Microsoft Teams

1. Attendance

| Present: | Position: |
|--------------------------|---|
| Professor Tina Harrison | Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) (Convener) |
| Professor Matthew Bailey | Dean of Quality, CMVM |
| Dr Michael Barany | Senate Representative |
| Professor Laura Bradley | Doctoral College Representative of CAHSS (PGR) |
| Marianne Brown | Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling |
| Brian Connolly | Acting Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement, Academic Services |
| Dr Anne Desler | School Representative of CAHSS |
| Faten Adam | School Representative of CSE |
| Olivia Eadie | Co-Director, Institute for Academic Development |
| Professor Nazira Karodia | Deputy Vice Chancellor and Vice Principal of Learning & Teaching, Edinburgh Napier University |
| Professor Linda Kirstein | Dean of Education Quality Assurance and Culture, CSE |
| Callum Paterson | Academic Engagement and Policy Coordinator |
| Dr Neneh Rowa-Dewar | School Representative of CMVM |
| Dr Emily Taylor | Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Validation, CAHSS |
| Dylan Walch | Vice President (Education), Students' Association |
| Sinéad Docherty | Committee Secretary, Academic Services |
| | |
| In attendance: | |
| Dr Andy Law | Observer from Senate Task and Finish Group |
| Dr Kate Ash-Irisarri | Observer from Senate Task and Finish Group |

2. Welcome and introductions

The Convener welcomed members to the first SQAC meeting of 2024/25 and in particular the two new members, Dylan Walch, VP Education and Faten Adam, School Representative of CSE, as well as returning elected Senate member, Dr Michael Barany.

The Convener also welcomed the two Senate Effectiveness Review Task and Finish Group representatives who were in attendance to observe the meeting.

The Convener extended thanks and congratulations to the Dean of Education Quality Assurance and Culture, CSE who will be moving on to a new role within the College. The Committee look

forward to welcoming Professor James Hopgood as the new Dean of Quality Assurance, CSE from the next meeting.

3. Note of e-business and minutes (SQAC 24/25 1A and 1B)

The Committee approved the note of e-business relating to 29th April – 6th May 2024.

The Committee noted a query received in relation to the minutes of the May meeting (Paper B Degree Awarded Analysis 2022-23) seeking clarification on the reference to ‘...Schools being asked to award marks in the 80s and 90s to make full use of the scale’. It was noted that this point, originally made during the discussion of awarding gaps and degree outcomes, referred to the encouragement (but not a formal University policy) given to subject areas, particularly within the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, a number of years previous in response to comments from External Examiners.

In order to understand the current use of the mark scale, the Committee noted that the inclusion of aggregated data in the annual analysis of degree outcomes would be useful in providing more insight. This was suggested as an area that the Student Data Monitoring Task & Finish Group could explore as part of their work. It was also noted that the understanding and use of descriptors and rubrics is an important component of making full use of the mark scale.

Action: Committee Secretary to refer the request for aggregated data in the degree outcome paper to the authors of this work.

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 16th May 2024.

Action: Committee Secretary to publish final version of April’s e-business note and May minutes on the Committee webpage.

4. Matters Arising

- **Minutes**

In relation to a request for the draft minutes to be circulated to members sooner after a meeting, the Convener confirmed the intention that minutes would be circulated within 2 weeks, when possible.

- **Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Tertiary Quality Review**

The Convener reported that the SFC has published the [Guidance on quality for colleges and universities AY 2024-25 to AY 2030-31](#) which outlines the key elements of Scotland’s new Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF). It was noted that the Convener and members of Academic Services had attended a number of information sessions organised by the SFC since the August 2024 publication.

The Convener confirmed that a new institutional annual reporting process to the SFC has been implemented from 2024/25, the Self-Evaluation Action Plan (SEAP). The SEAP will

replace both the annual report and statement of assurance on Institution-Led Review and the learning and quality aspects of the Outcome Agreement process. It was noted that the SEAP submission deadline will be 30 November each year (or the first working day in December, where the 30 November falls on a weekend or bank holiday as it does this year) and the final document must be reviewed and signed off by the Accountable Officer (i.e. Principal) in advance of submission (and should be shared with the Governing Body to support their oversight of quality assurance and enhancement).

The Convener also confirmed that a new institutional review process will be implemented from 2024/25, the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER). This will replace the previous Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR) and Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR). In the first year of TQER, two institutions (one Higher Education and one Further Education) have been chosen to undertake review. The schedule for all other institutions will be published by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in the Autumn of 2024, with specific dates for each institution confirmed 8 months in advance.

The Convener confirmed that a communication on the TQEF and TQER will be circulated to key stakeholders across the University.

Action: Convener to circulate a communication to colleagues on the key elements of the new TQEF and TQER.

- **Quality Enhancement & Standards Review (QESR)**

The Convener confirmed that the University's [Action Plan](#) in response to the recommendations of the [2023 QESR](#) was submitted as required to the QAA in July 2024. It was noted that feedback from the QAA had been positive with just one additional request to confirm that training will be in place (and uptake monitored) for the start of the 2024/25 academic year for all postgraduate research students who teach. It was noted that data on this had been gathered during the summer (as part of the annual monitoring process) and Colleges are working with Schools to ensure that this training is in place and monitored.

Action: Convener to include an update on progress with the QESR Action Plan in the TQEF/TQER communication.

5. University of Edinburgh Students' Association Vice President Education Priorities 2024/25 (SQAC 24/25 1C)

The VP Education presented the Committee with their priorities for academic year 2024/25:

- Advocate for transparency and accountability in University decision-making, to help students shape their experience and make their own informed decisions;
- Enhance student's experience of interacting with the University, with services offering the support and standards expected and students able to navigate these services;
- Empower student leaders to create change.

The VP Education explained that their priorities are driven by the objective of improving the education experience for students. It was noted that student partnership and student voice are integral in all these priorities, and the VP Education is committed to ensuring that the student voice is working within the existing QA processes. There was emphasis on working within teams and in collaboration, from a student perspective, to streamline University services.

The Committee reflected on the commitment to empower student leaders, and asked how to create more meaningful interactions in engaging with the wider student population. The VP Education suggested that there are different best practice approaches at different levels, and that a small group of engaged people can be an effective way to engage with the student voice.

The VP Education proposed improvements to the student representative system and its governance, to make sure that reps are feeding back to students and strengthening the representative system at School level. It was also recognised that, in addition to information flowing up and down within Schools, there is a need to build structures which enable the flow across College level and more widely across the institution.

The VP Education reflected that, in terms of aligning with the Student Partnership Agreement, this existing agreement might not be where student partnerships work is moving toward. There may be a sense that the SPA is low-level, at the moment, and is seen as more of a funding package than a student partnership opportunity.

The Committee were informed of the wider work of the EUSA Sabbatical Officer team and their shared priorities for 2024/25, including pay and reward for student reps, additional accommodation and food support for the student population to offer an accessible and communal package, and enhancing the existing University services in place to make them more student-centred and accessible at the point of use.

The Committee noted its support for the priorities set out and expressed its commitment to working with the VP Education throughout the year to accomplish these priorities.

6. School Annual Quality Reports 2023/24: Sub Group Report (SQAC 24/25 1D)

The Committee discussed the report from the sub-group tasked with reviewing the school annual quality reports. It was noted that a new Student Outcomes reporting box has been added (with a specific prompt to reflect on any differences in attainment for different student demographic groups) and specific reflections had been required on the following institutional priorities: Student Voice Policy; Assessment & Feedback Principles & Priorities; student support; and the impact of the industrial action.

The following themes for further development at University level were agreed:

Student Support

The Sub Group noted that it was apparent throughout the reports that the Student Advisor role was highly valued and their contributions had been recognised by a number of Schools. Two specific examples of good practice within this theme were highlighted by the Sub Group; the heat maps of student email interactions with Student Advisors, devised by the School of

Economics, and the research and published report by the School of Informatics which considered the switch to the new student support model within the School. The Committee acknowledged the report's findings that students value reliability and consistency as key aspects of student support provision.

Action: Student Support Continuous Improvement Group (SSCIG) to share the good practice and findings from School of Economics and School of Informatics.

The Sub Group noted that the Cohort Lead role had been identified as having had variable success; there were clear examples of individuals working well in the role and engaging with students but many Schools reporting that the role could be more effective. The Sub Group found that there was demand for enhanced central guidance on how to deploy the role and design events to best engage with students. It was identified that the role was felt to be working well in smaller Schools and tight academic areas. There were, however, challenges for students on joint programmes, with Schools concerned about gaps or inconsistency in the student experience. It was suggested that the issues with the student support model reflect the limits of the structures in place within the University, including issues around the teaching model and over-reliance on PGR tutors. These factors may help to explain the concern around the academic support gap and the expected role and responsibilities of cohort leads.

Action: Committee Secretary to refer issues to the Student Support Continuous Improvement Group (SSCIG) for response to SQAC.

Assessment and Feedback

The Sub Group noted that Schools were looking for further guidance on Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) and assessment to help with concerns around academic integrity. It was noted that Schools had started to develop their own approaches and in some areas this has resulted in a return to in-person exams. However, the positive opportunities of Generative AI as a tool were also recognised, particularly in regard to graduate attributes and the need for University of Edinburgh students to learn how to use AI tools responsibly. The Convener confirmed that the Assessment & Feedback Strategy Group had considered the issues and updated guidance for students is due to be published shortly. The Convener also confirmed that work is ongoing around innovative uses of Generative AI in teaching, and a paper is due to be presented to Senate Education Committee (SEC) later in the academic year to agree the institutional position on exams.

Views of wider Senate elected members were fed into this discussion on assessment and feedback. There was agreement that colleagues see Generative AI as a major concern that must be addressed. There is interest from wider Senate in the paper on assessment formats and resits being presented to SEC by Professor Tina Harrison and Senate elected members request that this item is also presented to a future meeting of Senate. Finally, Senate elected members are supportive of the increased visibility of turnaround times across the institution and seek to understand the impact that the metric is having on student satisfaction.

In relation to quality of feedback, the Convener confirmed that work is being undertaken with the Internal Audit team to develop an institutional framework for conducting audits on quality of feedback. The approach is based on the tool developed by the Director of Quality for the

Deanery of Molecular, Genetic and Population Health Sciences. It was noted that the School of GeoSciences has agreed to pilot the feedback audit, conversations are ongoing with the Business School about joining the pilot, and that a School or Deanery from within CMVM should also be invited join the pilot.

Action: Dean of Quality CMVM to liaise with Schools and Deaneries within College to identify a volunteer for the feedback audit pilot work.

The Committee recognised that the audit work must be an open process at School level, and communication with colleagues must be clear and considerate to sensitivities. It was noted that the focus on quality of feedback is driven by professional development for colleagues, as well as moderation requirements. It was agreed that there is further work to be done on following up External Examiner reports and supporting colleagues in conversations around moderation. Feedback turnaround times, published marking criteria and rubrics adhering to the Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities, feedback templates and established minimum standards were all identified as mechanisms for enhancing assessment and feedback. The Committee agreed that a desirable outcome for this work is consistency of experience for students.

Action: Committee Secretary to refer issues to the Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group for response to SQAC.

Student Voice & Partnership

The Sub Group noted that Schools continue to make significant efforts to provide opportunities for students to feedback on their student experience through locally organised student voice mechanisms, and provided examples of feedback mechanisms used. However, many Schools, particularly those using survey tools, reported issues with engagement and low response rates, with concerns regarding the utility of feedback derived from such low levels of engagement. It was common for Schools to report high student satisfaction with opportunities for providing feedback, but a much lower student satisfaction in terms of students feeling that feedback is valued and action taken as a result. The Sub Group noted that the School reports generally lacked information on actions taken in response to feedback from students, and approaches to closing the feedback loop, and agreed that the template next year should prompt for this.

The Sub Group noted that a possible aspect challenging closing the feedback loop may be due to the challenges of identifying and responding to issues at School level (which can be addressed and responded to locally) versus those that are not within the control of the School and which require institutional-level response and action, making it more challenging at School level to close the feedback loop and may create a disconnect between students and decision makers. The sub-Group noted a need for a more effective means of escalating issues that cannot be addressed at School level.

Action: Academic Services to revise School Quality Reporting template to prompt Schools next year to update on actions taken in response to student feedback and approaches to closing the feedback loop.

Action: Colleges to encourage and support Schools to consider feedback mechanisms that encourage dialogue with students, reducing reliance on surveys attracting low responses.

Action: Students' Association and Academic Services to work together to consider an effective approach for escalating issues requiring University level attention and response through the student representation structures.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

The Committee noted the value of the report template including reference to student outcomes and progression and therefore greater reporting on these areas this year. There was a query as to whether definitions of outcomes and progression vary across Schools; it was proposed that the Student Data Monitoring Task and Finish Group should explore the definitions and develop guidance for how Schools should use the progression and outcome data that is available to them.

Action: Committee Secretary to refer issues to the Student Data Monitoring Task and Finish Group for response to SQAC.

Postgraduate Research Student Experience

In relation to the postgraduate research (PGR) student experience, it was highlighted that the key elements in the reports addressed completion times, training for PGR students who teach and the student support model not extending to postgraduate taught (PGT) students. Responses around lengthening completion times reflect the trend in the sector to move to a 4-year funding model. It was acknowledged that this presents issues for Widening Participation (WP) students and those who are self-funding, who are expected to complete an unfunded period at the end of their studies. It was agreed that the University needs to improve its understanding and awareness of the scale of this issue.

The Doctoral College representative noted concerns that the data referenced in the School reports is not robust because different parameters were used to evidence the responses. It was proposed that the templates should provide central data, generated with the same parameters, to ensure greater consistency although it was recognised that there will be resource required to support this work. It was also noted that the data provided included students with an authorised interruption of studies (AIS) status; some Schools manually excluded this from their report, but the inclusion elsewhere impacted the reported completion rates.

The Committee agreed that further actions were required to appropriately escalate the concerns raised within the theme of PGR student experience. It was agreed that the points around PGR students and student support should be directed to the Student Experience Group for their attention, and the points around completion rates should be directed towards the Doctoral College who can help to strengthen annual reviews and expectations across the University. Finally, it was agreed that the action in the Sub Group's report, concerning the records of training for PGR students who teach, should be redirected to Professor Antony Maciocia, as the institutional PGR Lead on the External Quality Review Oversight Group.

Action: Committee Secretary to refer relevant issues to Student Experience Group, Doctoral College, PGR Lead on the External Quality Review Oversight Group for response to SQAC.

The Committee considered the remaining themes identified by the report. These reflected issues that had come up strongly through some reports but were not widespread. These areas were noted by the Committee and it was agreed that responsibility lay with the relevant Colleges to

monitor and support work in these areas. It was agreed to raise concerns around student attendance and engagement with the Student Support Continuous Improvement Group (SSCIG) and to direct the concerns around space and estates to the central estates team. This was recognised to be an ongoing issue where Schools need support and information. It was acknowledged that the building and moving programme underway is having an impact on expectations and understanding of available space.

A member raised the issue of resit entitlement which had been apparent in some of the School reports. It was highlighted that Schools and Colleges are having to manage a large number of concessions as a result of resit delays, and there should be the expectation that resits take place in the same academic year. It was questioned whether the resit model is generally fit for purpose. It was requested that the University's language around resit provision be reviewed and strengthened to improve the process and timing.

Action: Convener to take issue of resit entitlement to the A&F Strategy Group for action.

The Convener recorded thanks to the members of the Sub Group for their time reading the School annual quality reports and working on the Sub Group report.

7. Internal Periodic Review Themes 2023/24 (SQAC 24/25 1E)

The analysis of themes from the Internal Periodic Reviews (IPRs) held in 2023/24 was presented to the Committee by the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement, Academic Services. It was noted that the identified areas for development in this paper align with the themes identified through the annual monitoring quality process.

It was noted, in relation to the Assessment & Feedback recommendations, that the A&F Strategy Group is in operation and is supporting the work to deliver the changes required by the QESR recommendation. Therefore, the responsibility for action around A&F recommendations will also lie with the Strategy Group, as well as Schools and Colleges.

The Committee flagged that the average number of 12 recommendations per report was high, and may impact the depth of response provided by the Schools. The Committee also highlighted that commitment of staff was often commended, although commendations should focus on good practice and action that had been taken. The Committee agreed that there can be other mechanisms through which to recognise contributions of staff and it is important for the reports to be targeted in their use of commendations and recommendations.

Action: Academic Services to review IPR report template and guidance to provide more instruction on maximum number of recommendations and the language used to identify commendations.

8. Student Support – 2023/24 Feedback Outcomes (SQAC 24/25 1F)

This item was presented to the Committee for noting by the Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling. It was explained that the outcomes had been informed through focus groups,

that a more detailed report has also been produced and is available, and that the outcomes align with the themes identified in the annual monitoring reports. Key outcomes highlighted that students want to be proactively supported and receive personalised support, and that there is ongoing work to do to effectively embed the Cohort Lead role within the new model.

Action: Head of SAIM to share more detailed version of the feedback outcomes report with Committee members.

The Committee discussed the report and noted appreciation for the triangulation of feedback from different review methods. Issues with inconsistency in the application of the model was noted as an important aspect for the University; in managing and implementing significant change projects, it is important to provide clear and specific guidance and a detailed framework. It is not sufficient to cascade information to Schools for their interpretation, and this results in significant workload for Schools applying the broad guidance to their own area.

It was suggested that there is a need for a mindset switch from thinking about how the Personal Tutor role was used and what the academic role needs to be within the new model. Conversations and interactions with students can take place in different environments, not just a one-to-one setting. The Committee were informed of the training event organised for Cohort Leads working within CAHSS, which was found to be a positive group exercise that included examples of successful activities and what worked well within the model. The Committee agreed it would be useful for good practice examples to be shared more widely across the University.

It was communicated to the Committee that this paper had generated much discussion within the elected cohort of wider Senate members. It was reported that this paper presented to SQAC was understood to have articulated issues within the student support model, whereas a paper on the SEC agenda appeared to be less cognisant of the issues identified within the model.

The Committee discussed the importance of improving communication channels to Schools and Colleges to address any disconnect around the evaluation of the model. It was noted that Senate Standing Committee papers are written for different audiences and it is appropriate that the greater level of detail belongs with SQAC as it is the Committee with responsibility for monitoring the student support framework.

The Convener recognised that the implementation of the new student support model had been a significant shift, both for the University and in the context of the sector. The increase in student satisfaction with mental health support was highlighted as an indication that the system is working well, and it was noted that most students have had experience of the previous system against which they can compare.

The Committee addressed a concern noted in the paper some students do not know where to go for the appropriate support. Triaging through different services needs to work well, and whilst Student Advisors are a key contact for students, not everything has to go through this channel. Academic staff should also be aware of the services that students should be signposted to for support, and be available for contact with students that does relate to academic matters. The Committee suggested it would be useful to track how often Student Advisors are connecting

students with academic staff, and develop a better understanding of what good academic support means within the model.

Action: Continuous Improvement Group will investigate the definition of academic support that has been referred to in the evaluation.

9. Student Support – Evaluation and Monitoring Framework Plan (SQAC 24/25 1G)

The Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling presented an update on the evaluation approach that has now been developed to evaluate and monitor the newly implemented student support model. The Student Support (Continuous Improvement) Group (SSCIG) have responsibility for actions arising from this work.

It was outlined that the framework relies on various data sources and this is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the impact of the model. There was a query around the benchmarks and targets for the key indicators. The Committee were informed that benchmarking has been undertaken where possible, but that baseline data was not always available. It was noted that the data required is not all held in one place, and therefore there is the need to triangulate the data and review the impact retrospectively.

The discussion raised some areas for consideration in the framework. It was noted that some metrics must be defined, such as the benchmark for what is considered to be low turnover in Student Advisor roles and the total number of students who can be supported by Wellbeing Advisors. It was recognised that the PTES survey has a low response rate and queried how effective this is as a data source. The presenter highlighted the range of data sources used as inputs to mitigate the surveys with a low response rate, and explained that the framework had to identify data that is in existence and not expect Schools and College to undertake further data collection.

It was acknowledged that some data sources may have limitations, but it is hugely important for student views and understanding of support to be fed into the evaluation and this is sourced, in part, through survey responses. It is hoped that the cohort evaluation activity will be piloted this academic year, with the student voice informing how this activity is integrated into the model.

It was proposed that it would be helpful for QA processes to ask more targeted questions around student support and engagement with EUSA and the student voice. In response to queries around surveying students, it was explained that NSS questions are set externally and the University cannot adjust the wording of the questions. The University can select the banks of rotational questions; SEC has responsibility for approving the selected question banks, an item it considers in semester 2. It was suggested that it would be useful for Schools to know what questions were to be included in the NSS in advance of the survey.

Action: Head of SAIM to circulate communication to Schools to confirm the NSS question set in advance of the survey going to students.

It was confirmed to the Committee that there will be some scope with the framework to see how certain groups of students are impacted by the student support model, where the data can

support this. In relation to awarding gaps, there was a question around the diversity of Student Advisors and whether this correlates with how students seek support. It was confirmed that the initial recruitment of Student Advisors was targeted to achieve similar representation to that of the student population, although it was not known where those Student Advisors were placed within the institution.

The Committee were informed that the SSCIG are expected to complete a progress report by the end of the semester which will be presented to SQAC.

10. Senate Committees' Internal Effectiveness Review 2022/23 (SQAC 24/25 1H)

The Committee Secretary outlined the key findings of the internal effectiveness review.

During the discussion, low participation in e-business was raised as a concern, with the Committee prompted to consider how to evidence baseline engagement with e-business or reassess how it uses e-business.

In relation to the proposed action for time to be set aside at the final meeting of the year for members to complete the internal effectiveness survey, it was noted that this should not be necessary as it is the responsibility of members to engage with the survey and the in-meeting time constraint is not conducive for free text comments and feedback.

The Committee felt it was helpful to see the responses in relation to how effectively communication is managed. It was agreed to set aside some time in a subsequent meeting for the Committee to explore how to better communicate the work it does. There was concern that some of the work of the Committee risks being duplicated because of lack of awareness or visibility within the wider institution. The Senate Committee newsletter was highlighted as a useful tool for communicating the Committee's activity, although it is not known how effective this is.

Action: Committee Secretary to enquire into recipients of and engagement with Senate Committees newsletter and report back to next meeting.

The Committee discussed mechanisms and approaches to diversify its membership. Suggestions included a co-opted member with EDI expertise, such as a School Director of EDI, joining the Committee or seeking input from the new EDI lead at University level to align with broader strategy. It was proposed that SQAC should seek to work in collaboration with the EDI Committee rather than rely on representation within the Committee membership. There was caution against tokenism and divesting the Committee of its responsibility to consider EDI matters.

It was recognised that the Committee will have a particular focus on EDI matters and awarding gaps, through its oversight of the Student Data Monitoring Task & Finish Group. It was agreed that the Committee does have a role in sharing good practice and creating greater impact from the work that it does. The Business School's Widening Participation film for staff was cited as an example of good practice noticed through a quality process which should be shared more widely for the benefit of colleagues across the institution.

Action: Academic Services to enhance mechanisms for promoting and sharing good practice as an outcome of QA processes.

11. Committee Terms of Reference and Membership 2024/25 (SQAC 24/25 1I)

The Convener presented these administrative items for noting. The updates to membership that had been confirmed over the summer were reflected in the revised membership list.

The Committee discussed the vacant positions within its membership, which are two co-opted positions and two unfilled Senate elected representative positions. The Convener proposed a colleague for one of the co-opted places; this colleague has a background in statistics and would be a valuable contributor, especially in the work of the Student Data Monitoring Task & Finish Group.

There was discussion of the process for nominating a co-opted member to the Committee. Members were advised that the expectation of co-opting members from the wider university is described in historical minutes referenced in the Standing Orders. Members expressed an expectation that an advert for interest would need to be made available across the University, for colleagues to then express their interest in joining on a co-opted place.

The Committee were informed that there are interested parties who wish to take the vacant Senate elected positions, one from CSE and one from CMVM, which would ensure Senate representation on behalf of all three Colleges. It was acknowledged that there is an annual election process for Senate representatives to join the Senate Standing Committees and the Committee felt that a motion would have to go to Senate to address the unfilled positions to ensure due diligence on the required process.

It was agreed that the Student Data Monitoring Group membership would be reviewed and, if any gaps identified, this may inform the expertise sought through the co-opted member process.

Action: Student Data Monitoring T&F Group Co-conveners to review membership and identify any potential gaps in expertise of the Group.

12. Internal Periodic Review: Reports and Responses (SQAC 24/25 1J)

Due to the volume of IPR documentation to consider for this meeting, the College Deans of Quality had been asked to provide commentary for the reports and response within their College.

The Dean of Quality, CMVM noted that it had been useful to have several IPRs clustered together which had highlighted themes to be addressed by the College Executive group. These themes included staff experience, development and promotion, strategic overview and the absence of a Workload Allocation Model (WAM) within the College. It was noted that the College governance review should help to address the core themes from the CMVM reports.

The Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Validation, CAHSS highlighted that the recommendations in the SPS final report aligned with University and College priorities, and with the focus on assessment and feedback. It is expected that the School will benefit from parallel activity in other Schools and at College level as they make progress against the recommendations.

Two CAHSS responses were identified as needing to provide further detail and clarification; the School of Economics in relation to its recommendations around programme enhancement and graduate attributes and the School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures in relation to support for students returning from a year abroad, the timelines for addressing assessment type and volume and management structures. The Committee agreed that these Schools should be asked to update their response to include further information.

Action: Academic Services to refer areas for further updates to the relevant Schools and monitor progress through quality processes.

The CAHSS and CMVM reports and responses were approved subject to the actions identified in the commentary from the relevant Deans of Quality.

The Dean of Education Quality Assurance and Culture, CSE will provide written commentary on reports and responses belonging to Schools within CSE and this will be shared with the Committee to assist their approval decisions. Some comments were noted in relation to CSE Schools; it was highlighted that the estate-based recommendation is not within the School of Chemistry's power to address and questioned whether all the recommendations made to the School of Engineering can be effectively measured and assessed. In response to the estate-based recommendation, it was emphasised that IPRs can ask for the University to address problems that cannot be solved at School or College level.

13. A.O.B.

It was noted that a number of suggestions during discussions had been directed towards the Student Data Monitoring Task & Finish Group. It was emphasised that the workload of the group needs to be appropriate and in line with the remit in order to ensure its task is manageable.

14. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 5th December 2024, 2-5pm.

The University of Edinburgh
Senate Quality Assurance Committee

5 December 2024

**College Annual Quality Reports
2023-24**

Description of paper:

1. The College annual quality reports for 2023-24 are included below.

Fit with remit:

| Quality Assurance Committee | Y/N |
|---|------------|
| Oversee the delivery and enhancement of the University's quality assurance framework, ensuring that it meets external requirements. | Y |
| In partnership with Edinburgh University Students' Association, ensure effective student engagement and representation of student voices in the University's quality framework. | Y |
| Maintain oversight of the outcomes of the quality assurance framework, ensuring that actions are addressed, and support the sharing of good practice. | Y |
| Promote the quality assurance framework as an important part of the University's activities and ensure that the outcomes inform relevant University business. | Y |
| Identify areas for innovation and enhancement of the student experience and ensure that these inform Senate Education Committee's policy development. | Y |

Action requested / recommendation:

2. For discussion.

Background and context:

3. The College annual quality reports for 2023-24 are informed by the School level quality reports. College quality committees (or equivalent) consider school annual quality reports, identify themes and areas for action in the coming year.

Discussion:

4. See attached papers.

Resource implications:

5. Considered within the reports.

Risk management:

6. Considered within the reports.

Equality & diversity:

7. Considered within the reports.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed:

8. College reports should be considered by the relevant College committee. Should the Committee agree any actions, consideration will be given to how to communicate these.

Authors

CAHSS:

Dr Emily Taylor, Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Validation, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

CMVM:

Professor Matthew Bailey, Director of Quality Assurance, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine

CSE:

Professor James Hopgood, Dean of Quality and Enhancement, College of Science and Engineering

December 2024

Freedom of Information: Open

Presenter

CAHSS:

Dr Emily Taylor, Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Validation, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

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Professor James Hopgood, Dean of Quality and Enhancement, College of Science and Engineering

College Annual Report 2023/24

The University is responsible for its academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience. The College Annual Report is a key part of the University's commitment to reflecting on and systematically reviewing its provision and taking action to enhance it.¹

Scope: Your report should cover all credit-bearing provision, including collaborative and credit-bearing continuing professional development (CPD) provision (where applicable).

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Contributors: Your report should include input and contributions from colleagues across your College.

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Deadline: Monday 25 November 2024

| | |
|--|--|
| School/Deanery: | CAHSS |
| Report written by (include contributors): | Leopoldine Barde, Emily Taylor, Lynsey Dinwoodie |
| Date of report: | November 2024 |

¹ <https://www.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/atoms/files/annualmonrevreppolicy.pdf>

1. Actions from the previous year.

Please report on progress with the actions you identified in last year's report and planned to take in 2023-24.

The College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, in conjunction with the broader institution, identified Assessment and Feedback as a priority focus for the 2023/24 academic year and beyond. Our aim was to enhance the student experience and fully embed the Assessment and Feedback Principles and priorities introduced in 2022 into our practices.

The CAHSS 2022/23 Annual QA Report highlighted ten enhancement-led priorities for 2023/24 related to assessment and feedback. Each of our priorities is listed below, along with progress updates detailing the relevant actions taken by the College and Schools.

The complete and most recent version of the updates can be found here: [Assessment and Feedback in CAHSS](#)

1. Implementing the Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities

Schools are now actively pursuing significant changes in their assessment strategies in response to the Assessment & Feedback Principles and Priorities.

College recommends that all CAHSS taught programme teams complete an assessment matrix to identify range, spread and volume of assessments as a first step to identifying where changes are needed.

The college developed a set of Minimum Standards for Assessment and Feedback, operationalising the Principles and Priorities (see below).

Resources: [Download: CAHSS Assessment Matrix Template](#)

2. Timeliness of return of marks and feedback for students

College expectations for the three-week turnaround are now formalised and implemented. They prioritise timely and constructive feedback in order to increase student satisfaction in this area. All coursework assignments worth less than 40 credits on small-medium courses should be returned within three weeks, and in all cases students must receive clear communication about return dates. Assignments on very large courses may take up to four weeks.

In the process of developing these expectations, College identified a number of obstacles to timely return of marks and feedback including over-assessment, managing multiple submission dates, and over-allocation of marking. The assessment matrix helps identify resolvable issues for 2024-25.

Resources: [CAHSS Expectations for the Implementation of the Three Week Feedback Turnaround](#)

3. Literacy in and use of assessment criteria and assessment rubrics to improve consistency

Following extensive consultation with CAHSS schools through the QA Forum, College Education Committee and College Student-Staff Liaison Committee, CAHSS Minimum Standards for Assessment Feedback were produced and were approved by the College Education Committee in May 2024 for full implementation in 2024/25.

Resources: [Assessment and Feedback Standards in CAHSS](#)

4. Assessment loads

It has become apparent that there are areas of significant over-assessment in the College which is having an impact on the ability of CAHSS students to engage in timetabled classes and to

complete coursework on time. Students report that over-assessment is a reason for coursework extension requests.

College has begun investigating the use of assessment tariffs at equivalent external institutions after initial research suggested that tariffs, embedded within policy or more general guidance, typically limits assessment to one item per 10 credits (therefore max. 12 items per year).

Our research suggests that:

- There is an implicit sector standard emerging from those universities that have developed tariffs/benchmarks/tools
- If we were to introduce this, it would be at college-level and as guidance
- Clarity is needed as to what schools would find helpful in terms of operationalising the A&FP&P and how detailed the guidance should be

5. Resource allocation to support more efficient and effective assessment and feedback processes

This is a key consideration of Portfolio Review in CAHSS for 2024-25.

In spring/summer 2024, CAHSS established a short-life working group to explore the use of drop boxes to manage assessment submission, the return of timely feedback and reporting of the feedback return dates. The group aimed to review practice across CAHSS with a view to establishing common approaches and identifying system or policy issues that required central university action.

Resources: [Find out more about Portfolio Review in CAHSS](#)

[Read CAHSS Dropbox Working Group Report \(July 2024\)](#)

6. The quality and availability of feedback through sharing of innovative feedback practices

The Quality Enhancement Standards Review recommendations from November 2023 make clear that quality feedback is as important as timeliness of feedback.

The CAHSS Minimum Standards for Assessment Feedback set to outline requirements as well as recommendations, suggestions and a repository of exemplars from across CAHSS schools.

Resources: [Assessment and Feedback Standards in CAHSS](#)

7. Consistency in delivery and marking across all course staff, including Tutors and Demonstrators, to avoid disparities in feedback quality

CAHSS Minimum Standards for Assessment Feedback are now expected to be shared with all Course Organisers in CAHSS.

The CAHSS Expectations for Supporting Tutors and Demonstrators set a baseline requirement for tutor training to include assessment and feedback, linking to the minimum standards, and for course organisers to ensure consistent approaches across the teaching and marking teams.

The new IAD Fundamentals of Teaching course will provide further support in this area.

Resources: [Assessment and Feedback Standards in CAHSS](#)

[Tutors and Demonstrators - Expectations in CAHSS](#)

8. Collaboration and sharing of best practices among different departments to establish consistent and effective assessment and feedback strategies

This has been conducted through CAHSS QA Forum and all schools have been invited to share best practice which, in turn, will be collated on these CAHSS staff resource pages.

9. Understanding of perpetuating factors in attainment and awarding gaps, with the goal of ensuring fair and equal outcomes for all students

CAHSS colleagues contributed to Curriculum Transformation research on Awarding Gaps. The 2023/24 QA reports gathered more detailed analysis of Student Outcomes at the programme and school level, and the College has now reviewed and collated responses across CAHSS. CAHSS Heads of School have been asked to reiterate to all colleagues the need to record appropriate lectures, as emphasised in recent IAD guidance. All CAHSS schools are expected to use the Resource List service for all taught courses with reading lists. Full implementation of this expectation is not yet achieved.

Resources: [Expectations of Implementation of Resource Lists in CAHSS](#)

10. Working toward a standardised approach to tutor training and supervision, to improve consistency and quality in assessment feedback

The CAHSS Expectations for Supporting Tutors and Demonstrators have outlined priority areas for implementing the existing Tutors and Demonstrators policy, which is now in place for PGR students who teach by the start of 2024/25.

During the development of this detailed guidance, several challenges—mainly related to HR and employment—were identified. A short-life CAHSS working group will be established to address these, either to recommend practices for CAHSS schools or to escalate the issues to the university's Tutors Working Group.

Resources: [Tutors and Demonstrators - Expectations in CAHSS](#)

2. Please use this free text space as an opportunity for general reflection on the past year.

Several initiatives have been launched this year to progress improvements in assessment and feedback practices as well as the broader student learning experience. Schools have been active contributors to this work and have approached implementation with an open and positive attitude. We are especially grateful for the successive draft-reviewing and constructive feedback provided by schools over the past year. This collective effort has led to guidance documents that we hope meet the needs of all our schools.

Actions for the coming year.

Please identify actions or areas for improvement for the College and at University level during the next year (up to 5 bullet points each).

Recognising the number of priorities identified by the university and the required pace of change, the College will augment its QA forum with a newly established Directors of Quality network, providing Directors of QA with regular opportunities to share updates, discuss challenges, and explore solutions related to university, College, and school priorities.

I. Actions identified for the College

1. Assessment and Feedback

Our priority - Delivering timely return of high-quality assessment feedback to students across all taught courses

Our objectives:

- Set and meet school-level targets for % improvement in rate of return compared to end of Semester 2 23/24, reporting and monitoring progress and barriers to meeting these.
- Scope and make recommendations on the value of cross-college assessment tariffs
- Review monitoring and reporting processes across 24/25 including decisions on future consistent assessment submission processes (eg dropboxes)

Our priority - Applying the CAHSS Minimum Standards for Assessment Feedback to all taught courses with a particular focus on providing clear marking criteria.

Our objectives:

- Clarifying/ defining definitions of rubrics/ putting into practice
- Initiate audit of assessment criteria provision through course portfolio review to ensure rubric/ marking/ assessment criteria provided for each course and assessment loads reviewed
- Develop evaluation framework for implementation of the CAHSS Minimum Standards

2. Listening and Responding Well to Our Students (Student Voice)

Our priority - Improving connections with our student representatives and their collective impact

Our objective:

- Standardise our SSLC reporting at school and college level and establish clear escalation routes as well as responsive mechanisms to close feedback loops. By aligning with ongoing efforts by EUSA and Registry Services, this directly contributes to broader institutional goals of closing the feedback loop and standardising student voice initiatives.

Our priority – Supporting schools to respond effectively to student feedback

Our objective:

- Identify barriers and enablers to responding to student feedback and address these
- Provide guidance to emphasise and support clear communication with students about how their feedback is acted upon
- Share good practice between schools

3. Tutors and Demonstrators

Our priority - Training and supporting our Tutors and Demonstrators to support world class student experience and education and the professional development of PGR tutors.

Our objective:

- Establish a College short-life working group to resolve outstanding issues towards full implementation of Tutors and Demonstrators policy and associated CAHSS expectations.

4. Portfolio Review and Curriculum Transformation

Our priority - Assessing and refining our portfolio of programmes and courses to ensure clarity and efficacy

Our objectives:

- Deliver effective frameworks for programme and portfolio review, laying groundwork for future business as usual programme reviews and curriculum transformation implementation (note this will be connected to work being led with CAHSS Organisational Improvement Group to build programme costing tools).
- Continue collaboration and open discussion with School L&T leads (academic and professional services), and College L&T Deans and leads to build deep understanding of school portfolios and interdependencies across schools

II. Actions requested of the University arising from CAHSS School QA reports

Extensions and Special Circumstances: Following concerns regarding the interaction between academic misconduct penalties and exceptional circumstances, one school is trialling a new approach developed by college in collaboration with Academic Services. This highlights the need for a review of University guidance on coursework submissions and penalties, and the outcome of this trial can inform this.

Curriculum Transformation Uncertainty: Ongoing uncertainty from the Curriculum Transformation Project and other University-level changes remains a concern. The College requests that all university-wide initiatives and change projects consider carefully the sequencing, prioritisation and resource investment.

AI and Assessment Challenges: The increasing use of AI introduces new challenges for assessment practices across the institution, highlighting the need for centrally supported, coordinated guidance and training for staff.

Guidance on Turnaround, the university calendar and moderation: Realistic guidance is needed for managing the three-week turnaround for courses with high numbers of special circumstances and larger classes. Compressed timelines for assessments, marking, and Boards of Examiners add to the challenges and needs institutional review. Moderation policy and guidance needs review to address delays to feedback turnaround due to inefficient application of the current guidance.

College Annual Report 2023/24

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Deadline: **Monday 25 November 2024**

| | |
|--|---|
| College: | College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine |
| Report written by (include contributors): | Matt Bailey (Dean of Quality) & Victoria Bennett (Quality Officer). Contributions from: (Gill Aiken, Alex Laidlaw, Philippa Burrell, Patrick Hadoke, Sarah Henderson, Debbie Shaw, Mohini Gray; School/Deanery Directors of Quality) |
| Date of report: | 25th November 2024 |

¹ <https://www.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/atoms/files/annualmonrevreppolicy.pdf>

1. Actions from the previous year.

Please report on progress with the actions you identified in last year's report and planned to take in 2023-24.

Actions identified for the College:

- 1) **Supporting IPR:** we had four reviews during AY23/24 and had tabled an action for additional support to the Schools/Deaneries. The Dean of Quality/College Registrar provided the organisational context of the ongoing College restructuring and governance review for reflective reports and met the review team during the site visit. Following the reviews, the College Quality Officer compiled a report that identified common emerging themes (see Section 2). This was discussed by the CQAEC, feeding into the ongoing development of the College education strategy. We are mindful that the IPR process is largely a conversation between Schools and Academic Services, yet College could add further value by proactive oversight, tracking actions and responses to recommendations.
- 2) **Supporting PGT targeted change management:** Edinburgh Surgery Online (ESO) was an early leader of digital education at the University and its suite of 9 programmes is a key asset of our PGT portfolio. During annual programme review, the ESO team and the Clinical Sciences' Teaching Organisation highlighted a priority to refresh course content, an action that was significantly hindered by the long-tail of pandemic disruption for NHS colleagues and by ongoing staffing issues within the programme team. College identified that there was a timely opportunity to realign programmes to CTP archetype and a deep-dive on course content/structure could identify course-sharing efficiencies across the ChM programmes and potentially create CPD-ready content. To ensure implementation, College recruited in August 2024 a senior post to lead this change project (UE9, FTE 0.4). This posts reports directly to the Dean of Clinical Science and is working with with ESO leadership (Regius Chair of Surgery) and the Royal College of Surgeons, with who there is an external partnership agreement. An outline of the restructure is prepared and was presented (November) to the Programme Team. The College Digital Education Unit have provided significant support. A one-day ELDeR workshop is planned for each clinical speciality to review clinical content. The Change Manager and Director of Teaching (Deanery of Clinical Science) are preparing the major change paperwork for College Education Committee consideration, following input from University Regulations and Governance.
- 3) **Preparation of targeted Quality objectives for PGR:** The PGR provision will undergo IPR at College level in March 2025. This action was to develop harmonising criteria for benchmarking the quality of doctoral programmes and the student experience, acknowledging that the PhD (& equivalent) is a highly individualised programme of study. A working group of College QAE Committee, including Director of PGR Experience and Dean of Quality was established to improve understanding of the available metrics (ie our known knowns) and to establish data that we would like to collect (ie our known unknowns). This initiated a discussion with Student Analytics that has not progressed rapidly largely due to workload. This feeds in to a broader activity within the Doctoral College, as it is anticipated that our requirements will be similar to those in the other two Colleges.
- 4) **Supporting students on digital programmes:** the action was to implement the student support fayre model for online students and to develop approaches that would foster engagement with enhancement events (eg the Good Practice Showcase) for all members of our learning community. We report no real progress against this action, largely because of the "pause" for recruitment to new Dean roles across the College. An online version of the Wellbeing Fayre was not

pursued and is in abeyance currently. The Good Practice Showcase (GPS) ran again as a highly successful in-person event. Discussion at the CQAEC identified the value of retaining GPS as an in-person event and encouraged the development of a structured community of practice with a regular event programme held in hybrid format. Looking at the student support model more broadly, we note a positive enhancement in networking opportunities for staff in key support roles across CMVM (ie Student Advisers/ Managers/ Cohort Leads/ Directors of Students) to discuss the development, challenges and good practice associated with their roles. This is particularly valuable form of experiential support, allowing newer staff a space to interact with others who have an understanding of the issues and challenges faced by our students and experience in supporting our students as they navigate these challenges.

To note: some of these communities are well-established eg The Student Adviser Forums. Others, such as the Cohort Lead meeting, are very new.

2. Please use this free text space as an opportunity for general reflection on the past year.

College modernisation

The College is undergoing a structural reorganisation, the purpose of which is to streamline and clarify governance, allowing agile implementation and improved integration of learning/teaching and research strategy. The process was initiated as a strategic project in AY22/23 and used iterative consultation with student and staff stakeholders across a variety of formats to evolve a structure in which six Schools replace the existing two School and three Deanery model. The structure has been presented to Senate and was submitted to University Court at the start of the current Academic Year. This restructure will bring significant change in the ownership and management of the College's portfolio of programmes, particularly at UG and PGT. It is anticipated that two schools: R(D)SVS and the Tier 4 entity currently referred to as "School Six", will have ownership of the majority of such programmes. Granular detail and an implementation process are not yet defined, pending recruitment of Head of School Six. The Quality Team will be central to this process and is tasked with revising the Quality Model for the College. The College is currently increasing the FTE allocation of the Dean of Quality role to reflect this, and other major institutional priorities.

These structural changes are accompanied by the appointment of an extended senior leadership team of academic and professional services roles, tasked with defining and implementing the College's learning and teaching strategy, ensuring alignment with University-level projects and priorities including portfolio review and the Curriculum Transformation Project. Initial work has included the establishment of a new College Education Committee, which supersedes the previously distinct College UG and PGT Learning and Teaching Committees. This new committee, led by the new Dean of Education, will be a key vehicle in shaping College strategy to support education. Development of operational detail to support the new structure is a priority for the next academic year. The input from EUSA VP Education, a member of the Education Committee, is important as an efficient conduit of student voice into these activities.

Stakeholder engagement in a prolonged change project can be difficult to sustain. College Leadership has engaged in a series of town-hall meetings across our different campuses, with recordings and other information available on the "College Modernisation" SharePoint. Student representatives on the College QAE committee highlighted the need to strengthen interaction with student stakeholders for the next, implementation, phase of the process. This led to increased engagement of the student voice, with The EUSA VP Education joining

the College Education Committee. Student representatives are already embedded within all other College learning and teaching related committees. A new College Student-Staff Liaison Committee has been established for academic year 2024/25 and this will provide further opportunities for students to feed into the modernisation process as well as facilitating conversations between student representatives and the College education leadership team to surface issues that impact students across the College. (See Action 2).

College response to QESR Recommendations

An assessment and feedback oversight group formed to coordinate and focus College activity in response QESR recommendations and ensure alignment to University-led work arising from the Student Experience Delivery and Monitoring Board and the External Quality Review Oversight Group. The targeted actions of the College's group ensured compliance with the use of the assessment and feedback turnaround times tracker. We worked with local areas to develop consistent escalation processes, deployed when turnaround times exceeded the three-week requirement. Indeed, this prioritisation by the University of a data-driven approach given insight and improved understanding into the challenges posed to teaching teams by the three-week deadline, including those associated with complexities of clinical portfolio assessment and others in which programmes are heavily reliant on external (typically NHS) colleagues to provide assessment and feedback. These instances are being collated for feedback into SEDaMOB

Annual review processes provided assurance of "cut through": it was clear that programme teams recognised the significance of the QESR recommendation, surfacing good practice and also identifying the challenges that faced at point of delivery, particularly around the impact of ESC requests, moderation timeframes, marker calibration and training as well as the significant factor of externality (eg NHS). School-level reports highlighted School and Deanery-based activities that were rapidly deployed to address these challenges. Several areas held School/Deanery-level training days focussed on the Assessment and Feedback Principles and Practices and connectivity to local assessment practices. College noted increased activity to review and develop marking guidance and criteria/rubrics. This was done in parallel with proactive marker training to drive consistency of feedback and alignment with grade and to direct feedback quality so that it clearly identified how improvements could be made. We will use the AY24/25 Good Practice Showcase (26th March, Playfair Library) to celebrate good practice in assessment and feedback across the College.

School/Deanery Annual QA reports recorded current practice around the induction, training and support of students who teach. Directors of Quality have requested a forum to share practice in this area across the College and this will be facilitated by the College Education and QAE Committees.

Internal Periodic Reviews

Internal Periodic Reviews (IPRs) took place in four of the five CMVM Schools/Deaneries during academic year 2023/24. In preparation for the reviews the quality team organised and hosted a session to support teams planning for reviews. A representative from academic services spoke to colleagues about the process, with an emphasis on engaging students in the process and preparing the reflective report. Teams who had been through the IPR process the previous year were also invited to share their experiences and answer questions. The event was well attended and received.

Common themes emerging from internal periodic reviews across the areas reviewed included a number of recommendations around staff resourcing and workload including recommendations about specific appointments as well as the development of workload allocation models and development of resourcing strategies. Related to this work, although stemming directly from the College modernisation work rather than IPRs, a review of staff

involved in teaching (both academic and professional services) is planned for academic year 2024/25. This review will focus on defining College's existing resources for roles that support learning and teaching. This exercise will support the redeployment of programmes into the new school structure. Having robust data for roles and responsibilities will surface under-resourced areas, and enable agility to optimally resource learning and teaching activities throughout the academic year. Additionally, the resource review will foster transparency into the processes underpinning staff recruitment and may help address the "grass-is-greener" perception that exists regarding resource allocation.

3. Actions for the coming year.

Please identify actions or areas for improvement for the College and at University level during the next year (up to 5 bullet points each).

Actions identified for the College:

1. QAE Processes: to develop and implement a QAE model for the new College educational structures
2. Student Voice: to provide the opportunities that ensure our students- as key stakeholders- contribute to shaping the College educational structures and operations.
3. Students who teach: to facilitate opportunities to share practice in induction, support and training of students who teach.
4. College resource review: to provide granular data of the academic and professional services staff currently involved in teaching.
5. Portfolio Management: to review of current curriculum approval processes with a view to enhance approval processes and support more robust portfolio management. The development of the new College Education Committee is an opportune time to review and enhance curriculum approval processes. Up to now Curriculum approval at CMVM has been separated across provision type. Existing processes will be reviewed with the aim of developing an approval process aligned across all provision types, retaining good practice and aiming to enhance existing practice.
6. Alignment: to establish the processes within the College Educational leadership team that will ensure alignment with University-level actions for Portfolio Review and the Curriculum Transformation Project. The College Modernisation Steering Group considers PR and CTP as key levers to advance our modernisation aspirations and the College CTP Implementation group has oversight.

Actions requested of the University:

- Review processes surfaced multiple challenges with responding to the large number of institutional change and development programmes. A clear timetable and roadmap of University-level projects would be very useful, as would some insight into prioritisation strategy. This would allow College to efficiently allocate resources (including staff) to these important processes.

College Annual Report 2023/24

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Deadline: **Monday 25 November 2024**

| | |
|--|---|
| School/Deanery: | College of Science & Engineering |
| Report written by (include contributors): | Calum MacDonald, Projects and Quality Officer James Hopgood, Dean of Quality and Enhancement (CSE) Jamie Pearce, Dean Postgraduate Research (CSE) Linda Kirstein, Dean of Education (CSE) Iain Gordon, Vice-Principal and Head of College (CSE) |
| Date of report: | 25 November 2024 |

1. Actions from the previous year.

Please report on progress with the actions you identified in last year's report and planned to take in 2023-24.

1. Continue the work of the Progression and Attainment Working Group, reviewing initial data and determining whether any actions can be recommended for Schools to implement ahead of the 24/25 Academic Year.

¹ <https://www.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/atoms/files/annualmonrevreppolicy.pdf>

- The Progression and Attainment Working Group (ProAttain) met twice in 2023/24; in February and April 2024. The Working Group met to discuss the best way to answer some of the original observations, and identify which priorities to focus on in the short-term. Progress was been slower than expected due to the task of bringing different datasets together proving to be considerably more difficult than previously thought.
- In addition, Student Systems confirmed that data prior to 2018 is unavailable as until then the majority of data was maintained locally rather than centrally available in the University system.
- As a result of these challenges, ProAttain has been temporarily halted while the Student Data Monitoring Task Group which has been set up in response to the Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) is established and focuses on data held in different formats on different data universes. SQAC established this sub-group to focus on the student journey and academic performance, which the CSE Dean of Education will co-chair.
- The new subgroup is focusing its efforts on developing data universes, storage solutions, and access protocols to produce a usable data set. The group will explore methodological options and make recommendations to SQAC for a new systematic approach to monitoring student data at University level, in addressing the Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR) and QESR recommendations regarding equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in the student population.

2. Continue to review and prioritise the health and wellbeing of all staff including PhD students, and improving work environments. This will involve developing and implementing the Committee action plan to ensure these priorities progress.

- The College Postgraduate Research Committee has continued to review and prioritise health and wellbeing of all staff including PhD students, which was one of its priorities for 2023/24.
- Two particular issues monitored by the Committee were the awareness of the University's wellbeing service amongst the PGR community, and the need for a Case Management System to systematically recording supervisor/School interactions with students better able to track and address any wellbeing, engagement or progression concerns.
- These issues remain a key part of the College Postgraduate Research Committee three-year strategic plan, with a commitment to 'Strengthen and harmonise PGR Student Support models within Schools'.
- The College has also worked to improve the sense of belonging to The King's Buildings Campus for both students and staff. Various activities took place over the last year including King's Fest, an end of exam celebration attended by nearly 600 students and staff, and two CSE Town Hall Meeting all-staff meetings hosted by the Head of College, Prof Iain Gordon. This is in addition to College Research student staff liaison committees, which are held twice per year to elevate PGR student voice.

3. Reflect on the implementation of the Student Support model across the College and continue to set up the move to business-as-usual activity

- The new model of Student Support has been in place since the academic year 2022/23. The College of Science and Engineering chose a phased implementation strategy, introducing the model to first-year undergraduate and all incoming postgraduate taught students at the start of 2022/23, and extending it to all other taught students from the beginning of the 2023/24 academic year. The project is now transitioning into a 'business

as usual' phase, where maintenance and review of student support will be integrated into regular operations.

- In order to support and maintain the operation of student support going forward the Project Board has approved a model of governance, which includes the creation of a new College (Student Support) Oversight Group (CSSOG).
- CSSOG convened for the first time on October 3rd 2024 and plans to work in partnership with Schools and the University Continuous Improvement Group moving forward.
- A list of priorities has been developed following initial evaluation feedback from 2023/24. The priorities focus on analysing variations in the model across different Schools, enhancing the development of the academic support strand including cohort leads, and solving challenges related to the availability of Student Advisers (SAs) for proactive work.

4. Work with staff and students to develop shared assessment and feedback good practice

- In November 2023, the College Education Committee (CEC) and the College Strategy and Management Committee (CSMC) approved an Assessment and Feedback Action Plan and hosted four workshops on feedback practices for staff and students, with results presented at the CEC's June meeting. This action plan was updated following the QESR report.
- The College created communication templates for Schools to use in reintroducing feedback monitoring as a standard operational procedure ahead of the new academic year.
- All Schools in CSE are contributing to and monitoring the 3-week turnaround times for assessment using the central university spreadsheet. Some Schools are using two drop boxes to accommodate late submissions.

2. Please use this free text space as an opportunity for general reflection on the past year.

Teaching Organisation Support Team

- The second year of The Teaching Organisation Support Team has continued to see strong demand for the service from nearly all Schools within CSE.
- Colleagues continue to give positive feedback, with Schools valuing the support from trained staff and reduced reliance on costly temporary workers.
- We expect high demand as recruitment slows, with the service providing a buffer for Schools needing to delay backfilling posts or cover gaps due to ill health.
- There continues to be significant staff turnover within this team. Staff members are often providing a valuable support where gaps in staffing within Schools arise and as such, this positions them very well for a move into those Grade 5 roles. We do also see other reasons for leaving, including changing of career paths, or returning to education. The high turnover does present considerable risk to the TO Support team service, and gaps in service have been observed simply due to the time it takes to go through the recruitment process. This can lead to a lack of support for Schools when they need it, potentially resulting in more pressure and drop in service quality within student service areas.
- There is a plan to increase staff numbers to 3 FTE, and also to diversify the types of roles they can support, including Postgraduate Research Office and Student Support Office administration.

Portfolio Review

- The Dean of Education and Head of Student Lifecycle have picked up the work started by the previous Dean of Learning and Teaching and Head of Academic Affairs, and are in the process of visiting each School and Department to establish current and future plans for programme delivery and cohesion with the PGT curriculum transformation archetypes.

3. Actions for the coming year.

Please identify actions or areas for improvement for the College and at University level during the next year (up to 5 bullet points each).

Actions identified for the College:

- 1) Enhance the quality of feedback by conducting audits on feedback modes and volume, ensuring alignment with actual student experiences, and by establishing clear, standardised marking rubrics for all courses communicated to students at the beginning of each course and prior to assessment deadlines.
- 2) Strengthen and increase opportunities for student engagement, particularly focusing on amplifying the voices of CSE students through facilitated dialogue.
- 3) Support the Student Data Monitoring Task Group in examining and refining data sets and methodologies for tracking student retention, progression, and attainment.
- 4) Develop comprehensive training and strengthen accountability among PGR supervisors to enhance consistency and quality in supervision.
- 5) Enhance student wellbeing by expanding PGR students' understanding and engagement with research cultures as part of improving pastoral care.

Actions requested of the University:

1) Estate, Systems and timetabling (including resit examination diet)

- Schools continue to face difficulties in securing both teaching and meeting spaces that meet their specific requirements and needs, with RAAC also impacting the overall student experience in 2023/24.
- Timetabling has also been highlighted as an issue again, which has been made more difficult where lecture theatres and teaching spaces have been closed due to RAAC.
- Although there was minimal impact in 2023/24 from industrial action, last year's Marking and Assessment Boycott (MAB) has continued to have an impact in terms of progression and exam resits, with some Schools feeling a much more significant impact than others. For some Schools resit opportunities were made available in August 2024 to students who had been given a conditional progression in 2022/23. There is a need to tighten University policies and Taught Assessment Regulations to ensure actions are consistently applied and specifically around the provision of resits across Schools and programmes, in relation to timing of resit examinations. This is an area that has been flagged as causing significant concern across the College, where individual School approaches can cause tension and issues for students studying across different Schools.

2) New Student Support Model

- Clarity on the Cohort Lead role is needed, as identified by multiple School QA reports, and to ensure students are aware of the available support. The Student Support College

Oversight Group is prioritising work in this area and is planning to clarify both the role of the Cohort Lead and work with Schools to agree individualised Cohort Lead activity plans.

- There remains a feeling that the full potential and impact of the Cohort Lead role in terms of enhancing available academic support for students have not been completely realised yet. The College is working with Schools to establish clear Cohort Lead Engagement Event Plans; however, it would be useful to have a central drive address this, with the aim of a consistent student experience across the University.
- Although Cohort Lead engagement has been inconsistent, efforts are underway to address this. Notably, events organised by The School of Mathematics Cohort Leads have been integrated into student timetables, which has been very successful. The College and Schools would like to see clearer policy and guidance in relation to the critical role Cohort Leads play and to focus on creating a consistent experience for students across all Schools. Staff at the School of Informatics wrote an article in response to the Student Support Model, addressing this issue amongst others: [Building Student Support for Computing Students: How Do Students Respond to Different Models? | Proceedings of the 2024 on Innovation and Technology in Computer Science Education V. 1](#)
- Every School QA report highlighted the success of Student Advisers, and efforts are now ongoing to now strengthen other points of contact. A visible communications campaign would be beneficial in order to help students to navigate the support system.
- Greater attention is also required as to the how the student adviser model will be extended across the university to align with the needs of PGR students. It is clear the PGR community is in need of a means to record-keep in a central space (such as the Meeting and Notes field in Euclid), and the new University Case Management System which is due to be rolled out to PGR School staff in 24/25 will be very welcome.

3) Use of Generative AI at the University

- Concerns around the use of Generative AI continue to be a common theme through the School QA Reports.
- It has been noted that new guidance on the use of AI in assessment has recently been shared with staff and students, but more work is required in this area as the technology develops for example regarding regulations and the training of staff.
- The University should consider how to train academic, professional services and students in the ethical and professional use of AI and review regulations in line with guidance.

4) Assessment & Feedback – closing loop

- Schools reported that there was high satisfaction in terms of opportunities to provide feedback, but significantly lower student satisfaction regarding the perception that their feedback is valued and acted upon.
- Further work, including clear policy and shared best practice, in this area would be helpful for Schools as they all work with students to improve on the methods to close the feedback loop.

Senate Quality Assurance Committee

5 December 2024

Learn Ultra Evaluation

Fit with remit

| Quality Assurance Committee | Y/N |
|---|-----|
| Maintain oversight of the outcomes of the quality assurance framework, ensuring that actions are addressed, and support the sharing of good practice. | X |
| Identify areas for innovation and enhancement of the student experience and ensure that these inform Senate Education Committee's policy development. | X |

Description of paper

1. In 2021, Learning, Teaching and Web (LTW) undertook a multi-year programme to upgrade the University's core Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), Learn and to engage colleagues across the University to use the new tools in new ways to enhance learning and teaching. As a strategic change project, an external evaluation was done to understand the impact of the change delivered.
2. This paper follows on from a paper taken to the Senate Education Committee in March 2024 (SEC 23/24 4F) and provides Senate Quality Assurance Committee access to the executive summary from the completed evaluation report (please see appendix one).
3. The evaluation report contributes to Strategy 2030 as the recommendations within the report support change projects in delivering more user-friendly processes and efficient systems to support our work.

Action requested / recommendation

4. The committee is requested to **review** the executive summary from the evaluation report contained within this paper, **share** the Learn Ultra [evaluation report](#) as appropriate within their respective areas and **consider** how the recommendations for future change projects can be most usefully embedded.

Background and context

5. This paper presents the external evaluation report undertaken via the Learn Ultra Upgrade project and focuses on central decisions made by the governing board, steering groups and project teams.
6. In 2023, the Learn Ultra Upgrade project was also the subject of an internal audit, the output of which noted that the project was well planned and executed.

Discussion

7. During the Learn Ultra Upgrade project, it was identified early on that in order to ensure success, the project would need to be considered as more than a technical upgrade.
8. The evaluation of the Learn Ultra Upgrade project was undertaken by an external consultant to provide an independent overview of how the change was delivered and providing recommendations for future change projects at the University.
9. The evaluation report was shared with the Learn Ultra project board at the beginning of August who have approved and endorsed the report for sharing with the Senate Education Committee and subsequent committees.
10. The evaluation report makes a number of recommendations, these are highlighted for stakeholders including ISG, local learning technologists, teaching office colleagues, academic colleagues and governance boards.

Resource implications

11. There are no further resource implications as a result of this paper, but the recommendations in the evaluation report will be used to guide planning and resourcing decisions for future projects.

Risk management

12. It is sometimes said that evaluation reports sit unread on shelves (or SharePoint). By bringing the report to this meeting and disseminating it more widely inside and out with the university (to peer institutions enabling similar programmes of change) we aim to mitigate that risk in this case.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

13. N/A

Equality & diversity

14. Where possible, intersectional approaches have been used to understand our data, acknowledging that different people experience our services in different ways.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

15. The evaluation report has been shared with the project board who have been requested to circulate (as required) within their respective areas. The report will also be shared amongst key stakeholders as per the project communications strategy with key information available via the Learn Ultra SharePoint¹.

Author

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November 2024*

Presenter

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November 2024*

Freedom of Information *Open*

¹ <https://uoe.sharepoint.com/sites/LearnUltra/SitePages/Learn-Ultra-Evaluation.aspx>

Appendix One

Executive Summary

Overview

- The University of Edinburgh's Learn Ultra upgrade aimed to enhance the virtual learning environment (VLE) to better support the diverse student body and align with other strategic initiatives and objectives.
- The Learn platform hosts over 6,000 courses with an average of 39,000 daily logins from students engaged in on-campus, online, and hybrid studies.
- The Learn Ultra upgrade project oversaw the successful upgrade of the University's VLE from Learn Original to Learn Ultra. It focused on improving usability and accessibility based on feedback from students and faculty, aiming to create a more user-friendly and inclusive learning environment.
- This report presents an evaluation of the key decisions made by the central Project Team that have led to the successful delivery of the upgrade project.
- The evaluation combines qualitative and quantitative data sources to provide a comprehensive analysis of the delivery of the Learn Ultra upgrade project:
 1. A campus-wide student survey that gathered responses from 391 undergraduate students on their experiences with Learn Ultra.
 2. Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including senior stakeholders, learning technologists, teaching office staff, academic colleagues, and relationship managers.
 3. Focus groups with the project's implementation and user groups.
 4. Profession-specific focus groups with learning technologists, teaching office staff, and academic colleagues.
 5. Secondary analysis of existing data sources, including user experience (UX) data, Early Adopter feedback, training feedback, and internal project reports.
- The evaluation identifies eight key overarching decisions made by the Project Team that have led to the success delivery:
 1. Upgrading the existing VLE, rather than procuring a new provider.
 2. Treating the upgrade as a Change project.
 3. Implementing a pluralistic governance framework.
 4. Extensive multimodal communications and engagement.
 5. Establishing the Early Adopter Programme.
 6. Creating an extensive training programme.
 7. Focusing on a user-centred upgrade approach.
 8. Enhanced focus on accessibility.

Additionally, the evaluation identifies three themes that were found to be important to successful local upgrades:

1. Pro-active local Change approaches and project ownership.

2. Effective relationship-building and collaboration.
3. Tailored local training and ongoing support.

Attention to recommendations for large change projects

In the time that this evaluation has been written, the university has received other external reviews of large change projects.

The Information Services Group (ISG) was keen to build on recommendations produced by the People and Money (P&M) evaluation²; while P&M and the Learn Ultra upgrade differed greatly in their topics and scope, the P&M evaluation produced important recommendations for all University Change projects, including:

- *Building trust and collaboration*: Build trust with Colleges, Schools, Directorates, and other staff groups to foster a more collaborative environment.
- *Enhancing Change Management*: Continue and enhance focus on Change management, rather than approach projects as mere system implementations.
- *Effective Engagement*: Develop an approach for effective engagement with users, utilising representatives from various staff groups.
- *Sufficient Training*: Develop intuitive and informative training materials, and deliver training through dedicated sessions.
- *Reciprocal Communication*: Implement a communications plan for regular and effective stakeholder communication. Additionally, adopt a "you said, we did" approach to address feedback and demonstrate responsiveness, and regularly communicate progress and plans transparently.
- *Developing a Unified Roadmap*: Consolidate all plans (e.g., short-term, medium-term, long-term), into a single integrated roadmap, ensuring the roadmap provides clear milestones and deliverable dates to instil confidence in leadership, governance groups, and the wider organisation.
- *Quick Wins for Building Confidence*: Identify areas where substantial improvements can be made quickly to demonstrate progress and build confidence in the change process.

² [External Post Implementation Review of the People and Money Programme](#)



Defined Governance Structure: Clearly outline the overall governance structure, specifying where decisions are made and how they are communicated.

Upgrading the existing VLE, rather than procuring a new provider.

- The upgrade was aligned with Strategy 2030, supporting the University's strategic goal of enhancing the student experience, placing student needs and expectations at the forefront of educational technology development.
- Upgrading from Learn Original to Learn Ultra was necessary to maintain secure and robust integrations with existing online systems.
- A focussed market analysis concluded that there was no alternative VLE that could better meet the University's needs within the required timeframe. The merger between Blackboard and Anthology also promised an improved EdTech ecosystem.
- Upgrading to Learn Ultra minimised business continuity risks and avoided the significant costs and disruptions associated with switching to a new provider.
- The established working relationship with Blackboard also facilitated a smoother transition.

Approaching the upgrade as a Change project.

The Project Team approached the Learn Ultra upgrade as a Change project, emphasising stakeholder buy-in and enhanced change management:

- The project was guided by established change theory, specifically John Kotter's eight-step model for organisational transformation, which includes: creating urgency, forming a guiding coalition, developing a vision, communicating the vision, empowering action, generating short-term wins, consolidating gains, and anchoring new approaches in the culture.
- A Change approach focuses on managing resistance, engaging stakeholders, ensuring effective communication, aligning with broader goals, and promoting continuous improvement rather than seeing the project as a one-time upgrade.
- This approach encouraged involvement from colleagues from across the University, fostering buy-in and addressing concerns more effectively, ensuring a smoother transition.

Robust communication strategies were employed to address concerns and facilitate a smoother transition, ensuring stakeholders were well-informed and engaged throughout the process.

Implementing a pluralistic governance framework.

- The project benefitted from a *Defined Governance Structure*: A Project Board was established to make key strategic decisions and supervise the overall progress of the upgrade.

If you require this document in an alternative format, such as large print or a coloured background, please contact Learn Foundations (LearnFoundations@ed.ac.uk).



- The Learning and Teaching Implementation Group (LTIG) provided guidance on issues relating to learning and teaching, representing learning technologists. Some academic colleagues were also members.
- The Technical Implementation Group (TIG) ensured all integrations worked well and liaised with Blackboard on software developments.
- The Academic User Group (AUG) represented the views of academic colleagues.
- The Professional Services User Group (PSUG) represented professional services stakeholders' interests during the project.
- Focus groups conducted with the implementation and user groups identified the key reasons that members thought their groups contributed to the project's overall success:
 1. Group meetings were good networking opportunities and allowed for information flow to colleagues across the University.
 2. Members could share good practices from their Schools and Colleges.
 3. Members gained valuable insights into software changes.
 4. Groups had diverse representation and voices, providing a comprehensive view of the upgrade's progress across different areas.

Extensive multimodal communications and engagement.

- The Project Team dedicated significant time and resource to developing effective communication and engagement strategies during the course of the upgrade.
- There was an extensive project of engagement with key stakeholders throughout the upgrade:
 1. *Round One:* Raising awareness of the project.
 2. *Round Two:* Gathering requirements from key stakeholders.
 3. *Round Three:* Embedding change in the University.

In between the rounds of engagements, the Project Team also met informally with School and College stakeholders, and attended various School and College committees to continue to raise awareness and provide project updates.

- The Project Team continually updated the University committees: the Information Technology Committee³, the Knowledge Strategy Committee⁴ and the Senate Education Committee.⁵
- Communication methods ranged from blog posts and website articles to conference presentations and posters.
- Regular updates were provided to stakeholders to ensure transparency and strategic buy-in from senior leaders and key stakeholders.

³ [Information Technology Committee](#)

⁴ [Knowledge Strategy Committee](#)

⁵ [Education Committee](#)



- Early adopters played a crucial role as ambassadors, disseminating information and driving enthusiasm within their respective Schools.

Establishing the Early Adopter Programme.

- The project benefitted from building trust and collaboration from the start. The Early Adopter Programme (EAP) was implemented to transition courses to Learn Ultra ahead of the full upgrade, engaging over 160 courses, representing all three Colleges, to gather insights for a smoother rollout.
- Good Practice Guidance provided comprehensive resources, streamlining course builds and encouraging meaningful discussions.
- Comprehensive training sessions and a flexible approach ensured relevance and responsiveness to feedback and updates.
- A Microsoft Teams channel facilitated collaborative learning and community building among colleagues.
- Involvement of diverse support teams within Information Services Group enhanced problem-solving and support provision.
- Positive feedback on course builds and ease of use of Learn Ultra reflected the Project Team's commitment to user input and improvement.
- Robust partnerships and relationship-building efforts with learning technologists and academic teams improved trust and facilitated collaboration.
- Cohesive teamwork among various support roles was instrumental in the programme's success, showcasing effective support throughout the upgrade.
- Learnings from the EAP informed the University-wide rollout in 2023/24.



Creating an extensive training programme.

- The Training and Support workstream focused on delivering a comprehensive training programme to Early Adopters prior to the full upgrade.
- The '10 Things to get Started in Learn Ultra' training programme for the full University rollout was designed to familiarise staff with the upgrade, with sessions running from March 2023 to January 2024.
- Maintaining a two-hour training course length was crucial: it was long enough to cover the most important features of Learn Ultra, and short enough for time-strapped colleagues to attend.
- The training schedule was crucial in three key ways:
 1. There was a high frequency of sessions, with sessions available weekly and during the summer.
 2. Courses were available both online and in-person across all locations on campus.
 3. Courses always ran regardless of attendance numbers and cancellations.
- Bespoke sessions were also offered as part of the training programme for any Schools who wished to have more tailored experiences.
- Training was shaped by user feedback and tailored to meet the needs of staff and students, with proactive recruitment techniques employed to promote uptake.
- A survey of 306 training participants showed overwhelmingly positive satisfaction levels, with high ratings for course duration, structure, coverage of essential areas, and increased confidence in creating accessible courses and improving the student and staff experience with Learn Ultra.

A user-centred upgrade approach

- The Project Team included user experience (UX) experts who conducted user research with staff and students prior to the University-wide upgrade to ensure a user-centred approach in implementing Learn Ultra.
- Usability testing with staff that focused on commonly performed tasks – which were identified through a 'top tasks' survey conducted during the Learn Foundations project⁶ - returned encouraging usability scores and positive feedback on the platform's shallower folder structure.

A similar research blueprint was applied to a group of students, with most reporting positive experiences and ease of completing top tasks on Learn Ultra.

- Student feedback highlighted preferences for consistent terminology and comprehensive scheduling information within the platform.

⁶ [Learn Foundations](#)



- The Project Team responded accordingly by:
 1. Confirming course templates based on staff feedback and research insight
 2. Adjusting content styling for accessibility and providing guidance on content structure.
 3. Developing training and guidance for discussion boards, groups, activity stream, and calendar features.

Enhanced focus on accessibility.

- The Learn Ultra Project Team focused on enhancing accessibility through the upgrade, making key decisions to support this goal.
- Implementing the 'Ally' accessibility tool in Learn Ultra allowed for greater accessibility support, including alternative format downloads and suggestions for course improvements.
- Existing accessibility resources and initiatives - such as accessibility training sessions, guidance on creating accessible materials, and a student-led annual accessibility checklist and review process – were given more prominence during the project.
- Annual accessibility reviews, conducted through the Learn Foundations Internship programme, assessed courses against WCAG 2.1 guidelines and provided holistic and individual reports to participating Schools and Deaneries.
- Accessibility became a central theme in communications to senior staff and committee meetings, with discussions on Learn Ultra's accessibility features and the decision to embed mandatory accessibility reviews for all Schools following the March 2024 SEC meeting.⁷
- Learn Ultra's features, such as pronoun and name pronunciation options, improved navigation, universal design principles, responsive interface, and file transformation capabilities, were highlighted for their contribution to accessibility and inclusion.

Insights from interviews

- The analysis of stakeholder interviews revealed three key themes contributing to the positive local implementation of the project: proactive Change approaches, effective relationship building with key colleagues, and tailored local support and training.
- Local Stakeholders approached the upgrade as a Change project, emphasising the importance of local ownership alongside central guidance.
- Successful initiatives included proactive identification of heavily impacted courses and addressing change resistance through relationship building.
- Challenges included academic scepticism and change fatigue, necessitating trust building efforts and personalised approaches to gain buy-in.

⁷ [Senate Education Committee, minutes of meeting on 7 March 2024](#)



- Good communication and collaboration across professions were vital for success, with relationships deepened through effective dissemination of project information.
- Relationship building with the central Project Team facilitated efficient information flow and allowed for timely responses to academic queries.
- User and implementation groups played a key role in disseminating project news and fostering collaboration within local areas.
- Schools provided tailored support and training to address diverse academic needs, ensuring smooth transition to Learn Ultra.
- Proactive approaches to training and support, including frequent notifications and personalised sessions, were linked to positive project experiences.
- Adaptation of local approaches based on specific academic needs further enhanced support and facilitated successful implementation.

Insights from student survey

- The student survey findings provide valuable insights into the usability and satisfaction levels with Learn Ultra among undergraduate students.
- Students expressed high levels of satisfaction with Learn Ultra's usability.
- Among students who have no experience with the previous Learn Original VLE, the majority found accessing their courses on Learn Ultra easy.
- Students with experience in both Original and Ultra generally found Ultra easier to use.

Recommendations

The project's learnings have identified a number of general recommendations for project teams and groups, and colleagues across professions who will be engaging in similar upcoming projects:

ISG and other professional services

- *Learn lessons from other Change projects:* Reflect on the recommendations of previous strategic Change projects and how they feed into your own ongoing or upcoming projects.
- *Embed a 'Change' mentality in all projects:* Design and manage systems implementations and technical change projects as Change projects with a focus on people and culture as well as technology.

Project Teams

- *Effective Communication Strategies:* Establish an explicit communication strategy to facilitate transparent and timely communication with stakeholders. Use a combination of communication channels such as regular meetings, email updates, and Teams groups to ensure everyone is informed and aligned.
- *Stakeholder Engagement and Management:* Develop a stakeholder engagement and management plan to build relationships with key stakeholders throughout the project. Identify stakeholders, assess their interests and concerns, communicate regularly with them, and involve them in decision-making processes to ensure their buy-in and support.
- *A Clear Governance Structure:* Establish appropriate governance groups with defined terms of reference, with representation coming from across the University.
- *Local Representation in Governance Structure:* Foster a partnership approach by including local representatives in governance and implementation groups, and have them be responsible for dissemination of information in their local areas.
- *Continuous Improvement and Reflection:* Foster a culture of continuous improvement and reflection within the project team and with stakeholders by regularly evaluating progress, identifying lessons learned, and implementing process improvements where appropriate.
- *Ensure Senior Committees Understand the Project's Strategy:* Ensure that committee members have a clear understanding of how the project aligns with the university's strategic goals, mission, and values. Provide regular updates on how the project contributes to overarching objectives such as enhancing the student experience, supporting digital learning initiatives, and achieving institutional excellence.
- *Update Committees Regularly:* Provide committee members with timely and relevant information to support informed decision-making.

- *Collect Training Data:* If training is to be provided to stakeholders as part of the project, ensure sufficient data is collected to track progress (e.g. attendance rates, completions across Schools/Colleges, etc).

Academic colleagues

- *Early Engagement and Training:* It is beneficial to engage with Change projects at the earliest possible stage, by participating in training sessions and informational workshops.
- *Faculty Champions:* Identify and appoint faculty champions within your School who are enthusiastic about the upcoming change and willing to advocate for it. These faculty champions can serve as mentors to their peers, share best practices, and provide support during the transition process.

Teaching Office colleagues

- *Specialised Internal Support Teams:* Establish specialised support teams within teaching offices, dedicated to providing project support. Assign appropriate colleagues with relevant experience to ensure internal project coverage.
- *Clear Communication Channels:* Implement clear and accessible communication channels for School/College staff to receive updates, announcements, and guidance related to the project.

Learning Technologists

- *Pro-active Engagement with Project Team:* Engage early and effectively with the Project Team to ensure good communication practices are established. Communicate local progress to the Project Team regularly and identify areas where support is needed.
- *Pedagogical Support:* Provide appropriate pedagogical support to academic colleagues if the project requires it. If time and resource allow, offer assistance such as instructional design guides, training workshops, examples of good practice and tailored support.

Governance and Implementation Group colleagues

- *Clearly defined Terms of Reference:* Before assembling and convening groups, the Project Team should define the group's terms of reference, outlining the group's scope and objectives, to ensure members understand their roles and responsibilities.
- *Ensure information dissemination to Schools/Colleges:* The Project Team should ensure that group members understand their responsibility to inform their Schools/Colleges of key group developments and updates.
- *Encourage proactive involvement from members:* Ask members to bring local issues to the group for wider discussion.

Senate Quality Assurance Committee

5 December 2024

Self-Evaluation Action Plan (SEAP)

Description of paper

The University's annual report to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) on activities to effectively manage quality assurance and deliver on enhancement.

The report is a regulatory requirement.

Fit with remit

| Quality Assurance Committee | Y/N |
|--|-----|
| Oversee the delivery and enhancement of the University's quality assurance framework, ensuring that it meets external requirements. | Y |
| In partnership with Edinburgh University Students' Association, ensure effective student engagement and representation of student voices in the University's quality framework. | Y |
| Maintain oversight of the outcomes of the quality assurance framework, ensuring that actions are addressed, and support the sharing of good practice. Promote the quality assurance framework as an important part of the University's activities and ensure that the outcomes inform relevant University business. | Y |
| Support the University's engagement with external quality requirements and activities, including: Enhancement-Led Institutional Review, the UK Quality Code, and responses to consultations and initiatives. | Y |
| Identify areas for innovation and enhancement of the student experience and ensure that these inform Senate Education Committee's policy development. | Y |
| Consider the implications of the Committee's work and its decisions in the context of external initiatives and compliance and legal frameworks, particularly in relation to equality and diversity. | Y |
| In relation to academic collaborations with partner institutions: maintain oversight of development, approval, monitoring and review / renewal processes; receive annual reports on activity and identify any areas where action is required to maintain academic standards and the quality of the student experience. | Y |

Action requested / recommendation

1. For information.

Background and context

2. A new institutional annual quality reporting process to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) has been implemented from 2024/25, the Self-Evaluation Action Plan (SEAP). The SEAP replaces both the previous annual quality reporting process and the learning and quality aspects of the Outcome Agreement process.
3. The SEAP has been produced in accordance with the SFC [Guidance on Quality for Colleges and Universities 2024-25 to 2030-31](#) which outlines the key elements of Scotland's new [Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework \(TQEF\)](#). It will be used as part of the evidence base for the new institutional quality review process, the [Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review \(TQER\)](#), and to monitor institutional progress with the outcomes of the TQER and support the annual institutional liaison meetings with the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).
4. The report is divided into two sections: Self-Evaluation 2023-24 (reflecting on annual institutional quality assurance and enhancement activities and outcomes, including progress made since the last external review) and Action Plan 2024 - 2025 (a consolidation of the planned institution level enhancement activities arising from the self-evaluation). It is a concise, high-level summary of themes discussed and associated actions taken by various groups and committees across the institution, and as such is drawn from existing reports and papers and updates from relevant stakeholders.
5. The SEAP is intended to be a live document that can be revisited and updated throughout the academic year. A key aim of the process is to demonstrate to staff and students how their contribution to the activities that impact the quality assurance and enhancement of learning, teaching and the student experience are collated and used to document and drive strategic enhancement within the institution.
6. The SFC has stipulated that a new approval and sign-off process must be implemented for the SEAP to ensure that the Accountable Officer is sighted on, and has ownership of, the quality of the student experience, academic standards and academic integrity. Only once the Accountable Officer is satisfied with the thoroughness and effectiveness of the evaluation and action-plan should it be submitted to SFC. It is not a requirement that the SEAP be reviewed and approved by the Governing Body prior to submission, however the SEAP should be shared with the Governing Body to support their oversight of quality assurance and enhancement.

7. Student partnership is a key aspect of the TQEF, and therefore we have included a Statement of Partnership (not a SFC requirement) which the Vice President Education co-sign in order to demonstrate that the SEAP has been produced in partnership with the Students' Association and reflects the interests and priorities of students. We will continue to work together with the Students' Association to engage students as partners on an ongoing basis in the preparation of the annual SEAP and in the monitoring of the implementation of the actions.

Discussion

8. The report is relevant to the Committee's responsibility for the quality assurance framework and is attached.

Resource implications

9. There are no specific resource implications associated with the report.

Risk management

10. The provision of a high quality student experience is a high level risk on the University's Strategic Risk Register, and is overseen by the Risk Management Committee reporting to Audit & Risk Committee and Court. Additionally, failure in effectiveness of the quality assurance framework, including aligning review activity with external expectations and taking action on findings, constitutes an institutional risk.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

11. This paper does not contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals. It is a regulatory requirement.

Equality & diversity

12. Quality assurance policies and processes are subject to Equality Impact Assessment.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

13. The SEAP will be co-signed by the Principal and Vice President Education before it is submitted to the SFC on 2 December 2024. It will then be submitted to University Court for information at the meeting on 24 February 2025.

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Freedom of Information

Open

If you require this document in an alternative format, such as large print or a coloured background, please contact academic.quality@ed.ac.uk or Academic Quality and Standards, Old College, South Bridge, Edinburgh, EH8 9YL.

Self-Evaluation and Action Plan

University of Edinburgh

Self-Evaluation 2023-24

1. Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Curriculum Transformation Programme

This is a major long-term initiative for the University, closely aligned with the University Strategy 2030, to review the shape, design and delivery of our curriculum to ensure it develops with the needs of our future students. Significant progress has been made during Academic Year (AY) 2023/24. A Full Business Case for the Taught Postgraduate element of Curriculum Transformation has been approved for the next four years. This covers a two-year transitional phase where work will be undertaken to prepare the necessary regulatory, process and system enablers ready for the roll out of a new Taught Postgraduate Curriculum Framework in AY 2026/27 and a secondary roll out in AY 2027/28. The framework has been designed to be adaptable and responsive, able to accommodate a diverse range of provision and the requirements of a different educational contexts and purposes, domestic and international demand for postgraduate study and lifelong learning, including stand-alone courses, collections of courses, Certificates, Diplomas and Masters programmes through multiple and flexible modes of study (on-campus, online; full time, part time, stackable). An Outline Business Case has been approved for the Undergraduate element of Curriculum Transformation. This will enable the completion of work on the design and approval of a new Undergraduate Curriculum Framework and in-depth analysis and testing of associated regulatory, process and system changes. The Outline Business Case includes funding for the development and piloting of new elective cross-University experiential learning and Challenge Courses linked to our institutional research priorities

and values. A Full Business Case for the Undergraduate Curriculum Framework is due to be submitted in the second half of AY 2024/25. Further information (including a selection of briefing papers and other resources) is available from the programme website.¹

Annual monitoring and Institution-Led Quality Review (ILQR) – 2023/24²

The following themes of positive practice for sharing at University level were identified in our annual quality reports 2023-24 and Internal Periodic Reviews (IPRs, our ILQR process) held in AY 2023-24:

- **Student Support** - the new student support model was fully implemented across the University in AY 2023-24 and reports indicate that it has been generally well received by staff and students across the University, with improvements noted in the consistency of support provided to students, particularly through the new Student Adviser roles.
- **Student Voice** – Schools continue to make significant efforts to create opportunities for students to share feedback on their experience through locally organised student voice mechanisms. Students recognise the opportunities available to provide feedback.
- **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)** – there were a number of initiatives highlighted by Schools and Deaneries in support of promoting an inclusive learning environment.
- **Learning and Teaching Enhancements** – academic and professional services staff have made considerable efforts to do things in new and inventive ways in order to enhance the student experience.

At the same time, our annual quality reports and IPRs highlighted the following areas for further development at the University level:

- **Student Support** – reports suggested a need for greater clarity around academic support roles (particularly in relation to the Cohort Lead role) and support for students on joint programmes.
- **Assessment and Feedback** – recognising the increasing opportunities and challenges of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI), particularly in relation to academic integrity and the need for greater guidance on approaches to assessment.

¹ <https://www.ed.ac.uk/staff/teaching-matters/curriculum-transformation-programme>

² <https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/quality/monitoringandreview/annual-monitoring-review-and-reporting>

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- **Student Voice** – the issue of low response rates was raised in a number of reports, with concerns regarding the utility of feedback derived from low levels of student engagement. Feedback from students suggests the need to address closing feedback loops as clear communication on what has been acted upon may increase confidence in participation and encourage more students to take part in subsequent surveys.
 - **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)** – our updated reporting template included a section on student outcomes which resulted in more detailed reflections on awarding gaps, with black and minority ethnic (BAME) and widening participation (WP) students experiencing the biggest awarding gaps.
 - **Postgraduate Research Student Experience** - a number of reports noted concerns over the increasing time taken to complete PhDs, with average timeframes stretching to 4 years and beyond, and suggested that the current standard model may need to be reviewed.

Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) has approved actions at University level in response to issues identified above and will consider progress updates later in the academic year before feeding back to reporting areas. The reports identifying themes of positive practice for sharing at University level are passed to the Institute for Academic Development (IAD) to identify content for Teaching Matters³ and the Learning and Teaching Conference. Examples of Teaching Matters blog posts that have been identified through quality processes are tagged⁴.

Student Retention, Progression and Outcomes

SQAC considers a report on degree classification outcomes annually. Any subject areas judged to have diverged substantially from either the University average or comparators in their discipline are then asked specifically to reflect on the issue, and any proposed remediation, in their School annual quality report. This approach ensures systematic University oversight whilst also encouraging Schools to engage with the specific data on awards, reflect on the issues and context, and then seek appropriate local solutions.

³ <https://www.ed.ac.uk/staff/teaching-matters>

⁴ <https://www.teaching-matters-blog.ed.ac.uk/tag/quality-enhancement-report-examples/>

In May 2024 SQAC considered the annual analysis of degrees awarded by the University in the AY 2022/23⁵, including data on awarding gaps for key student groups. In general, student outcomes appear to be returning to pre-pandemic levels with over 89% of students at the University being awarded a high classification degree (a first or upper second-class degree) in 2022/23 (a 1.8% decrease from the previous year and a 0.5% decrease across a five-year period). Within this, the number of first-class degrees awarded in 2022/23 has decreased (by 3.2% from the previous year), however there has been an overall increase of 5.3% across a five-year period.

In 2022/23, for the first time in a five-year period, a higher proportion of male students were awarded a first-class degree than female students (34.9% vs 33.5%). However, a higher proportion of female students were awarded a high classification than male students (90.6% vs 86.8%). Students with a disclosed disability continue to be less likely to be awarded a first-class or high classification degree than students with no disclosed disability. The awarding gap for first-class degrees increased from 1.7% in 2021/22 to 1.9% in 2022/23, while the gap for high classification degrees decreased from 2.4% to 1.7% over the same period.

The most significant awarding gap is between black and minority ethnic (BAME) students and white students. While the awarding gap for first-class degrees reduced from 13.1% in 2021/22 to 11.6% in 2022/23, the gap for high classification degrees increased from 4.7% to 7.3% during the same period. A similar trend is seen across widening participation students, with a narrowing of the gap for first-class awards from 10.3% in 2021/22 to 7.5% in 2022/23, against an increasing gap for high classification degrees from 6.7% to 8.9% over the same period.

Retention and progression data is embedded in our ILQR processes and our Insights Hub provides a searchable directory of analysis and insights to support these ILQR activities. In order to enhance these processes SQAC established a Data Task Group in February 2020 to examine data set and methodological options for a new approach to monitoring retention, progression, and awarding data. However, the pandemic delayed progress, with the maintenance of core requirements the primary focus of activities across the University.

As we emerged from the pandemic, SQAC sought to align with work already being undertaken by the University's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) and the Governance and Strategic Planning (GaSP) area to develop improved data capture and analytical tools. The Equality, Diversity and

⁵ <https://registryservices.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2024-07/16%20May%202024%20-%20Agenda%20and%20Papers.pdf> (Paper D)

Inclusion Data Report 2023 was published by the EDIC in May 2023⁶. This coincided with the completion of the first phase of work to develop internal data dashboards, making more detailed EDI data readily available across our institution. The key focus for this first phase has been to ensure the integrity, accuracy and confidence of the data, as well as to ensure that data definitions used are suitable for the required range of purposes.

SQAC has established a new Student Data Monitoring Task Group⁷ now that more detailed EDI data has been made available. In the short term the Group is exploring ways to use this data to develop a more systematic oversight of retention, progression and awards at University level. In the longer term the Group will seek to work with the EDIC and GaSP to generate and use robust quantitative and qualitative data in support of the University's QA processes (see 'Awarding Gaps' below).

Assessment and feedback

From the start of AY 2022/23, we implemented a set of Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities in response to persistent student dissatisfaction with areas of assessment and feedback from regular student feedback and student survey results over a number of year, and the recommendation from [Enhancement-led Institutional Review \(ELIR\) 4](#) (see section 3 below) to develop an institution-wide approach to assessment and feedback. The Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities include an agreed expected standard for feedback turnaround times of three weeks in response to National Student Survey (NSS) scores, our comparative position in the sector, and analysis of what seems to be effective in those Schools that perform well in the NSS. Ensuring that we consistently meet this standard and can demonstrate that we do, alongside the quality of feedback, continues to be a priority for the University. The Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities also set an expectation of a shared understanding of marking criteria between teaching staff, markers and students. The Students' Association will be supporting this through the School reps who will work with Schools on this.

Throughout AY 2023/24, significant action has been taken to address this priority led by the Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group and the Student Experience Delivery and Monitoring Oversight Board. We have reviewed College actions for the implementation of the Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities (initially focused on the timely return of feedback to students) and developed a framework for gathering and monitoring feedback turnaround

⁶ <https://equality-diversity.ed.ac.uk/governance-and-compliance/edi-strategy-and-equality-outcomes/equality-outcomes-2021-2025-and>

⁷ <https://registryservices.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2024-07/16%20May%202024%20-%20Agenda%20and%20Papers.pdf> (Paper D)

times (including the development of data dashboards) as a means of understanding current and ongoing performance. We are using the data to identify and celebrate good practice, understand challenges and support areas struggling to meet turnaround times. We will continue to monitor turnaround times in AY 2024/25 via a standardised template and publish data via the dashboards.

We are also in the process of developing a framework for an ongoing programme of feedback quality audits (building on a successful model developed in one of our Schools) with the aim of identifying exemplars of good practice and improving information given to students on assessments such as rubrics and making criteria.

The National Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey 2024 results show an improvement in assessment and feedback: a 8.6% increase in returning prompt feedback to 66.8% and a 5.1% increase in supervisors providing feedback on the dissertation/project to 83.5%.

External Examiners

An analysis of data from the External Examiner Reporting System (EERS) is considered by SQAC annually, with any University-level actions agreed and assigned to specific areas as appropriate. At the meeting held on 25 April 2024 SQAC considered the analysis of AY 2022/23 undergraduate and taught postgraduate⁸ external examiners' reports showing that there continues to be a high number of commendations and a low number of issues across the University. The main theme commended in undergraduate reports across all three Colleges was the assessment process, with the sub-theme of good practice and innovation (in the programme development theme) most commented on. The main theme commended in taught postgraduate reports was also the assessment process, with the sub-theme of student feedback most commented on. A small number of issues raised by external examiners related to the (often timely) provision of information to examiners. No University-level action was required.

The positive comments from external examiners on our assessment process and feedback may seem at odds with the NSS feedback, where we are scored lower on assessment and feedback. The difference may be explained in that External Examiner's comments speak to academic standards and quality and provide assurance that our assessment processes are robust. The NSS reflects the student experience and, in particular, dissatisfaction with the timeliness of

⁸ <https://registryservices.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2024-07/25%20April%202024%20-%20Agenda%20and%20Papers.pdf> (Paper E)

feedback and the clarity of assessment expectations. Our NSS scores are not where we want them to be which is why both timeliness of feedback and clarity of assessment criteria are key priorities within our assessment and feedback principles and priorities.

2. Supporting Student Success

Student Support

The start of AY 2023/24 marked the full implementation of a new approach to taught student support across the University, following a phased introduction that began in AY 2022/23, mainly for new incoming students. The introduction of the new student support approach was our response to the need to improve student support across the University (responding to student and staff feedback that the existing model wasn't working) whilst also recognising the need for holistic support for academic and pastoral needs whilst creating a sense of belonging. This was a shift from the model which had existed before in the form of a single point of contact in the Personal Tutor.

The new approach is based on an ecosystem of student support comprising Student Advisers, Wellbeing Advisers, Cohort Leads, academic teaching teams, wider University services, and Peer Support. It is an ambitious and sector-leading approach to student support that has attracted much interest from other universities. Each student is assigned a Student Adviser who is their main point of contact, providing administrative and academic support. In addition, Wellbeing Advisers in each School provide advice on wellbeing-related matters and act as a key connection point to other specialist services, such as the Student Counselling Service or Disability and Learning Support Service. Academic support and building a sense of belonging is provided via Cohort Leads who have academic leadership responsibility for cohorts of students with the purpose of creating a sense of community within programmes and providing relevant academic-related support that fits the needs of the programmes and learners. Academic advice remains core to student support, with teaching teams providing academic support at the subject/course level as previously. Peer Support activities are student-led and staff-supported and provide an opportunity for students to support other students. A Director of Students role has been introduced in each School supported by the College Dean of Students to have oversight of the academic roles within the model.

An example of the evidenced success of the new model is that the IPR of the Deanery of Biomedical Sciences (UG and PGT) commended the Student Advisers for the positive impact they have had on the student experience, and their overall commitment to making the transition to the new student support model as smooth as possible. Furthermore, the national annual Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey 2024 results reveal increased awareness of and satisfaction with student support - 4% increase on 2023 on the question – “My School/Deanery has provided advice and guidance on how to access support where needed”.

To coincide with the introduction of the new student support approach we also launched a new Student Wellbeing Service in September 2022 (note the reference to Wellbeing Advisers as part of the ecosystem). The Service is located in the University Student Experience Services directorate. Wellbeing Advisers work with all Schools and Colleges providing a layer of support between the School-based Student Advisers and the central specialist counselling

and disability services. This service supports all students: UG, PGT and PGR. This is a transformational investment in mental health services for our students, involving recruitment of new staff and providing proactive and reactive wellbeing support. The recent NSS survey (2024) showed a 4.4% increase in student satisfaction with wellbeing support.

The implementation of the new Student Support model has been a partnership approach with a central project team supporting College implementation groups, overseen by the Project Board, including representation from the Students' Association. Throughout we undertook assessment and monitoring through surveys and focus groups with students and staff to allow us to evaluate the impact of the new model, and make improvements, as required. With the conclusion of the implementation phase of the project in July 2024 our focus is now on monitoring and evaluating provision on a continuous basis to ensure envisaged benefits of the model are being realised. Senior Academic colleagues within the university who have expertise in the longitudinal evaluation of societal models have supported and advised on the approach to the longer-term evaluation.

To ensure consistency and fidelity of the new model is maintained, a Student Support Framework has been approved by Senate Education Committee⁹ (with a review due in one year) and a new University level oversight group established, the Student Support Continuous Improvement Group (SSCIG), which will work with new College level groups in a coordinating role. The Students' Association Vice President Education has been appointed as the Deputy Chair to ensure the student voice is heard when planning improvement work. An additional quality assurance process will be introduced to ensure cyclical reporting and oversight of the new model of student support at institutional level. This reporting will be governed by the Student Lifecycle Management Group (SLMG), with cyclical reporting to SQAC and SEC, and will focus on outcomes across key indicators and supplementary contextual data sources.

Once fully embedded, evaluation of student support provision will align with existing quality assurance processes (such as annual monitoring and ILQR) overseen by SQAC. Colleges, Schools and Professional Services will be asked to provide updates on the effectiveness of their student support provision via the annual QA monitoring processes. Each area will be required to use data to evidence the effectiveness of their provision, aligned to the Student Support Framework, and to reflect on their partnership working across the institutional ecosystem of student support. In AY 2024/25 SSCIG will continue to work with SQAC to develop these monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in order to ensure consistency of experience for all students across the University.

⁹ <https://registryservices.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2024-07/7%20March%202024%20-%20Agenda%20and%20Papers.pdf> (Paper D)

Widening Access

In January 2024 we unveiled our ambitious University wide [Widening Participation Strategy 2030](#), building on our commitment to support students who encounter barriers to higher education. Our refreshed priorities aim to create a nurturing and inclusive academic environment that appreciates the varied backgrounds and needs of our students. Following the launch of the Strategy we have established new governance arrangements to enable us to more effectively coordinate our activity and build on our evidence base. This includes a strategic committee that reports directly to our University Executive, an implementation group and a research and evidence forum to support all groups. We are focussing on actions across the whole student lifecycle and have institutional leads to drive this activity.

In AY 2023/24 we welcomed 241 new SIMD20 entrants to the University of Edinburgh. We continue to see over 10% of our undergraduate students coming from SIMD20 backgrounds and all of our ongoing outreach projects maintain a strong focus on prospective applicants from SIMD20 backgrounds. In 2024, the majority of young people on our [YourEd+ programme](#) were from SIMD20 postcodes and they successfully completed an SCQF level 7 assignment for the YourEd+ programme. This meant they were awarded the equivalent of B at Higher, developing their confidence, skills and supporting their application to the University.

We continue to build our community of care-experienced students, and in AY 2023/24 we had a total of 159 verified care-experienced students on programme at the University. 50 of our students were supported by 50 staff mentors in our innovative mentoring programme offering mentors to care-experienced and estranged students throughout their studies at the University. We also provided 50 start out kits for our Edinburgh Cares students to help support them setting up in new accommodation. We were also very proud to celebrate our care-experienced and estranged students successfully graduating from the University in 2024; we ensure they can experience this fully by offering fully-funded photo and gown packages for the students.

We continued our commitment to staff development and inclusive learning by providing training for staff to support students from widening participation backgrounds. In the AY 2023/24 we delivered over 25 hours of staff training. We have also contributed to the newly developed SCAPP (Scotland's Community of Access & Participation Practitioners) online training module – An Introduction to WP in Scotland – and are currently developing guidance regarding accent discrimination.

In terms of our growing college partnerships, we have two new articulation routes currently in place with three new routes in the pipeline. The new routes offer advanced standing with entry to year two of our MA (Hons) Learning in Communities from HNC Social Services at Edinburgh College and from HNC Social Sciences at West Lothian College and Edinburgh College. Overall, we have built our portfolio of HNC/HND progression routes with over 100 of our degree programmes accepting progression or advanced progression into year 1 or 2.

New for 2024, we are working in partnership with IntoUniversity and the University of Glasgow on designing and delivering a pilot Adult and Family Learning Project. This aims to increase outcomes for children in IntoUniversity Centres in Glasgow and Edinburgh through closer engagement and support for their parents, carers and wider families.

Awarding Gaps

We have taken several actions to support ongoing work to address the awarding gaps identified by our Thematic Review¹⁰, annual monitoring and ILQR¹¹ processes.

Throughout AY 2023/24, the University appointed an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer (a secondee to the Curriculum Transformation Project) to coordinate work underway across the University to address awarding gaps. The initial focus has been on identifying a range of good practice exemplars and resources to be shared at events.

As noted above, SQAC has established a new Student Data Monitoring Group to explore and recommend a systematic approach to monitoring student data at University level, taking a student lifecycle perspective including: recruitment and admissions; retention and progression; and awarding. This builds on the work of the Progression and Attainment (ProAttain) Working Group in the College of Science and Engineering and is being implemented during AY 2024/25.

The Institute for Academic Development (IAD) has created an online toolkit¹². This includes guidance on universal design to help our staff anticipate our students' needs and improve the overall learning experience in an inclusive and accessible way that benefits all our students, and guidance on decolonisation in the curriculum, which includes nine recommendations for positive change to narrow the awarding gap and also to foster a diverse and inclusive environment for every student.

¹⁰ <https://registryservices.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/quality/monitoringandreview/student-support-thematic>

¹¹ <https://registryservices.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2024-07/16%20May%202024%20-%20Agenda%20and%20Papers.pdf> (Paper H)

¹² <https://institute-academic-development.ed.ac.uk/learning-teaching/staff/accessible>

3. Enhancement and Quality Culture

Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR)

In 2021, the University received ten recommendations from [Enhancement-led Institutional Review \(ELIR\) 4](#). The ELIR Action Plan, setting out the University's response to the review recommendations, was approved by Senate in October 2021 and an ELIR Oversight Group established to provide direction and oversight of the actions.

The ELIR Action Plan took a themed approach to the implementation of the recommendations in order to ensure alignment with existing learning and teaching priorities and senior leadership responsibility. Actions were grouped as follows:

- **Assessment and Feedback** (improving feedback turnaround times and feedback quality);
- **Student Support** (the personal tutor system);
- **Strategy, Growth and Planning** (encompassing the oversight and planning for growth of student numbers, and the strategic approach to the enhancement of learning and teaching);
- **Change Management** (and the pace of change);
- **Monitoring consistency of implementation of strategy, policy and practice** (encompassing oversight and implementation of policy and practice, and specifically training for postgraduate research (PGR) students who teach);
- **Developing and promoting teaching excellence** (encompassing the recognition and support for academic staff development, and promotion of academic staff based on teaching);
- **Attainment gap monitoring** (including sharing good practice in addressing awarding gaps).

Two of the recommendations, relating to assessment and feedback and student support, were prioritised for action over the course of the academic year following the ELIR. We have made significant progress in relation to these two recommendations which included developing University-wide agreed principles and priorities for assessment and feedback and rolling out a completely new student support approach.

Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR)

Our QESR took place on 16 November 2023 and the review team was confident that the University is making effective progress in continuing to monitor, review and enhance its provision to enable effective arrangements to be in place for managing academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience. The QESR team commended the University's Institute for Academic Development in establishing a network of secondees and associates embedded within the schools to support developments in learning and teaching.

The QESR team considered four of the ELIR recommendations to be fully addressed, recognised the action taken to date towards the remaining six recommendations, and helpfully made the following further recommendations for action based on, and in addition to, the ELIR 4 recommendations:

- **Pace of change** - the University should make progress on and accelerate its actions in response to the recommendations from the previous ELIR, ensuring effective and consistent implementation by all Schools, and monitor the outcomes, in order to evidence significant progress within the next academic year.
- **Learning and Teaching Strategy** - the University should expedite the final drafting, approval and implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy to help staff and students understand how major strategic projects work together and provide clarity on the strategic approach to enhancing learning and teaching.
- **Assessment and Feedback** - the University should take immediate action, within the current academic year, to ensure that the new Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities (developed in response to ELIR 4) are fully implemented in all Schools, that feedback turn-round times and quality are monitored effectively, and that prompt action is taken to address any shortcomings.
- **Training for postgraduate research (PGR) students who teach** - the University should take prompt action, within the current academic year, to consistently implement its updated policy and to ensure that training for PGRs who teach is required at the University and School level, and that this action is monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure that all PGRs are fully supported in undertaking their teaching duties.
- **Promotion of academic staff based on teaching** - the University should clearly and accurately record data on promotion routes based on teaching excellence so it can effectively evidence the implementation of its goal to achieve parity between teaching and research and take action to ensure this aim is met.
- **Attainment gap monitoring** – the University should pay particular attention to sharing good practice and supporting staff in understanding the causes of attainment gaps and taking effective action.

The [final report](#) of the QESR was received on 18 January 2024 and an External Quality Review Oversight Group was established to take the recommendations forward. The University's external quality review [Action Plan](#) in response to the recommendations of the QESR was submitted to the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in July 2024. Feedback from the QAA was positive with just one additional request to confirm that training for all postgraduate research students who teach will be in place (and uptake monitored) for the start of AY 2024/25. Data on training was gathered during the summer (as part of the annual monitoring process) and Colleges are working with Schools to ensure that this training is in place and monitored on an ongoing basis.

UK Quality Code Mapping

We last reviewed the mappings of our policies and practices to the Quality Code in September/October 2022: [Quality Code Mapping](#). Since 2022 we have been actively engaged in the UK sector-wide conversation about the future scope and structure of the Quality Code. There are minor updates required to the mapping, for example, to reflect the full move to the new student support model. We are considering the approach we will take to the new Quality Code and the relevant mappings will be reviewed by the Quality team in due course.

Enhancement Themes

Throughout the last Enhancement Theme, Resilient Learning Communities, the University has focussed on community building, responding to student feedback. Enhancement work continued through AY 2023/24 to pilot 'community champions' in five schools as part of the Sense of Belonging Continuous Improvement Group.

Enhancement of Academic Practice

The QESR team (as noted above) commended our Institute for Academic Development (IAD) on the provision of staff development activities in support of learning and teaching. These include the annual Learning and Teaching Conference (with over 100 staff and students presenting and between 500-900 in attendance), a newly accredited Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice, and the Edinburgh Teaching Award with recognition of fellowships at all four categories of the Professional Standards Framework. The IAD also provides programme and course design support for staff through a PgCAP course, through a range of workshops, and advice and through new programme and course design webpages that draw together all the programme and course design information from across the University to make this information easier for colleagues to access.

Tutors and demonstrators play a really important part in our teaching. In 2023/24 IAD made changes to the modality of our basic introduction to teaching for tutors and demonstrators, in recognition that workshops had been over-subscribed, and created a new self-paced, online 'Fundamentals of Teaching Course' open to all tutors and demonstrators. Since September 2024, more people have completed the course than would have been able to attend workshops over the year. IAD continue to run a range of workshops for tutors and demonstrators alongside the online course. Feedback on the new course has been extremely positive from tutors and from staff in Schools.

4. Student Engagement and Partnership

Student Voice

The University and Students' Association continue to work in partnership to deliver and enhance systems and processes which amplify the student voice.

In AY 2023/24, over 1300 part-time, volunteer student representatives were recruited, inducted, and supported by the Students' Association's Student Voice team, as well as staff across and at all levels of the University. All Programme and Elected Representatives continue to receive a two-part induction and training package, consisting of an asynchronous and introductory self-study module, followed by a live and interactive role-specific session.

Training completion remains high - with 95% of Elected Representatives and 85.5% of Programme Representatives completing both elements. 89.1% of student representatives described their experience as a student representative as excellent or good, with representatives reporting positively on the

support they had received from the Students' Association and relevant University staff, their ability to create positive change for the students they represent, and their ability to develop personally and professionally in their role.

All student representatives have access to on-going development opportunities, through the workshop calendar for volunteer student leaders, as well as access to multiple reward and recognition schemes, from Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) recognition to the Edinburgh Award for Student Leadership, and the nationally-recognised Saltire Award for volunteering. At the end of their term, all student representatives are invited to complete a handover form, reflecting on their experience and sharing insights with their successors.

Student voice has been identified as a strategic priority by the University's Senior Leadership Team, driven in large part by continued disappointing performance in the student voice section of the National Student Survey, particularly the questions regarding students' confidence that their feedback is valued and acted upon by staff. In AY 2023/24, the existing Student Voice Task and Finish Group, which had coordinated a series of focus groups with students and staff to identify areas of key concern, was replaced by the Student Voice Continuous Improvement User Group, under the Student Lifecycle Management Group. The Students' Association partnered with Graduate Offices across the University and the Doctoral College to enhance the integration of Postgraduate Research students into existing student voice structures, work which is continuing in AY 2024/25.

In AY 2024/25, the University and Students' Association will work in partnership to:

- Baseline School approaches to student voice, through analysis of data available from existing Quality processes, such as Internal Period Reviews, and consultation with Schools.
- Address inconsistencies in the implementation of existing student voice policies, such as the Student-Staff Liaison Committee Policy, across Schools and Colleges.
- Explore alternative methods of collecting feedback, addressing student feedback regarding survey-fatigue, and create resources highlighting best practice for use by staff.

Student Feedback

In AY 2023/24, we introduced a new institutional survey, the Student Life Survey, to replace the Pulse Surveys which were introduced during the pandemic. The survey was informed by the student voice focus groups highlighted above, and developed in partnership with the Students' Association, with academic expertise, and in listening and responding to how students want to participate in surveys (i.e. short surveys that take less than a minute to complete). It was designed to understand more about student experiences across different aspects of their journey, as well as to align with strategic priorities for student experience, ensuring the collection of data to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of on-going and future enhancements in relation to student experience. The survey ran as a pilot in AY 2023/24 to taught students who were not participating in sector surveys, such as the National Students Survey (NSS) and the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES).

Across the year, work was undertaken to improve communication to student about feedback opportunities. This included an introductory communication to all students outlining how they can feedback, and then a follow up email at the end of each semester outlining feedback which had been gathered, and actions in response to it. Further work has been identified for AY 2024/25 to ensure communications are landing more effectively, including greater collaboration with Schools to tailor communications, and a focus on developing more engaging communications.

Student Partnership

We have a University Student Partnership Agreement with 19 funded projects last year (and 18 projects in 2024-25), focused on building community, enhancing teaching, learning and curriculum and EDI. We continue to run the Edinburgh Network: Growing Approaches to Genuine Engagement (engage network) for staff and students, with regular monthly events showcasing student engagement and partnership work from the University and beyond; the two most recent events attracted approx. 85 staff and students. The PgCAP programme for staff starts with a course entitled 'Becoming an Engaging Teacher', where we encourage colleagues to adopt evidence-based approaches to more relational teaching, active learning, student engagement and co-creation.

Action Plan 2024 -2025

The plan should link directly to the institutional evaluation of the Principles and should prioritise strategic actions arising from the narrative. In addition, the actions arising from commendations or recommendations identified through external review, should also be embedded into this action plan to ensure alignment with overall institutional priorities and to streamline reporting processes. This action plan should be a live document utilised by the institution to focus on strategic quality assurance and enhancement activities on an ongoing basis. The timeline for the completion of actions should be suited to the nature of the activity and the context of the institution.

| Principle and Area for enhancement or development | Action(s) and planned impact/ outcomes | Milestone (s/ target date(s), continuing/ carried forward (c/f) | Responsible/ Lead |
|--|--|--|--|
| Enhancement and Quality Culture: Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) & Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) | Continue to progress with the ELIR and QESR recommendations, in particular prioritising actions over the course of the year in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assessment and feedback • the training of postgraduate research students who teach. • Learning and Teaching Strategy | Detailed actions and target dates in the University’s external quality review Action Plan | External Quality Review Oversight Group |
| Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment: Curriculum Transformation | Prepare for introduction of new PGT Curriculum Framework from AY2026/27 | A 2-year Transitional Phase followed by the main roll out in AY2026/27. Work on regulatory and policy changes is being taken forward through Senate Academic Policy & Regulations Committee | Curriculum Transformation Board/ Senate Education Committee |

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| | | during AY2024/25 & AY2025/26. | |
| Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment: Curriculum Transformation | Complete UG Curriculum Framework design work (including development and piloting of elective University Challenge Courses and cross-University Experiential Learning Courses in AY 2024/25 & 2025/26) | UG Curriculum Framework Design work and undertake in-depth analysis and design of the associated System, Process & Regulatory changes during AY24/25. Development and piloting of elective University Challenge Courses and cross-University Experiential Learning Courses in AY 2024/25 & 25/26. | Curriculum Transformation Board/ Senate Education Committee |
| Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment: Assessment and Feedback | Continue to embed the Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities | Ongoing, with a focus on feedback return times and feedback quality (including assessment rubrics) as priority areas in AY 2024/25 | Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group, reporting to Senate Education Committee |
| Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment: Learning and Teaching Strategy | Implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030. | Strategy approved in Semester 1 AY 2024/25 with roll-out and implementation from Semester 2. | Senate Education Committee |

| | | | |
|--|---|---------|---|
| Enhancement and Quality Culture: Sector enhancement activity | Engage with the new national enhancement programme: Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP) | ongoing | Senate Quality Assurance Committee |
| Student Engagement and Partnership: Student voice | Continue work of the Student Voice Continuous Improvement Group, review the implementation of various student voice policies and develop a shared vision for student voice. | ongoing | Deputy Secretary Students/Senate Quality Assurance Committee/Students' Association |
| Supporting Student Success Student Support | Continue to monitor and evaluate the impact of the new student support approach | ongoing | Deputy Secretary Students |
| Supporting Student Success: Awarding Gaps | Continue work to understand the causes of and how to narrow awarding gaps, supporting Schools by sharing good practice. | ongoing | Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) |

Statement of Assurance

Statement of Assurance: *As the Accountable Officer for the University of Edinburgh, I confirm that I have considered the institution's arrangements for the management of academic standards and the quality of the learning experience for AY 2023-24, including the scope and impact of these. I further confirm that I am satisfied that the institution has adequate and effective arrangements to maintain standards and to assure and enhance the quality of its provision. I can therefore provide assurance to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) that the academic standards and the quality of the learning provision at this institution continue to meet the requirements set by SFC.*

Signature:

Accountable Officer (Name):

Date:

Statement of Partnership: *As the Vice President Education of Edinburgh University Students' Association, I confirm that this report and action plan have been produced in partnership with the Students' Association and reflect the interests and priorities of students. I further confirm that and the University and the Students' Association will work together in partnership to implement the actions outlined.*

Signature:

Students' Association representative (Name):

Date:

Senate Quality Assurance Committee

5th December 2024

Committee Priorities 2024/25

Description of paper

1. The paper asks the Committee to note the updates to Committee priorities for academic year 2024/25 after discussion by Senate.

Action requested / recommendation

2. The Committee is asked to note the updated priorities for 2024/25.

Background and context

3. At its meeting in April the Committee discussed draft proposed committee priorities and agreed the final set of priorities in its May meeting.
4. The Standing Committees' proposed priorities were reported to Senate in October 2024 for endorsement, after being held over from the May and June meetings.
5. Amendments were proposed to Senate and were considered, and voted upon (if required), in the October meeting. Senate approved an additional priority for SQAC, relating to internal systems and change processes. Details have been included in the table below.
6. Senate accepted additional priorities applying to all Standing Committees. These are detailed at point 8 below.

Discussion

7. *Committee priorities 2024/25*

| Priority | Responding to 2023 Quality Enhancement & Standards Review (QESR) |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Rationale and fit with remit | This priority responds to the recommendations following the 2023 QESR and is relevant to the committee remit: 2.1 Oversee the delivery and enhancement of the University's quality assurance framework, ensuring that it meets external requirements. 2.5 Support the University's engagement with external quality requirements and activities, including: Enhancement-Led Institutional Review, the UK Quality Code, and responses to consultations and initiatives. |

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| <p>Area of focus and objectives</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee to focus on the progress required against the QESR recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Assessment & Feedback (turnaround times and quality of feedback) ii) Implementation of the Tutors & Demonstrators training policy iii) Promotion of academic staff based on teaching iv) Learning & Teaching Strategy v) Attainment gap monitoring vi) Pace of change: make progress on recommendations from external reviews which can be evidenced in the next academic year. • Committee to support and monitor the work of the External Review Oversight Group who are taking action to progress the above recommendations. The group will report to SQAC and SEC to allow the Senate Committees to monitor progress against recommendations and ensure that appropriate action is being taken. • Committee will also update wider Senate on developments and progress in order to facilitate understanding of QESR and related external QA requirements. • Committee to give particular focus to progress against Assessment & Feedback and T&D training which have been identified as time critical recommendations following the external review. |
| <p>Regulatory/external requirement?</p> | <p>Yes. This is in response to recommendations made in the QAA ELIR 2021 Report and the later QAA QESR Report (published January 2024).</p> |

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| <p>Priority</p> | <p>Responding to the outcome of the Scottish Funding Council’s Tertiary Quality Review</p> |
| <p>Rationale and fit with remit</p> | <p>A sector-wide Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) for implementation within 2024-25 is being developed (the University has been represented during this development). As above, this fits with the remit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.1 Oversee the delivery and enhancement of the University’s quality assurance framework, ensuring that it meets external requirements. • 2.5 Support the University’s engagement with external quality requirements and activities, including: Enhancement-Led Institutional Review, the UK Quality Code, and responses to consultations and initiatives. |
| <p>Area of focus and objectives</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee to focus on identifying where policy, guidance and practice is updated to align with changes to the TQEF • In line with its remit, the Committee is expected to promote the quality assurance framework as an important part of the University’s activities and ensure that the outcomes inform relevant University business. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee will also update wider Senate on developments and changes in order to facilitate understanding and engagement with the new TQEF. • |
| Regulatory/external requirement? | Yes – mapping to SFC Guidance on Quality is an external requirement. |

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| Priority | Evaluation and monitoring of the implementation and effectiveness of the new student support model (SSM) |
| Rationale and fit with remit | <p>Relevant to committee remit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.5 Support the University’s engagement with external quality requirements and activities, including: Enhancement-Led Institutional Review, the UK Quality Code, and responses to consultations and initiatives. • 2.6 Identify areas for innovation and enhancement of the student experience and ensure that these inform Senate Education Committee’s policy development. |
| Area of focus and objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversight of the evaluation of the implementation of the model (continuation from 2023/24 academic year). The Committee will look to ensure consistency and identify good practice & lessons learned from the use of the SSM. Any relevant lessons learned from implementation will be shared with the University’s change management group. • Oversight of the development of an evaluation mechanism as the model transitions to business as usual – including how this mechanism integrates with existing quality assurance processes. • Committee to be responsible for assessing the effectiveness of the SSM, through the evaluation model and supported by data to evidence the impact. |
| Regulatory/external requirement? | <p>Yes. The University has made progress on the recommendation in ELIR 4 to progress with student support services. Under this recommendation, the University was asked to develop an effective mechanism to monitor consistency of implementation and allow it to evaluate the impact of these changes on the student experience.</p> <p>Equally, evaluation and institutional oversight of the SSM will be an ongoing piece of work that will be the responsibility of SQAC as a quality measure once the project team completes its work.</p> |

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|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Priority | Student Data Monitoring |
| Rationale and fit with remit | Relevant to committee remit: |

| | |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.6 Identify areas for innovation and enhancement of the student experience and ensure that these inform Senate Education Committee’s policy development. • 2.7 Consider the implications of the Committee’s work and its decisions in the context of external initiatives and compliance and legal frameworks, particularly in relation to equality and diversity. |
| <p>Area of focus and objectives</p> | <p>The Committee established a task group in 2019/20 but the work was impacted by Covid-19 disruption. The Committee intend to revive the task group with the objective to adopt a systematic approach to monitoring data at University level across key stages in the student lifecycle. The aim is to understand how well the University supports different student groups throughout their time at Edinburgh. This new systematic approach will fill a gap in our oversight of the student experience at the University and will focus on quality data and high standards of evidence collection and use. Where appropriate, the Committee will consult with APRC to understand relevant policies, behaviours & EIQA analysis.</p> <p>Some aspects of the work of this task group are in alignment with the attainment monitoring recommendation of the QESR. The QESR report requires the University to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the recommendation on attainment gap oversight, coordination and monitoring from ELIR 4, expediting progress to ensure that the work being undertaken is effective. • Pay particular attention to sharing good practice and supporting staff in understanding the causes of attainment gaps and taking effective action. |
| <p>Regulatory/external requirement?</p> | <p>Yes. This was a recommendation in the QAA ELIR 2021 Report and has been re-emphasised in the QAA QESR Report (published January 2024).</p> <p>Furthermore, it is an area of work that the Committee has identified for focus in previous years and now looks to prioritise the package of work that is required.</p> |
| <p>Priority</p> | <p>Enhance Senate understanding of arrangements and effectiveness for quality assurance regarding internal systems and change processes</p> |
| <p>Rationale and fit with remit</p> | <p>Relevant to committee remit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.6 Identify areas for innovation and enhancement of the student experience and ensure that these inform Senate Education Committee's policy development. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Area of focus and objectives | SQAC is to prioritise helping Senate to better understand and scrutinise the arrangements and effectiveness for quality assurance regarding internal systems and change processes, including recent/ongoing changes to Exceptional Circumstances, Timetabling, Student Support, and Virtual Learning platforms. |
| Regulatory/external requirement? | No. This priority has been set at the request of Senate members. |

Priorities for all Senate Standing Committees

8. Senate accepted the following amendment to be applied to all Standing Committees:

Senate notes that committees currently undertake a combination of operational and governance activities, and sets the following supplemental priorities for all committees:

- i. With the Task and Finish group, identify opportunities to clarify the relationship between operations and governance so that Senate committees are ultimately supporting Senate’s governance role with operations led by appropriate role-holders and executive or management committees. This should include working toward a draft delegation schedule for Senate approval.
- ii. Build capacity in Senate to understand and to scrutinise academic policy, strategy, and external compliance activities related to the committee’s remit.

Resource implications

9. Standing Committees’ work has implications not only for Registry Services, but also for the membership and stakeholders the Committee may need to consult and work with in relation to a particular priority. Resource implications should be outlined and considered on an ongoing basis as work on priorities progresses.

Risk management

10. Work on priorities is vital to the Committee fulfilling its remit. Failure to fulfil its remit raises potential risks associated with the University’s framework of academic policy and regulations and the student experience.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

11. This paper does not respond to the climate emergency or contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Equality & diversity

12. Equality and diversity implications should be outlined and considered on an ongoing basis as work on priorities progresses.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

13. Standing committees report updates on their activity to each meeting of Senate. Additionally, the Senate Committees' Newsletter provides information on standing committee business.

Author

Registry Services

20th November 2024

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Senate Quality Assurance Committee

5 December 2024

Internal Periodic Review

Description of paper

1. Reports and responses from the Internal Periodic Review (IPR) process.
2. Fit with remit:

| Quality Assurance Committee | |
|---|---|
| Oversee the delivery and enhancement of the University's quality assurance framework, ensuring that it meets external requirements. | Y |
| Maintain oversight of the outcomes of the quality assurance framework, ensuring that actions are addressed, and support the sharing of good practice. | Y |
| Promote the quality assurance framework as an important part of the University's activities and ensure that the outcomes inform relevant University business. | Y |

Action requested / recommendation

3. The Committee is invited to note and approve:
 - the IPR report from the 2023/24 cycle
 - the progress reports provided in the 14-week responses.

All reports are available here on the Committee SharePoint: [Thursday 5th December 2024](#)

Background and context

4. IPRs form part of the standing items within SQAC business.
5. The IPR reports and responses have been made available to Committee members via the Committee SharePoint and the College Deans of Quality tasked with reviewing the documentation relevant to their College.

Discussion

6. Committee members should be assured that the scrutiny of the College Deans of Quality will identify areas of good practice to share and any recommendations to be tracked through existing quality processes.
7. The College Deans will be invited to highlight themes and issues from the reports and responses relevant to their College.
8. The Committee will be invited to discuss and approve the reports and responses in the light of the College Deans' comments.

Resource implications

9. No additional resource implications.

Risk management

10. The paper does not require a risk assessment.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

11. This paper does not contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals. It is a regulatory requirement.

Equality & diversity

12. An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out on the IPR process. Equality and diversity will be considered as part of any proposed actions.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

13. Comments will be reported back to the School/Subject Area and the reports and responses published on the Academic Services website.

Author

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November 2024

Freedom of Information *Open*