Electronic Senate

E-Senate will commence on Wednesday 13 November 2024
and close at noon on Wednesday 27 November 2024

AGENDA

1 **Conferment of the title of Professor Emeritus / Emerita**   **e-S 24/25 2A**

To approve.

2 **Senate Election Dates 2025-26**   **e-S 24/25 2B**

To note.

3 **Communications from the University Court**   **e-S 24/25 2C**

To note.

4 **Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression Working Group**   **e-S 24/25 2D**

To note the update on progress by the Working Group.

To note the provisional dates for consultation workshops to be held with Senate members:

- Wednesday, 22 January 2025, 13:15 – 14:45
- Wednesday, 22 January 2025, 15:15 – 16:45
- Thursday, 23 January 2025, 12:15 – 13:45

Electronic Senate

13 – 27 November 2024

Conferment of the Title of Emeritus / Emerita Professor

Description of paper

1. The Senate is invited to confer the title of Professor Emeritus / Emerita upon those professors who recently retired or whose retirement is imminent.

Action requested / recommendation

2. To approve. Please note that in the approval of the award of Emeritus/Emerita Professor via e-Senate, a nil response is regarded as assent. Members are invited to submit any comments, observations or reservations using the form available on the Senate Members Portal (Senate member access only). These comments will be added verbatim to the Senate Members Portal e-Senate page where comments can be viewed by other Senate members.

Discussion

3. Senate is invited to confer the title of Professor Emeritus / Emerita upon those professors listed below:

    Professor Frances Fowle, Edinburgh College of Art
    Professor Jeremy Robbins, School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures
    Professor Caroline Watt, School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences
    Dame Professor Moira Whyte, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine

4. The Special Minutes are attached as an appendix.

Resource implications

5. None.

Risk management

6. Not applicable.

Equality & diversity

7. The use of the gendered titles 'emeritus' and 'emerita' may not align with an individual's preferences. The Senate Support Team will respect an individual's preference in title designation.

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

10. Those Professors who have been conferred with the title of Professor Emeritus / Emerita will be contacted by Senate Secretariat in due course.

Author Senate Support, 8 November 2024

Freedom of Information Open paper

Special Minute
Frances Fowle MA (Hons), MSc, Phd, FRSE
Emeritus Professor of Nineteenth-Century Art

Professor Frances Fowle has followed a dual career as art historian and curator, rising to the top of her profession in both areas. She was a lecturer at the universities of Aberdeen and Glasgow, and a curator at Tate Britain before being appointed, in 2005, to a newly created post at the University of Edinburgh - Lecturer in History of Art and Curator of French Art, held jointly with the National Galleries of Scotland. She was promoted to Senior Lecturer and Senior Curator in 2009, to Reader in 2013 and to Personal Chair of Nineteenth-Century Art in 2018. She was International Director of Edinburgh College of Art from 2015 to 2018. Her exhibitions, research and outreach activity over her career have created huge economic, cultural and social impact (case studies REF 2014, REF 2021).

Frances is internationally recognized as a leading scholar and curator of nineteenth-century European and American art, and as a pioneer in the fields of art market studies and global impressionism. She co-edited Yale's first 'born digital' book, *Globalising Impressionism* (2020), listed in *Art in America* as 'one of the five most essential books about Impressionism'. In 2023 her two-volume book *French Painting 1500-1900* was shortlisted for the Saltire Research Book of the Year. Frances is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and has sat on numerous international steering groups, scientific committees and scholarly advisory boards, currently the Netherlands Institute for Art History (RKD) and the Van Gogh Worldwide Project. She was Chair of the Association for Art History (2019-2022), and was co-founder/Board member of TIAMSA, the International Art Market Studies Association, 2016-2022.

Since 2005 Frances has excelled at curating major scholarly 4 and 5 star 'blockbuster' exhibitions in partnership with leading international organisations such as the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, Thyssen Bornemisza Museum, Madrid, Finnish National Gallery, Helsinki, the National Gallery of Ireland and the Terra Foundation, Chicago. She has also worked with the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Belvedere Museum, Vienna, Luxembourg Museum, Paris, British Museum, Tate, Courtauld Institute, and many others. She was the 2022 Van Gogh Museum Visiting Fellow.

Frances is a passionate supporter of the heritage sector in Scotland and has led several projects that focus on widening access and social regeneration, as well as having an international outreach. Since 2016 she has been Chair of the Trustees of the Burrell Collection, which won Art Fund Museum of the Year in 2023. She sat on the Burrell Renaissance Board, which oversaw the museum's five-year £67 million refurbishment. She is patron of Paisley Museum Re-Imagined, a £54 million regeneration project which will transform the city. She is also Chair of the Board of Hospitalfield House, Arbroath, which is undergoing a similar transformation.

In her retirement Frances aims to continue her support of the heritage sector and is involved in several research projects. She also plans to spend time walking, travelling and spending time with her grandson.

Special Minute
Jeremy Robbins BA, DPhil
Emeritus Forbes Professor of Hispanic Studies

Professor Jeremy Robbins is currently Forbes Professor of Hispanic Studies at the University of Edinburgh (since 2004). Jeremy completed a BA (Hons) in Spanish and French and a DPhil at the University of Oxford. He began his academic career as a Stipendiary Lecturer at New College, Oxford (1991–93). His long career at Edinburgh started in 1993, first as Lecturer, then Senior Lecturer, before being appointed to the position of Forbes Chair of Hispanic Studies in 2004, which he held until his retirement in September 2024.

Professor Robbins has demonstrated an exemplary commitment to teaching, research, and citizenship. He is a passionate and inspiring educator and is widely recognised as a leading scholar in the field of Spanish Golden Age Studies.

His research encompasses early modern literature (theatre, prose and poetry), history of ideas (with a particular focus on scepticism), religion (with a focus on the Jesuits), history of art and architecture. His works on the 'epistemological mentality' of the Spanish Golden Age and the 'uncertainty' of those times are now seen as classics. Indeed, in a review of Jeremy's most recently published monograph, Incomparable Realms: Spain during the Golden Age, 1500 – 1700 (2022), Roy Norton writes: 'In recent decades few scholars have contributed as valuably as Jeremy Robbins has to our understanding of the world-view of Golden Age Spaniards'.

In addition to his considerable research achievements, Professor Robbins has also made substantial contributions to the University through key leadership and management roles, especially as Head of the School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures (LLC). He served in this role for eleven years (2011–22), during which he strengthened the School as a hub for learning and research in all its varied disciplines. Jeremy also oversaw the School's move into its new home at 50 George Square. The feeling of community in LLC has been boosted considerably in its award-winning main building.

His extraordinary term as Head of School coincided with some testing times for the sector, not least the coronavirus pandemic, and some developments that created particular difficulties in LLC, such as the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union and from Erasmus+. Jeremy navigated LLC through the tumult of those years with resolution and composure. His strategic leadership and insights have also been seen frequently at University level as he helped to ensure the University would emerge as strongly as possible from the pandemic. Notably, Jeremy chaired the cross-University Study and Work Away Resilience and Development Group (SWARD) from 2020 to 2024.

Professor Robbins is respected not only for his scholarly achievements and leadership; he is also highly regarded as a colleague and a mentor. He has been generous with his time, offering guidance and support to students and colleagues. After all his generosity to the University, we wish him the very best for this new era in his life. Jeremy has just completed a book on the Spanish artist Francisco de Zurbarán, and we look forward to seeing the reactions to this new work very soon.

Special Minute
Caroline Watt MA, PhD
Emeritus Professor of Parapsychology

Caroline A. Watt received an MA (Hons) in Psychology, University of St Andrews, in 1984, and a PhD in Psychology, University of Edinburgh, in 1993. She was appointed Research Associate in June 1986 in the Koestler Parapsychology Unit (KPU) at the University of Edinburgh, promoted to Research Fellow in June 1993 and Senior Research Fellow in October 2004. Following the restructuring of the KPU, she was appointed to a senior lectureship through an externally advertised competition in February 2006. In August 2016, she was promoted to Koestler Chair of Parapsychology at the University of Edinburgh.

Caroline has always had a strong commitment to leadership and management, evidenced by her numerous Department, School, College and University level roles. She took leadership of the KPU in 2006, one of the world's few endowed University centres for parapsychological research and one of the few sources of authoritative and balanced information about the 'paranormal' for the public. She was also co-founder and mentor of PsychPALS (2010-2013), PPLS's first Peer Assisted Learning Scheme. She developed PPLS's first and most profitable online course in 2008, an Introduction to Parapsychology, which ran successfully until September 2023, with the majority of income re-invested to support PPLS students, research and knowledge exchange activities.

Caroline's major research interests are the psychology of paranormal belief and experience (approx. 30 peer-reviewed journal publications), and methodological and replication issues in parapsychology (approx. 30 peer-reviewed journal publications). The highest impact comes from her inauguration, together with Jim Kennedy, of parapsychology's first and only Study Registry in 2012, now used by parapsychologists to reduce ambiguity over interpretation of study outcomes. With parapsychology readily attracting public interest, it is an excellent vehicle for Knowledge Exchange. She has over 170 publications (Google Scholar, h=26, > 3400 citations), given multiple interviews in mainstream media/podcasts, invited talks at national and international symposia and congresses, and curated part of the exhibit "The Art of Science" at the University's Visitor Centre. She is an ambassador for both parapsychology and the University of Edinburgh at national and international levels. She has received several significant external research grants, including the WAS award for a PhD Studentship, multiple Bial Foundation Grants, and the Perrott-Warrick Senior Researcher fellowship.

Caroline's teaching includes Methods and Controversies in Parapsychology, Methodologies and Statistics, Meta-Analysis (undergraduate), and Methods for the Study of Anomalies, Beliefs, and Extended Communication, and Methodological Issues in Parapsychology (MSc). Since her open-ended appointment in 2006, she has principally supervised five postgraduate students and co-supervised an additional four. She has served as internal and external PhD examiner for a number of students.

Throughout her career, Caroline Watt has retained a balanced and informed approach to parapsychology that is designed to stimulate critical thinking. An engaging teacher, she has shown a particular commitment to supporting widening participation and the development of students and researchers from under-represented groups within the University. She has made major contributions to academic life at the University of Edinburgh and will continue to stimulate the thinking of her colleagues within the School and elsewhere.

Special Minute
Dame Moira Whyte DBE, FRSE, FMedSci
Emerita Professor of Respiratory Medicine

Moira Whyte has most recently been Head of College for CMVM and was recently made a Dame in the King's New Years Honours list. She continues to support clinical academic training and mentorship as her major link to the University.

Over the last decade Moira Whyte has altruistically given time and effort to support with great success the careers of younger clinician scientists, and medical doctors who lead research. Furthermore, she has served as a champion and role model for women on this challenging career path, in which women have been worryingly under-represented for far too long.

She has enjoyed a stellar career in clinical science, culminating in Headship of Respiratory Medicine and Directorship of the MRC Centre for Inflammation Research in Edinburgh and then appointment as the first female Dean of Medicine in the 300 years at Edinburgh Medical School.

Her exceptional and unselfish national contribution has been "above and beyond the call of duty". She has provided voluntary leadership to the Medical Research Council, the UK Government's major investment in discovery science for health; she has served as Chair of the Clinical Fellowships panel (similar in importance to "Chair of Selectors" for a national sports team); and then as Chair of the MRC Training and Career Development Board, overseeing strategic deployment of a budget in excess of £60m per year. This unpaid role also requires membership of the MRC's top peer review panel, the Strategy Board.

Moira was the first woman to be elected to the key national voluntary leadership role of Registrar of the Academy of Medical Sciences (one of only four academies supported by the UK Government) and was the driving force behind the ground-breaking and successful SUSTAIN programme that has retained post-PhD clinicians, particularly women, in academic medicine.

The College fully supports Professor Whyte being offered emerita status

Electronic Senate

13 – 27 November 2024

Senate Election Dates 2024-25

Description of paper

1. The paper provides Senate with information on the proposed nomination deadline and election dates for staff seeking election to Senate in 2025.

2. The paper provides Senate with information on the proposed nomination deadline and election dates for elected members of Senate seeking election to a Senate standing committee in 2025.

Action requested / recommendation

3. Senate is asked to note the proposed dates.

4. Any comments on this paper should made via the e-Senate form on the Senate Members Portal.

Background and context

5. Annual elections are held to elect academic staff members to Senate. These elections are conducted under the Senate Election Regulations.

6. Under the Senate Election Regulations, the call for nominations for each election will be made after 31 January each year. The nomination deadline and election date will be formally confirmed by Senate at its first meeting following this date. This meeting is scheduled to take place on 5 February 2025.

7. The election of student members of Senate is managed by the Edinburgh University Students' Association.

8. Three places on each Senate standing committees are allocated to elected members of Senate, with each position nominally assigned to a college. Current elected academic staff members of Senate plus Senate Assessors and the Academic Staff Member of Court are able to self-nominate for a position on one of the three Senate standing committees. In the event that the number of eligible nominations for a committee exceeds the three available places, an election would be held to determine which nominees are assigned to the membership of the committee.

9. At the conclusion of the 2024 Senate standing committees election process, for Senate elected members, three vacancies remained in the membership of two Senate standing committees. To increase the number of nominations received in 2025, it is proposed that the nominations process be brought forward and be extended from two to three weeks. It is also proposed that the timescale for online voting be extended from one to two weeks.

Discussion

10. The proposed dates for the Senate elections are as follows:

Wednesday 26 February 2025	Nominations open
Wednesday 26 March 2025 (12 noon)	Nominations close
Wednesday 16 April 2025 (9am) to Wednesday 30 April 2025 (12 noon)	Voting open online
By Friday 16 May 2025	Results announced

11. Possible conflicts and mitigating factors:

   a. Flexible learning week takes place from 17 February to 21 February 2025, which is prior to the proposed nomination period. It is possible that some academic staff will take annual leave around this week. However, the length of the nomination period (one month) should ensure that all staff have opportunities to participate in the process.

   b. Nominations and voting will take place online, therefore will remain accessible to staff working across different campuses and from home.

   c. Nominations will be open for a full month, and voting will be open for two weeks, which is intended to ensure that all staff are able to access the process.

   d. The nomination process will be completed before the Spring teaching vacation, with the bulk of online voting taking place after the Spring teaching vacation (7-18 April 2025).

12. The proposed dates for the Senate Standing Committee Elections are as follows:

Wednesday 7 May 2025	Nominations open
Wednesday 28 May 2025 (12 noon)	Nominations close
Wednesday 11 June 2025 (9am) to Wednesday 25 June 2025 (12 noon)	Voting open online
By Friday 4 July 2025	Results announced

13. The 2024 Senate and Senate Standing Committee Elections were conducted by Civica Electoral Services. The process for nomination and voting will be clearly communicated to eligible staff and elections will continue to be supported by Academic Quality and Standards staff with input from ISG as required.

Resource implications

14. The resource implications for managing the administrative tasks required for the election will be primarily be met within Academic Quality and Standards.

15. The University's Information Services Group has outsourced the running of elections to Civica Electoral Services and the budget required for this will be met by ISG.

Risk management

16. The University's Risk Policy and Risk Appetite statement refers to the University holding 'no appetite for any breaches in statute, regulation.' Senate elections are mandated by University Ordinance 212.

Equality & diversity

17. Ordinance 212: Composition of Senatus Academicus was subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) (published on the [Equality and Diversity webpages](#)). The EIA recommended publicising elections through a broad range of channels, to ensure that staff in all categories are aware of opportunities to stand for election, and this will be taken into account in planning election communications.

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

18. Any comments will be taken into consider in election planning. The final timetable will be presented to Senate for approval in February 2025

Author

Fraser Rudge
Committees and Governance Manager, Clerk to Senate
11 November 2024

Freedom of Information - Open

Senate

13 – 27 November 2024

Communications from the University Court

Description of paper
1. To update Senate on certain matters considered by the University Court at its meetings held on 3 and 7 October 2024.

Action requested / recommendation
2. Senate is invited to note the report.

Background and context
3. The University Court routinely reports to Senate on business which is of interest to Senate.

Discussion
4. Please see Appendix 1 for a report of business conducted at the October meetings.

Resource implications
5. Where applicable, as covered in the report.

Risk management
6. Where applicable, as covered in the report.

Equality and diversity
7. Where applicable, as covered in the report.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed
8. Regular reports on the Court's work of interest to Senate will continue to be submitted.

Author
Daniel Wedgwood
Governance & Court Services
November 2024

Freedom of Information
Open Paper

Appendix 1:

3 October 2024

1   Special Meeting

Court held a special meeting on Thursday 3 October 2024 to give additional time to consider the reports of two Short-Life Working Groups on aspects of responsible investment. The outcomes of this are described in a statement published here:
University Court Statement on Responsible Investment | The University of Edinburgh

7 October 2024

2   Principal's Report

The Principal's report was noted. Key points in the report included the following:

- Successful events had been hosted by the University, the Students' Association and the Sports Union to mark the beginning of the new academic year and welcome new students.
- There had been engagement with UK Government over the future of supercomputing.
- National pay negotiations had concluded.
- The Compliance Group had been replaced by the Speakers and Events Oversight Group, with an expanded membership and remit;
- The Edinburgh Book Festival had been hosted successfully at the University's Edinburgh Futures Institute.
- A number of University-linked athletes had participated at the Paris Olympic Games.

3   Senate report

Court received a report of e-Senate Business conducted between 3 June and 14 June 2024 and a report of non-contentious business considered by Senate at its inquorate reconvened meeting held on 18 June 2024.

4   Externally-Facilitated Effectiveness Review: Recommendations

Court considered proposed responses, based on initial consideration by Nominations Committee, to the recommendations of the report of the externally-facilitated effectiveness review of Court and its committees. Broad responses and next steps were agreed.

5   Student Experience: Student Surveys 2024 Results and Response

Court received a summary of the University's results in the National Student Survey and the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey, alongside an overview of current work to enhance the student experience. The University's results from the National Student Survey (NSS) 2024 had been low in key areas in context of the sector and in comparison to benchmark institutions. While these results were concerning, major pieces of work were already underway that aimed to address the areas where improvement was required. This work was expected to be reflected positively in future years' surveys.

Relevant work included measures to achieve a maximum time-limit for provision of feedback on student assessments and an ongoing review of course and programme offerings. The Student Support Model was generating positive feedback and this was expected to be reflected in future years' surveys.

Variation in performance in the NSS across the University was noted and it was agreed that examples of high performance should be celebrated and relevant good practice shared.

6   College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine

Court approved proposals to modernise the structure and governance of the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine (CMVM) and as a result enable greater transparency and consistency within CMVM and create more consistent structures across the Colleges. The proposed modernisation programme was designed to support strategic decision-making.

Impacts on the student experience were discussed and it was noted that the student experience had been a key motivation for the modernisation proposals. There would be further consultation with students as more detailed plans were developed under the new framework.

7   Estates

Court considered and approved Estates projects that required Court approval to progress under the Delegated Authority Schedule.

8   Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Outcome Framework and Assurances Model

Court was also informed of changes in the ways universities are required to report to the Scottish Funding Council.

9   Other Items

Regular reports were received from Court's committees, the Director of Finance, the Students' Association and Sports Union and the Development & Alumni Office.

Electronic Senate

13 – 27 November 2024

**Current Progress within the Academic Freedom and
Freedom of Expression Working Group**

Description of paper

1. This paper is intended to update Senate on the current progress of the University Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression Working Group. It is also intended to highlight further sources of information about this work as well as to notify Senate of plans to consult with it.

Action requested / Recommendation

2. Senate is asked to note the contents of the paper.

Background and context

3.1. Academic Freedom is a legal affordance that is foundational to universities, education, and research (cf. Section 26, Further and Higher Education [Scotland] Act 2005). Freedom of Expression, a legal affordance of the Human Rights Act (1988) which incorporates Article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights, is fundamental to democracy.

3.2. Freedom of expression is the right to hold and express opinions freely. An open and democratic society requires an unwavering commitment to freedom of expression in all its forms, including both the spoken and written word, as well as actions, gestures images intended to show meaning. It applies to information or ideas that are favourable, but also to those that people might find offensive or shocking, as long as they do not meet the threshold of hate speech, harassment, discrimination, or inciting violence.

3.3. Academic freedom means academics can express their opinions, question established ideas, and develop new ones, and present controversial or unpopular points of view, without placing their employment at risk.

3.4. While being distinct concepts, freedom of expression is relevant to academic freedom because academic freedom must also be exercised within the bounds of the law. If something is an unlawful exercise of freedom of expression, it will not be lawful simply because an academic says it, or because it takes place in an academic context.

REFRESHED WORKING GROUP

3.5. The University of Edinburgh established an Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression Working Group in 2023. Following approval by the University Executive, the Working Group has been refreshed with new Terms of Reference adopted and a new membership. The outcome of this decision was the creation of a Working Group that contained a Coordinating Group to oversee the programme of work and several Work Streams and Task and Finish Groups: a Legislation and Policy (formerly: Legislation) Work Stream; an Education and Curriculum Work Stream; a Challenges Work Stream; and a Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Work Stream; a Research Task and Finish Group; and an Institutional Support (formerly: Pastoral Care) Task and Finish Group.

3.6. The Legislation and Policy Work Stream works to ensure an up-to-date, transparent, and supportive, framework of core policies and procedures that facilitate academic freedom and freedom of expression, that is compliant with current legislation and sector regulations, and which builds upon evolving good practice. It also aims to provide general guidance on issues related to academic freedom from a regulatory and legislative perspective, and to promote the aims of academic freedom University-wide

3.7. The Education and Curriculum Work Stream considers aspects of academic freedom and freedom of expression in the context of curriculum and education (learning, and teaching), with the aim of fostering an environment that encourages open dialogue, critical thinking, and the respectful exchange of diverse perspectives.

3.8. The Challenges Work Stream considers, for example, disinformation, (self-censorship), online harassment (from a preventative perspective), and forms of interference.

3.9. The Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Work Stream considers the intersection between Academic Freedom, Freedom of Expression and Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). Its guiding question concerns how our university community can celebrate its diversity, including intellectual, affirming the democratic principles of academic freedom and freedom of expression, while fostering a respectful and inclusive environment?

3.10. The Research Task and Finish Group investigates what our large and diverse university community understands about academic freedom and freedom of expression and how the university community experiences academic freedom and freedom of expression. Its remit is to provide the wider working group with evidence that can inform our on-going activities.

3.11. The Institutional Support Task and Finish Group considers policies and approaches to supporting students and colleagues who encounter unwanted publicity or who are attacked due to their exercising of academic freedom and freedom of expression, or who experience distress due to somebody else's exercising of their academic freedom and freedom of expression.

Discussion

WORKING GROUP MODEL

4.1. The refreshed Working Group was conceived of as a networked approach which distributes leadership and builds the necessary structural scope and scale to undertake the ambitious programme of work into the medium to long term. As such, it is not focused around one individual as a single point of failure, but rather is led by a variety of people; drawing tougher expertise from across the University community. A Coordinating Group provides oversight across the totality of activity to ensure integration.

POPULATING THE WORKING GROUP

4.2. To achieve a refreshed Working Group, an open call for participation was made across the University community via email and the Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression website. This approach was adopted to foreground openness; to build neutrality; and to mitigate against bias.

4.3. The Working Group engages in a, sometimes, contested space within a large, diverse, community context and a macro societal setting. In a contested space, an understanding of multiple perspectives is arguably important. As such, the way in which the Working Group was populated mattered. Drawing together multiple perspectives and seeking to foreground participation was judged critical (as reflected in the open call to the university community).

4.4. Two opportunities to be involved were offered: to contribute on an on-going basis through the Working Group itself; or to offer expertise as an Expert Contributor on a more *ad hoc* basis. In the pursuit of a diverse membership, drawn from across our university community, work was undertaken in collaboration with HR: Talent and Development, as those experienced in selection. They advised on the creation of a new process, open to all, that would contain dialogue as an inherent feature of its approach. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was published at the start of April 2024.

4.5. Forty-seven Expressions of Interest were received. Two stages to the selection process were established. Firstly, a panel who had no prior involvement in the original Working Group, drawn from across academic and professional services, helped to shortlist the expressions of interest against criteria that HR had developed. Twenty-nine people were shortlisted and proceeded to a second, final, stage. In this part, a facilitated dialogue focused on a short Times Higher Education (THE) article which described the negative experiences of an academic who had shared their scientific expertise in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. This activity was shaped by the Institutional Care Task and Finish Group's guiding question: 'How can the University effectively and consistently support and protect colleagues who encounter unwanted publicity, who are attacked, or who experience distress, due to their exercising of academic freedom and freedom of expression or due to somebody else's exercising of these rights?'

4.6. Initial feedback from the discussion groups was that the dialogue was an enjoyable and positive experience. Observers, drawn from across HR and professional services, noted individual group behaviours against pre-determined criteria. As in the previous stage, individual opinions and beliefs were not assessed; rather, dispositions and a commitment to work with others to further the Working Group's endeavour was paramount.

4.7. Participants were allocated to various parts of the Working Group's structure, with their expression of interest answers informing their positioning. This task included inviting those holding certain *ex officio* roles to participate (e.g., Joint Trade Unions; Edinburgh University Student Association; HR, Legal Manager, etc), to provide critical connection into the wider university.

4.8. Some Expressions of Interest opted to become Expert Contributors whom the Working Group (Work Streams and Task and Finish Groups) could draw upon, as needed. There is a rolling open call for Expert Contributors to join the Working Group. Expertise is pivotal to the Working Group as is the utilisation of the breadth of expertise that exists across the University community.

4.9. Four current members of Senate (Shereen Benjamin, Sam Coombes, Bernd Schroers and Brodie Runciman) are members of the Working Group.

PROGRAMME OF WORK AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

4.10. Planning sessions are underway to identify the outcomes and tasks for each work stream and task and finish group, in line with their respective (University Executive) agreed Terms of Reference. This will be completed in November 2024 and will provide a comprehensive, coordinated, programme and communication plan for the Working Group.

4.11. The Working Group aligns with the project and change methodologies adopted in the University; for example, Prosci.

COMMUNICATION

4.12. A variety of communication approaches have been taken to inform about the Working Group's progress: a website was established in February 2024; regular blog updates have been posted to the Working Group's website (an accompanying facility exists to subscribe by email for updates); an article was published in the University Bulletin in April 2024 to highlight the existence of the Working Group's website with a

further University Bulletin article in late October; updates were also provided to University Court for the April, June, and October 2024 meetings.

4.13. The Working Group is planning to provide an update to University Executive in December (12th December).

4.14. With the Working Group populated and the programme of work being established, a consultation workshop is being planned for Senate members in January 2025. It will run several times to maximise the engagement opportunity.

Resource implications

5. No action is proposed in this paper.

Risk Management

6. No action is proposed in this paper.

Responding to the Climate Emergency and Sustainable Development Goals

7. Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression articulate with SDG4 'Quality Education' and SDG 16: 'Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions'.

Equality and Diversity

8. No action is proposed in this paper.

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

9. No immediate action is proposed in this paper.

In due course, the deliverables resulting from the Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression Working Group will require communication and implementation support.

Consultation

10. No action is proposed in this paper.

Further information

| **Author(s)** | **Presenter(s) (if required)** |

David Smith

Convenor: University Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression Working Group

Freedom of information

Open