



Senatus Academicus

Wednesday 11 December 2024, 1:10-4pm

Larch Lecture Theatre, Nucleus, Kings Buildings / Microsoft Teams

Members attending the meeting in person are asked to please bring a device to enable them to access electronic voting which will be undertaken using Wooclap, if required.

AGENDA

1 Welcome and Apologies

2 Minutes and e-Senate Reports – 5 minutes

To approve the minutes of the meetings held on:

- 22 May 2024. **S 24/25 2A**
- 18 June 2024 (includes June 2024 e-Senate report). **S 24/25 2B**
- 9 October 2024 **S 24/25 2C**

To approve the e-Senate reports of:

- 11-25 September 2024. **S 24/25 2D**
- 13-27 November 2024. **S 24/25 2E**

2.1 Matters arising

To consider any matters arising.

3 Convener's Communications – 10 minutes

Verbal Update

4 Senate Action Log

S 24/25 2F

To note updates to the Senate Action Log.

5 Update on the Finance, HR and Research Improvement Programme – 15 minutes

S 24/25 2G

To receive an update on the Finance, HR and Research Improvement Programme.

6 Update on Timetabling and Course Selection – 15 minutes

S 24/25 2H

To receive an update on Timetabling and Course Selection.

- 7 Curriculum Transformation update - Edinburgh Student Vision – 30 minutes** **S 24/25 2I**
- To discuss the Edinburgh Student Vision and to approve it for use as a key reference point for the Curriculum Transformation Programme and for learning & teaching more broadly.
- 8 Update on the Learning and Teaching Strategy – 20 minutes** **S 24/25 2P**
- To receive an update on the development of the Learning and Teaching Strategy and plans for implementation.
- 9 Senate External Review Task and Finish Group**
- 9.1 Senate Business Committee – 15 minutes** **S 24/25 2J**
- To approve the proposal to form a Senate Business Committee.
- 10 Generative AI: Teaching, Learning, Sustainability, and Data Security – 15 minutes** **S 24/25 2K**
- To discuss the paper.
- 11 Budget Resilience, Teaching, and Research – 15 minutes** **S 24/25 2L**
- To discuss the paper.

Items for information

12 Senate Standing Committees

To note the following:

- Standing Committee Remits - Interim Update. **S 24/25 2M**
- Senate Standing Committees – upcoming business. **S 24/25 2N**
- The outcome of elections to Senate Standing Committees. **S 24/25 2O**

13 Date of next meeting: 5 February 2025



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Senatus Academicus

Wednesday 22 May 2024 at 2-5 pm

Larch Lecture Theatre, Nucleus Kings Buildings or Teams

Unconfirmed Minute

Attendees: Peter Adkins, Gill Aitken, Mteeve Amugune, Arianna Andreangeli, Ruth Andrew, Jake Ansell, Mohammad Amir Anwar, David Argyle, Kate Ash-Irisarri, Sharan Atwal, Nikos Avramidis, Vansh Bali, Kasia Banas, Michael Barany, Sian Bayne, Matt Bell, Shereen Benjamin, Philip Best, Richard Blythe, Holly Branigan, Mary Brennan, Christina Boswell, Julian Bradfield, Mary Brennan, Aidan Brown, Tom Bruce, Celine Caquineau, Jeremy Carrette, Neil Chue Hong, Martin Corley, Miguel Costa-Gomes, Juan Cruz, Brenda Cundy, Sarah Cunningham-Burley, Jo Danbolt, Sumari Dancer, Jamie Davies, Ricardo De Oliveira Almeida, Chris Dent, Charlotte Desvages, John Devaney, Simone Dimartino, Kevin Donovan, Claire Duncanson, Agata Dunsmore, Murray Earle, Andrea English, Jite Eferakorho, Tonks Fawcett, Samantha Fawkner, Valentina Ferlito, Manuel Fernandez-Gotz, Vashti Galpin, Benjamin Goddard, Richard Gratwick, Emily Ford-Halliday, Beatrix Frissell, Stuart Gilfillan, Iain Gordon, Kim Graham, Patrick Hadoke, Colm Harmon, Gareth Harrison, Tina Harrison, Helen Hastie, David Hay, Thorunn Helgason, Melissa Highton, James Hopgood, Gbenga Ibikunle, David Ingram, Jakov Jandric, Aarnesh Kapoor, Itamar Kastner, Jim Kaufman, James Keeley, Tobias Kelly, Louise Kelso, Meryl Kenny, George Kinnear, Linda Kirstein, David Kluth, Dave Laurenson, Andy Law, Steff Lewis, Tom Leinster, Ashley Lloyd, Jason Love, Ewa Luger, Sophia Lycouris, Antony Maciocia, Alistair McCormick, Cait MacPhee, Sam Marks, Rebecca Marsland, Lorna Marson, Peter Mathieson, Gavin McLachlan, Avery Meiksin, Steven Morley, Susan Morrow, Simon Mudd, Rachel Muers, Lyndsay Murray, Rupert Nash, Pau Navarro, Max Nyman, Steven O'Hagan, Richard Oosterhoff, Natalia Penar, Jon Pridham, Sarah Prescott, Colin Pulham, David Quinn, Alma Kalina Riessler, Ken Rice, Simon Riley, Hollie Rowlands, Ricardo Ribeiro Ferreira, Simon Riley, Aryelly Rodriguez Carbonell, Maximilian Ruffert, Eberhard Sauer, Marion Schmid, Ash Scholz, Bernd Schroers, Matthias Schwannauer, Pablo Schyfter Camacho, Jo Shaw, Geoff Simm, David Smith, Sean Smith, Gavin Sullivan, Emily Taylor, Alex Thomson, Tamara Trodd, Uzma Tufail-Hanif, Nadia Tuzi, Jeremy Upton, Patrick Walsh, Stephen Warrington, Michele Weiland, Christopher Weir, Iain Wright, Qingchi Wu, Ingrid Young, Ansgar Zoch

In attendance: Adam Bunni, Anne-Marie Coriat, Lisa Dawson, Sinead Docherty, Lucy Evans, Lee Hamill, Olivia Hayes, Patrick Jack, Louise Kelso, Nichola Kett, Cristina Matthews, Lee-Anne Mitchell, Dave Robertson, Lorna Thomson, Jon Turner.

Apologies: Matthew Bailey, Laura Bickerton, Kelly Blacklock, Chandon Bose, Laura Bradley, Adam Budd, John Cairns, Jane Calvert, Leigh Chalmers, Sharon Cowan, Jeremy Crang, Karen Dawson, Hannah Dong, Gillian Gray, Kate Hardwick, Pia Helbing, Sarah Henderson, Emma Hunter, Kirstin James, Laura Jeffery, Lesley McAra, Carmel Moran, Andrew Morris, Chris Mowat, Bryne Ngwenya, Ailsa Niven, Diana Paton, Wayne Powell, Tobias Schwarz, Mike Shipston, James Smith, Tim Stratford, Melissa Terras, Frank Venter, Mark Williams

The Convener, Principal Sir Professor Peter Mathieson, opened the meeting and confirmed that Senate had reached quorum.

1. Convener's Communications

The Convener provided an update to Senate on a range of items:

Financial situation in the University sector

- The sustainability of university finances is causing anxiety and concern across the sector, with some institutions expressing concern regarding their continued existence. This is the case across all types of institutions, including ancient universities.
- Edinburgh remains in a strong position in Scotland and the UK, however is not immune to the financial pressures.
- Financial pressures have arisen due to national discussions around immigration and the role of students within this, as well as inflation and rising costs when compared with income.

Review of the Migration Advisory Committee

- A report was published last week which concluded that the graduate visa route is working as expected.
- This is a good outcome; however, it is unclear what the government's response to the report will be.

University encampment and protests regarding Gaza and the University's investments

- The Convener highlighted two unique elements regarding the Edinburgh encampment and protests:
 - There are students participating in a hunger strike. This is a source of great anxiety to the Convener and he would like to see the hunger strikes come to an end. The University has appointed an independent mediator to offer their services to the protestors.
 - Lord Balfour was the Chancellor of the University for a period of 30 years and this included the time of the Balfour Declaration. The University is undertaking a Race Review and the group responsible for undertaking the review has been asked to extend their remit to include Lord Balfour, and the historical links and current relationship with Israel and Palestine. The Race Review is expected to be published by the end of the year.

Sustainable Travel Policy and University Executive response:

- The University Executive have received the report on the Sustainable Travel Policy and will honour the commitment to provide the report to Senate and the wider University community.
- The report was received late, and has been shared with key colleagues in finance, procurement, and sustainability for a response. These responses were discussed by the University Executive when they met last week.

- The Convener advised that the report and the proposed response would be circulated to Senate in the week commencing 10 June. The response goes beyond the recommendations of the report. The recommendations have been accepted with some minor exceptions.

Letter from the Secretary of State for Science and Innovation in the UK Government:

- The University received confirmation that UK Government funding for a £900 million exascale supercomputer will be awarded to Edinburgh.
- It was also confirmed that Artificial Intelligence research resources would also be situated in Edinburgh, signalling a significant investment in Edinburgh from the current UK Government.

One member questioned the continued delay in sharing the Sustainable Travel Policy report, noting that it is encouraging to hear the recommendations of the report have been accepted, though expressing caution as to whether this is welcome news without the contents of the report being available. The member also reflected on concerns regarding the usage of a travel management service and of business class travel in the context of the University's current financial situation.

The Convener reiterated his commitment that the report and proposed response would be circulated to Senate in the week commencing 10 June and explained that the response goes beyond the recommendations of the report, which explains why the report will not be circulated without the accompanying response.

2. Senate Minutes & e-Senate Reports - S 23/24 2A

For approval

- Minutes of 7 February 2024
- Report of 24 April- 8 May e-Senate 2024

The Convener noted that corrections to the 7 February 2024 minute have been incorporated. A further correction will be incorporated as a Clerk's note to the Sustainability item which will include reference to the 2023 QS Sustainability Rankings.

The Convener invited Senate to approve the 7 February 2024 minutes as presented subject to the correction outlined. Senate approved the minutes as presented without requiring a vote.

The Convener invited Senate to approve the Report of E-Senate for 24 April – 8 May 2024 as presented. Senate approved the report as presented without requiring a vote.

One member commented on the lack of response received to questions raised via the e-Senate process. They identified the redirection of Senate items as one matter queried during the recent e-Senate where they would appreciate a response. The member suggested that the e-Senate process and closing the feedback loop be considered by the Senate Task and Finish Group. The Senate Clerk confirmed that e-Senate is one of the areas for the Task and Finish Group

to consider and the members comments would be shared with the group for consideration.

Action: Senate Clerk to refer comments regarding e-Senate and closing feedback loop to the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group.

3. **Matters Arising - S 23/24 2B**

- [Senate Action Log](#)

The Convener highlighted that a summary of actions completed from the Senate Action Log was circulated as a paper to note. The Action Log includes an additional column with a brief summary of the outcome. The Action Log remains a live document and will continue to be updated.

A member expressed the understanding that the action log was intended to bring Senate clarity as to the outcomes of decisions Senate has made but was concerned that it has turned out to be narrowly tailored to track only whether decisions have been communicated rather than what actions have followed from the decisions. The member noted that the Principal had last year not accepted a paper asking for updates on decisions Senate had taken and it was explained that the action log was the appropriate mechanism for tracking decisions of Senate. The member expressed the view that the lack of information about the effect of Senate decisions is a matter of great concern for understanding Senate's effectiveness.

The member urged Senate to think about the bigger picture of what Senate does and the consequences of its decisions. The member stated that the Action Log is narrowly tailored around tracking the communication of Senate decisions to areas responsible and that if Senate decisions are to have meaning these should be recorded on the Action Log for tracking as appropriate. The member concluded that it is important to understand whether Senate decisions are being carried out by responsible areas and the Action Log should provide the mechanism for tracking this and providing feedback on Senate's effectiveness.

The Convener explained that the Senate action log was to record where Senate takes an action. The Convener agreed that there needs to be an improved communication pathway for other parties to report back to Senate, and will consider how this can be taken forward.

Action: Senate Convener and Senate Clerk to consider communication pathway for reporting back to Senate.

ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

4. **Conferral of Awards – CLOSED**

- **School of Literature, Languages and Cultures - S 23/24 3C**
- **Undergraduate Medicine and Veterinary Medicine (MVM) students - S 23/24 3D**

Senate approved the conferral of awards on graduates from the School of Literature, Languages and Cultures and College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine (MVM) without requiring a vote.

**5. Report from the Honorary Degrees Committee – S 23/24 3E
CLOSED**

For approval

Ms Lucy Evans introduced this item and highlighted that additional detail has been provided for each nominee based on Senate's feedback. Ms Evans welcomed questions on the report from Senate.

Senate approved the Report from the Honorary Degrees Committee without requiring a vote.

ITEMS TO COMMENT

6. College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine Modernisation programme - S 23/24 3F

To comment

Professor David Argyle, Head of College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine introduced the paper and accompanying slides. He explained that the paper represented considerable consultation which had taken place within the College over the last 18 months.

The proposal presents a simplified version of the current structure, with a six-School model proposed, and the removal of Deaneries and combining of Institutes. The revised structure would be supported by a revised Professional Services structure.

Professor Argyle explained that the programme is now within its consultation phase, with Senate members invited to contribute via an open portal. He explained the timeframe for the modernisation programme and that a change impact assessment and Equality Impact Assessment were still to take place. The establishment of School names and critical infrastructure will follow once these assessments have taken place.

Senate members made the following points:

- A member reflected on the wide consultation though low response rate from staff. They discussed the changes within their local area and reported that few colleagues were aware of the restructure. They felt there would be value in providing tangible examples of how the restructure will affect staff on a day-to-day basis for staff to provide meaningful feedback and engagement with the consultation. The member's perception was that colleagues were concerned about the potential impact on education and a potential segregation of teaching.

The Head of College encouraged staff to attend the town halls and provided reassurance around these being a meaningful way to engage with the restructure.

The College Registrar expanded on the next stage of consultation and acknowledged that a range of communication methods is required to reach all colleagues. Engagement has been focussed on a top-down and ground-up approach with the next stage of engagement to focus on reaching staff not

previously covered and clarifying how the structure will affect staff on a day-to-day basis.

- The CAHSS Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Validation queried where the Dean of Quality for CMVM would be situated in the new structure as this was not included in the diagram presented to Senate.

The College Registrar confirmed that a Dean of Quality would be included in the new structure and the College are working with the current Dean of Quality to establish where this role fits within the revised structure.

- A member suggested that the restructure was a good opportunity for the College to develop a workload model which aligns with that of other Colleges and they felt this should be explicitly incorporated at an early stage in the restructure plans.

The Head of College and College Registrar stated that the plans for a College-wide workload model are included in the larger pack of documentation and that work towards expanding a workload model across the College is taking place. The College is working with their counterparts in CAHSS and CSE to share best practice and learn how a wider-scale roll out has been achieved in other areas.

- A member welcomed the College Registrar's comments reflecting the consideration of the impact of changes on academic, clinical, and professional services staff. The member welcomed some elements relating to change management and highlighted other areas which should also be accounted for, including the need for a detailed risk assessment, a need for change to reflect the on-the-ground experience of staff and consideration of the University's relationship with the NHS. The member sought to clarify that the process and timelines for implementation take account of the lessons learnt from other University change management projects.

The Head of College explained that the timelines presented were for approval of the structure, and not for implementation of the revised structure.

The Convener also explained that engagement with the NHS on the restructure has been positive at a high level.

- A member sought to clarify what problems the restructure was intended to solve and that it would be helpful for non-CMVM staff to understand what the main issues and risks are. The member also queried what would happen to staff whose research and teaching teams are split in the new structure.

The Head of College explained that there is currently a high degree of complexity between Deaneries, Institutes and Schools and which areas individual staff belong to, which the revised structure seeks to simplify. The proposals put forward are based on feedback from staff, with a pulse survey undertaken across the College and a significant amount of work taking place toward improvements made in response to staff feedback.

- A member queried whether an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) has taken place and whether this includes specific provision for women and minority groups to provide anonymised EQIA will take place in the next phase of work,

with the EDI Committees providing input into the Assessment. The EQIA would provide anonymised opportunity for staff to feed into this and this would include provision for gender specific and minority groups to feed into the Assessment.

- The College Registrar noted that the College is planning for the 300-year anniversary of the Medical School in 2026 and considering how these celebrations can be integrated into the restructure plans.
- A member reflected on there being a communication issue with colleagues 'on the ground' unaware of the forthcoming changes. The member believed that the town hall events had been useful, however there are long gaps between updates and suggested that an Action Log be developed on the CMVM SharePoint for staff to access real-time updates via this portal.

The College Registrar explained that there was a series of FAQs on the CMVM SharePoint site which includes an Action Log and provides real-time updates. The College will consider means to empower local leadership to share these resources in their areas.

The Convener reminded Senate that a link to provide further comments on questions on the CMVM restructure would be posted on the Senate Members Portal and members informed once this link is available.

ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

7. Senate Letter from the Encampment - S 23/24 3G

Senate noted the letter.

Student Welfare, Investment Policy, and Research Expertise - S 23/24 3H

For approval

Dr Peter Adkins and Dr Claire Duncanson introduced the item and extended their thanks to the Senate Convener and Senate Clerk for incorporating the late paper into the billet.

Dr Adkins provided an overview of the paper and explained the paper is intended to represent a broad University view on this topic. There are deep concerns amongst the student and staff community regarding the ongoing hunger strike.

Each of the motions within the paper were introduced in turn.

Dr Adkins and Dr Duncanson expressed their concern students felt it necessary to protest through hunger strike and drew on comparable institutions where amicable agreement has been reached with protestors.

The paper seeks to affirm the Principal's statement regarding the right to protest and opposes any disciplinary measures against students who participate in the protests.

The paper calls on Court to divest from two companies, Amazon and Alphabet and highlighted this action as being particularly urgent due to the ongoing hunger strike.

Finally, the paper seeks the formal involvement of academic and research expertise in the Investment Policy setting bodies, including the Investment Committee.

The Convener echoed the concerns regarding the hunger strike and expressed his desire that these come to an end. He confirmed University Executive are meaningfully engaging with the protestors and highlighted that those participating in hunger strike are autonomous adults and the Executive cannot force individuals to end their hunger strike. The Convener invited Mr Lee Hamill, Director of Finance to comment on Motions 2c and 2d.

Mr Hamill explained the University has engaged with Investment and Fund Managers to understand the University's holdings of the two companies in question. There are two distinct ways in which funds are held:

1. Direct holdings: This is where the university holds shares for a named company and it is possible to sell those shares on the approval of the University Court.
2. Indirect holdings: This is where the university holds shares for a fund which contains multiple companies. These funds can contain hundreds of different companies, and it is not possible to exit from the investment of individual named companies without exiting from the entire indirect holding fund.

Mr Hamill confirmed the university holds both direct and indirect holdings for the two companies in question. He explained the process for disposing of direct holding funds was more straightforward than exiting from indirect holding funds.

Mr Hamill also clarified the University's Investment Committee is not responsible for setting the University's Investment Policy. The responsibility for setting the policy sits with University Court. Court provides the Investment Committee with the terms, targets, and exclusions for companies which they can and cannot invest in on the University's behalf.

In response, one of the paper authors, Dr Kevin Donovan, welcomed the explanation regarding direct and indirect holdings and clarified that Motion 2c is seeking the sale of direct holdings of Amazon and Alphabet.

Dr Donovan acknowledged the Convener's point that those participating in the hunger strike are autonomous adults and the paper does not suggest any coercive action take place. Dr Donovan highlighted that those participating in the hunger strike have indicated that they will end their strike if the direct shares are sold, as outlined in Paper S23/24 3G, and stated that there is a clear path forward that falls within the University's remit.

Senate members made the following points in discussion:

- A student member, who is also a member of Court, expressed their support for the paper and the recommendations. They stated that Court receives updates from the Investment Committee, however the student member does not feel there is sufficient detail contained in these updates and they find the governance and bureaucracy around policy making and guidance confusing.

The student member also sought to clarify the process for urgent Court consideration if Senate is to approve the motions.

The Convener confirmed in response that the Investment Policy is set by University Court. Court however receives regular updates on Senate business, via the Routine Senate Report to Court, Senate minutes and via the Principal's Report. Additionally, there are two Senate Assessors who sit on University Court. The Convener also confirmed that a Court Exception Committee exists and could meet electronically to consider what urgent action is necessary if Senate passes Motion 2c.

- A member stated that the decision to divest should be made because this is the right thing to do, rather than to end a hunger strike.
- The Convener stated that the wording of Motion 2a assumes a causal link between University Executive engagement and ending the hunger strike, whereas wording should refer to creating conditions to end the hunger strike.
- One of the paper authors, Dr Donovan, explained that the motions are distinct and discreet actions and highlighted that Motion 2a recognises the autonomy of the protestors, but also seeks to reach an agreement as soon as possible.

Motion 2a is intended to urge the University Executive to act, rather than this being at the request of the hunger strikers.

Motion 2c is intended to reflect the broader sense of prudence regarding university investments and urges Senate to consider these motions in line with this intention, it is not suggested that Senate approve Motion 2c to end the hunger strike.

- One of the paper authors, Dr Duncanson welcomed the acceptance of the motions, the clarification of onward referral to University Court and the ongoing staff involvement and decision-making regarding investments. She clarified that Motion 2d point to a longer-term intention, which is to ensure ethical expertise of the Responsible Investment Policy and ensuring this is reflected in the Investment Committee. She highlighted the most urgent issue is Motion 2c and the request that the university divest from direct shares in the named companies. The Convener confirmed in response that if Senate supports Motion 2c that this would be relayed to Court with urgency and with a recommendation that this be considered sooner than the next meeting of Court.
- A Senate member, who is also a member of Court, sought to clarify the intention of Motion 2d is to ensure staff expertise is considered in forming the Responsible Investment Policy, which is the responsibility of Court, rather than carrying out the policy, which is the responsibility of the Investment Committee.
- The paper author, Dr Duncanson explained that it is not as straightforward as Court setting the policy and this being carried out by the Investment Committee. She highlighted that the priority of the Investment Committee is to ensure strong returns on the University's investments. There is not staff expertise on the Investment Committee, and she stated that, in her view, this is why investments in Amazon and Alphabet still exist. The paper calls on Court to determine the best way to ensure that there is genuine ethical investment approach, and seeks ongoing structural and institutional means to support such investment.
- Co-author, Dr Donovan echoed this sentiment and explained the intention is for Court to consider the implementation of the policy. He identified that this is the second occasion in 10 years that the University's investments have been

the subject of student protests and encampment. He urged Court to consider a means to move away from a reactive approach to such action, and towards a structured approach to managing investments in an ethical way. He expressed a view that a broader remit within Court and expansion of expertise beyond a consultation exercise would be valuable in achieving this.

- In response, Mr Hamill provided greater detail on how the Investment Committee operates. The Committee does not consider individual shares, rather takes the mandate provided by Court and looks to invest in a way that obeys the Responsible Investment Policy, which contains exclusions such as fossil fuels and controversial weapons, whilst also achieving a reasonable return on investment. Fund Managers will only be considered if they comply with the University's Responsible Investment Policy. Mr Hamill explained that the Investment Committee does not go through individual stocks within each fund to check if there are investments with specific named companies, and that changing the membership of the Investment Committee would not achieve the desired outcome as provided in the paper and discussion. He reiterated that engaging with the consultation process is the means to achieve the desired outcome.
- A student member asked if there was an indicative timeframe for how quickly divestment could take place. They expressed concern about the lack of urgency and lack of definite commitment to a timeline for divestment, and expressed that it was fortunate that Senate was meeting in time to consider this paper but disheartening that this timing was by chance.
- The Convener agreed with the urgency of action and confirmed that consideration of action is not linked to the timing of Senate meetings. The Convener expressed a commitment to take forward Senate's decision before the end of the week, though reiterated that it is at the discretion of Court and its Exception Committee to determine how quickly they would consider and enact any action in response. The Convener also noted that the sale and disposal of assets would depend on whether these were held in direct or indirect funds and were dependent on other agencies to carry out any such request to dispose of funds.
- Two Senate members expressed their surprise that investments are not scrutinised line-by-line and expressed a view that this action seems necessary. One of the members stated that urgent action is critical and highlighted that the hunger strike has reached day 22 and reported that 21 days is the duration that someone can survive without food.
- In response, Mr Hamill explained it is standard practice within the fund management model that managers do not scrutinise investments line-by-line, with many indirect funds containing hundreds of companies. He explained that the University provide Fund Managers with criteria for investment of funds and fund managers are obliged to confirm and certify that they comply with this criterion.
- A Senate member expressed their sympathy to the cause but sought to understand why Amazon and Alphabet are expressly identified as companies which the University should divest from.
- In response, paper author Dr Donovan explained that Amazon and Alphabet hold contracts with the Israeli military that allow weapons systems to use cloud services. He indicated one such example is Project Nimbus and further information on this can be found via internet search. He also stated that Amazon and Alphabet have expanded the purposeful contracting with military

entities, including the Israeli military, and that the International Criminal Court has been asked to issue warrants of arrest for the Prime Minister of Israel and Minister of Defence of Israel.

Senate approved Motion 2a via a vote of 87%.
Senate approved Motion 2b via a vote of 92%.
Senate approved Motion 2c via a vote of 69%.
Senate approved Motion 2d via a vote of 69%.

Action: The Senate Convener and Clerk to relay Senate's approval of Motion 2c to University Court by 24 May at latest as an urgent matter for consideration.

Action: Senate Clerk to relay Senate's approval of the remaining motions via the routine Senate Report to Court.

The Convener initiated a short break before resuming the meeting.

8. Taught Postgraduate Curriculum Framework - S 23/24 3I For approval

The paper authors noted that the paper is taken as read and welcomed questions and comments on the Taught Postgraduate Curriculum Framework from Senate.

Senate members raised the following comments:

- A member queried the absence of specific elements from the paper which Senate has previously requested be included in future papers on the Curriculum Transformation Project. They recalled that these included specific and measurable indicators of success aligned to the University's strategic priorities, comprehensive risk assessment and risk management plans, and detailed costing and demonstration of resource. The member also asked for comment on the timing of the Edinburgh Student Vision.
- A member welcomed the Taught Postgraduate Framework and appreciated the differing stackable options available for postgraduate programmes. They expressed concern that stackable options may require heavy administrative load to support and the potential challenges around continuity of administrative support and knowledge, particularly where some stackable options last up to 15 years, which introduces risks associated with changes to personnel, systems, and programmes.
- Another member expressed concern regarding the currency of knowledge for programmes which are delivered over a long period of time.
- The Project Lead, Dr Jon Turner explained that the risk assessment and costings associated with the Taught Postgraduate Curriculum Framework would be included in the business case when this is presented to the University Initiatives Project Board. The paper presented to Senate focusses on the academic framework, rather than the resourcing and costings for the project.

Dr Turner also addressed the question regarding the Edinburgh Student Vision. He explained that the understanding following the previous Senate meeting was that the Postgraduate Taught Framework was a priority to return to Senate and that the Edinburgh Student Vision will return to Senate at the first meeting of 2024/25. The Project is currently undertaking market

sensitivity testing on the Edinburgh Student Vision with students who have applied to programmes to understand if there are any elements of the Vision which may be viewed differently by different student cohorts.

Dr Turner explained that the Senate Academic Policy and Regulation Committee (APRC) are scheduled to meet on 23 May and are expected to scrutinise the points raised regarding stackable options. He confirmed that Schools and programmes would continue to have discretion to decide the model and options suitable for programmes, and the intention is to provide options across the institution.

The Project Sponsor, Vice-Principal Students, Professor Colm Harmon, confirmed that the scrutiny provided by Senate Committees including APRC will include consideration of governance and guidelines required to support the implementation of the Postgraduate Taught Framework and such issues will be reported to Senate.

Dr Turner addressed concerns regarding the lengthy time periods and administrative challenges, noting that such challenges currently exist within the institution. He explained that the existing University systems and processes are not designed to manage such cases and therefore a significant piece of work is being undertaken in consultation with APRC and the Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) to understand the end-to-end processes and what changes may be required to support the new model.

- A member raised specific query on Model E and reflected that this provides priceless opportunity for students to prepare for the job market, but also expressed concern regarding assessing progression of students through this model, and where studies are spread across external assessors and who may not have sufficient insight into the University's assessment processes.
- A member raised a query regarding the Postgraduate Taught models where there is no dissertation or research project and therefore teaching is expected to take place over the summer. They queried whether this means a third semester and staff will be expected to undertake teaching over the summer and raised concern with the impact of this on individuals with heavy teaching loads.

The Dean of Education in the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine (CMVM), Professor Jamie Davies explained that teaching over the summer is routine across the undergraduate and postgraduate curriculum and that CMVM has a 48-week teaching year.

- A member queried what Senate is being asked to approve and the purpose of the Postgraduate Taught Framework and what issues this is seeking to solve. They reflected that, in their view, the Framework presented captures 80% of the University's existing taught Postgraduate provision and that many elements presented are incorporated via other means. They questioned what elements are worthy of the 'transformation' name and sought to understand what the Framework enables that the University does not currently deliver.

They reflected on Senate's request to receive information regarding the resourcing and risks involved and its desire to understand these elements prior to approving the academic proposal.

- Dr Turner, explained that Model A is the dominant model seen across the University at present. He explained that, at present, programmes that wish to diverge from a 60-credit dissertation or research project need to seek approval via additional approval pathways and that adopting the Postgraduate

Taught Framework would allow areas to adopt an alternative postgraduate framework as standard and without additional layers of approval. Dr Turner explained that Models C, D and E are not presently supported by the University regulations and processes, and approval of the Framework would allow regulations and frameworks to be evolved to support these structures.

Dr Turner addressed the query regarding the forward-looking benefits of the Framework and explained that increasing opportunities for flexibility and lifelong learning are becoming commonplace in the sector. He explained that approving the Framework, provides the University with significant opportunity to develop these changes, and for these to be supported by the University systems, processes, and regulations.

Dr Turner addressed a query regarding fully taught Masters' programmes and explained that there is scope for local areas to determine which clusters of the Framework they wish to adopt, however it is not anticipated that programmes will offer both fully-taught and taught with dissertation models simultaneously.

Dr Turner also addressed queries regarding maintaining currency of programmes that are delivered over several years. He explained that this will be discipline specific,

Dr Turner noted that the paper is seeking approval for the Framework, and that APRC will undertake detailed work on support and implementation before returning to Senate.

- The Convener of SQAC, Professor Tina Harrison reflected that the paper presents options for the delivery of postgraduate programmes and does not compel any areas to change their programmes. Rather, the proposal provides postgraduate taught structures which are available for local areas to adopt without requiring additional approval. Professor Harrison reflected that it is helpful to consider the Models as stackable blocks of study, rather than an overall period of 15 years, with students able to complete blocks and seek accreditation for their learning at various points over a period of time.
- Professor Harmon reflected on the feedback previously received at Senate on the Postgraduate Framework which indicated that the Framework is facilitative and allows a straightforward process for programmes that are seeking to reform.

Professor Harmon also addressed queries regarding the business case, reflecting that Senate's view, as endorsed by the University Initiatives Project Board (UIPB), was to progress the Postgraduate Framework and continue development and consultation on the Undergraduate Framework over the coming months, with the business case to be considered separately, looking to ensure that resources reside within Colleges and Schools to facilitate and encourage the innovation the Project allows.

- A member expressed a desire to see the Framework approved, but urged caution regarding launching the Project without an Equality Impact Assessment or risk assessment being undertaken. The member reflected on lessons learnt from People and Money and that Senate had asked to see these assessments prior to approving the framework.

The Convener confirmed that the UIPB will be responsible for considering these elements should Senate approve the Framework.

- A member expressed the view that seeking approval at this stage is premature, and that the paper should be presented for comment. The

member felt that when more detail was available from APRC and UIPB, the Framework could be presented for Senate's approval at this stage.

- Another member echoed this view, and highlighted that the motions approved in March 2023 indicated the expectation that any future recommendations relating to the approval of the Project be accompanied by a risk assessment and detailed costings.
- A Head of School indicated their eagerness for the Framework to be approved and reflected on the Framework being facilitative with many elements being essential for Schools to be able to progress as quickly as possible with plans and reshaping in the 2030's and beyond.
- The Convener reminded Senate that the item is presented for approval.
- Professor Harmon stated that it is essential for Senate to give its approval to the Framework to allow APRC and other areas to progress with the technical work that is required to support implementation. The risk and resourcing of the Project has been discussed at UIPB and these will return to Senate for scrutiny following the work undertaken by APRC and UIPB.
- The Provost, Professor Kim Graham, Convener of the UIPB, explained that UIPB needs to understand the broader direction of travel and Senate's support for this. The UIPB has already provided feedback to the Curriculum Transformation Board regarding resources and costings and provided reassurance to Senate that this is a key element of what UIPB considers, and the capacity for delivery and management of risks alongside other University projects. Professor Graham reiterated that if Senate approves the proposed Framework, then this will allow APRC and UIPB to progress with their work before the Framework returns to Senate.
- The Convener explained that the UIPB was formed in response to lessons learnt from People and Money and is responsible for ensuring that the questions relating to risk and resourcing are considered and properly addressed.

Senate considered the following amendment, proposed by Dr Tamara Trodd and seconded by Dr Steven Morley:

Add to 'Actions requested': 6. Senate welcomes the flexibility and choice signalled by this iteration of the Taught Postgraduate Framework, and notes that the choice of programme archetypes and pathways through programmes offered by Schools should remain at School and subject-area discretion, and should not be mandated by other authorities, including Colleges.

Ahead of a decision on this amendment, the proposer explained the rationale for the amendment, which is to address potential concerns that the pathways and stackable models will be mandated. They sought to clarify that the amendment is intended to ensure that decision making on the Taught Postgraduate Framework is delegated to Schools.

The following comments were raised in relation to the amendment:

- The Head of the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine, Professor David Argyle expressed concern regarding a vote on the proposed amendment as a fundamental change to the governance structure of the University.

- The Provost echoed these concerns and reflected that the amendment is at odds with the University's governance structures and these structures allow Colleges and Schools to work collaboratively across areas.
- Professor Harmon explained that the Project is silent on this matter and it is up to Colleges or Schools to determine the appropriate structure for their programmes.
- A member explained their reading of the amendment as being in line with the status quo and instead seeking to confirm that this will be maintained. They noted that School Boards of Studies are currently tasked with considering programme related matters.
- A Head of School explained that Schools and Colleges work collaboratively to reach decisions, and it would be difficult for a College-wide approach to be implemented as there are variances across School and subject areas.
- A member explained that at present Schools have discretion to make decisions and Colleges do not mandate these decisions. The member expressed concern regarding the phrase 'not mandated by other authorities' as the University is subject to external Quality Assurance Requirements.

The proposer of the amendment, Dr Trodd noted the points raised regarding the governance structures and reflected that this was not intended by proposing the motion. She accepted that the proposed amendment may break the governance structure and therefore agreed to withdraw the amendment if an alternative amendment, proposed by Dr Rupert Nash, is approved as an alternative.

Dr Rupert Nash proposed an alternative amendment and this was seconded:

Replace point 4 with "Senate thanks the CTP board for the progress and requests Senate Academic Policy & Regulations Committee (APRC) take forward the technical implementation and detail of policy changes for final approval in a future Senate meeting."

Senate approved the proposed amendment via a vote of 72%.

The Convener explained that the approved amendment means that final approval of the Postgraduate Framework will return to a future meeting of Senate.

In the interests of time, the Convener moved to item 12 on the agenda: S23/24 3P Research and Partnerships in the Defence Sector.

9. Award of degrees: delegation of authority to Boards of Examiners - S 23/24 3J CLOSED

For approval. Senate did not reach this item ahead of the conclusion of the meeting.

10. Senate Committee Administration

For approval:

- **Senate Exception Committee Membership & Terms of Reference - S 23/24 3K**
- **Senate Standing Committee Membership - S 23/24 3L**

- **Senate Standing Committee Priorities - S 23/24 3M**

For information:

- **Senate Standing Committee Upcoming Business - S 23/24 3N**

Senate did not reach these items ahead of the conclusion of the meeting.

11. Senate Task and Finish Group Update & Proposals - S 23/24 3O

For approval. Senate did not reach this item ahead of the conclusion of the meeting.

12. Research and Partnerships in the Defence Sector - S 23/24 3P

For approval

Dr Ricardo Ribeiro Ferreira introduced the item and explained that the item has originated from discussions with Senate members and colleagues who are not Senate members and who have expressed concern regarding research areas. He highlighted that the paper proposes that a review of projects be undertaken on an annual basis, rather than only at the commencement of each project, and is seeking greater transparency by publishing this report on an annual basis. The paper authors have been approached by Senate members and have tried to incorporate a series of amendments to the paper to try and achieve a consensus on most motions. He explained that discussions have taken place between Engineering colleagues who work in these areas and the authors seek to achieve the right tone and scope for the item and acknowledged the important humanitarian applications of some research being undertaken in these areas.

He confirmed that further amendments to the paper had been received, with student representatives expressing concern regarding the student impact of Motions 2.3 and 2.6 and proposed that more comprehensive wording be provided for these items to provide protection to students who may be affected by a review.

He also explained that a further amendment was received to include an additional motion, Motion 2.7, which the paper authors agreed to include:

2.7 To enhance the smooth operation of this suite of actions Senate recommends the creation of a working group - with adequate representation from Senate members, staff and students with experience in this area - to refine the scope, definitions and process implied in this paper.

Dr Ribeiro Ferreira also notified Senate that the paper authors received a petition with signatures from 250 students and staff expressing their support for the item.

Senate members raised the following comments:

- The Vice-Principal Research, Professor Christina Boswell thanked the paper authors for the item, noting her appreciation for the spirit in which the paper is written and the openness of colleagues researching in this area in engaging in discussions to develop proposals with paper authors.

She explained that the paper points to a gap in the University's Ethics Policy on how ethical review and due diligence takes place on external partnerships, coupled with how the University applies broader societal wellbeing within its research. She acknowledged that this merits further clarification and work and notified Senate that there are two Working Groups which the University Executive has agreed to establish in these areas. Within the research space it is beneficial for alignment across how these are identified and operationalised.

The recommendations from these two Working Groups would be rigorously implemented in research ethics and due diligence approaches. Once these definitions are identified, Colleges and Schools would be supported in examining projects within the scope of the definitions and with clearer guidelines in establishing parameters and undertaking ongoing review. Moving forward, these principles and parameters will be embedded in the University Ethics Policy, which will ensure a joined up and systematic approach across the University.

Professor Boswell confirmed that she would be happy to bring a paper to Senate which outlines how this work is being operationalised and which will incorporate the additional points into this process. She noted the importance of striking a balance between a rigorous ethics assessment process and not seeking to overburden specific projects and research across the University.

- A member thanked the paper authors for preparing the item and for highlighting the need to understand the University's exposure to projects which present risks. The member sought to understand the practical application of Motion 2.5, adding that guidance was required to understand how Research Ethics Committees are intended to apply this, and operationalise some of the principles.
- A member from the School of Engineering welcomed the open and transparent discussion and disclosed that they undertake research in the defence and security space with the majority of the research funded by the Ministry of Defence (MoD). They outlined their experience of working in this space and explained that work is often within a specific academic research area which has undergone an ethics approval process by the MoD and government. They explained that majority of the work is in uncontentious fields such as mine detection and cyber security.

The member expressed their concern regarding the potential widespread interpretation of the paper and the use of non-specific language could result in unintended consequences and cover up to 95% of research work undertaken within the School of Engineering. They explained that the paper could apply to companies which work across multiple disciplines spanning security and defence, but where the University's relationship with them is related to an uncontentious context, for example, tidal work.

They also expressed concern regarding ethical reviews resulting in additional work for Primary Investigators and noted that this is not adequately acknowledged by the paper's resource implications. They also expressed concern regarding the additional complexity and vulnerability of early career staff and PhD students who are undertaking research in legitimate areas and who may be targeted by ill-informed individuals online.

- Another member from the School of Engineering echoed these points and provided an example of having undertaken research which was originally intended for military use but was instead found to be beneficial for search and

rescue services within the UK. The member supported seeking greater clarity in the wording for this proposal and welcomed the earlier points raised by the Vice-Principal Research.

- The Head of the College of Science and Engineering echoed the points made by elected members from the School of Engineering and added that work could be undertaken to ensure greater transparency and clarity around its ethics processes. He noted that there is expertise across the institution that can be utilised to ensure that research work is undertaken with greater scrutiny leading to the right benefits being achieved. He welcomed the Vice-Principal Research's proposed approach and reiterated the importance of ensuring there were no unintended consequences.
- One of the paper authors expressed that the intention of the item is to emphasise the need for greater transparency, noting that the University is a publicly funded institution.
- The Director of the Edinburgh Research Office, Dr Lorna Thomson provided explanation on the forthcoming changes to the University's Ethics Policy. She explained that the ethics management system will allow for University-wide reporting on the projects undergoing the ethics review process, and these will be attached to a schedule for returning to the Ethics Committee. There has been investment in the office which provides support around governance, compliance and risk, and this team will provide greater support to Principal Investigators. The ethics approval process is a complex area with regulatory requirements rapidly changing and the office will provide greater support to ensure due diligence around partners.

Dr Thomson also explained some of the additional governance around projects in the defence sector, noting that the Research Office has access to information and support via a government team; this team has clearance with the MoD and other government departments and can provide advice on partners or research that the University plans to undertake. She noted that Principal Investigators work on this closely with Research Office staff but greater detail cannot be widely shared for confidentiality reasons.

- One of the paper authors welcomed the proposals from the Vice-Principal Research and stated these would be beneficial to receive in writing at a future meeting of Senate. The paper author expressed concern regarding further extending the process and that a report would be beneficial to affirm that proper checks are in place. They explained that the addition of Motion 2.7 is not intended to be attached to the two executive-approved working groups identified by the Vice-Principal Research, rather this group would be additional and proposed to help oversee the reporting work.
- The Senate Convener identified the overlap between work which is already taking place and work which is being proposed within the item. He agreed with the importance of the University being transparent and compliant with the law in this sector.

The Convener invited the paper authors to consider withdrawing the paper and returning this to a future meeting following further work with the Vice-Principal Research to refine the proposals.

- The Vice-Principal Research echoed the Senate Convener and stated that a revised paper could be returned to the October meeting of Senate.

- The paper authors expressed a preference that the item be considered now, and stated that other elected members on Teams were supportive of the item being considered at this meeting.
- A member suggested that the paper be treated as a starting point for implementation by the working group proposed in Motion 2.7 and that a revised proposal for the remaining elements returns to a future meeting of Senate.

Senate approved Motion 2.1 as contained in the paper via a majority vote of 75%.

An amendment to Motion 2.2 was proposed by Professor James Hopgood and seconded by Professor Sean Smith:

2.2: "Senate requests that the Edinburgh Research Office and the Research Ethics and Integrity Review Group (REIRG), in consultation with the Research Ethics Committees (RECs) at School level and relevant bodies, undertake a full consideration of the ethical review process for active research projects in the area of defence and security. This is to ensure that such research projects are not undermining "the interests and well-being" of the "broader society" that need to be safeguarded as per the University Research Ethics Policy, including violations of human rights or international and humanitarian law by the partners or any actors supplied with their products. Senate requests that the REIRG report to Senate on this process, with the intention that Senate subsequently approves a review of defence and security research and partnerships in accordance with that process."

Senate approved the proposed amendment via a vote of 72%.

Senate approved Motion 2.2 as amended via a majority vote of 79%.

The paper authors withdrew Motions 2.3, 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6 as contained in the paper and these would be referred to the proposed working group referred to in Motion 2.7.

Senate approved the addition of Motion 2.7 via a majority vote of 85%:

2.7 To enhance the smooth operation of this suite of actions Senate recommends the creation of a working group - with adequate representation from Senate members, staff and students with experience in this area - to refine the scope, definitions and process implied in this paper.

The Convener closed the meeting and noted that Senate would receive further communication regarding items not considered.

Action: Senate Convener and Senate Clerk to consider process for taking forward items not considered by Senate and communicating to members as soon as practicable.

ITEMS TO COMMENT

13. **People & Money Improvement Plan 24-26 - S 23/24 3Q**

To comment. Senate did not reach this item ahead of the conclusion of the meeting.

14. Court Resolutions – Personal Chairs - S 23/24 3R

To comment. Senate did not reach this item ahead of the conclusion of the meeting.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

The following items were provided to Senate for information:

15. Report of the Central Academic Promotions Committee - S 23/24 3S

ITEMS FOR NOTING

The following items were provided to Senate for noting:

- 16. Senate Election Results - S 23/24 3T**
- 17. Annual Internal Effectiveness of Senate - S 23/24 3U**
- 18. Student Partnership Agreement - S 23/24 3V**
- 19. Communications from the University Court - S 23/24 3W**
- 20. College Management Structure 2024-25 - S 23/24 3X**



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Senatus Academicus Reconvened Meeting

Tuesday 18 June 2024 at 9:45-10:45am
Microsoft Teams

Unconfirmed Minute

Attendees: Peter Adkins, Gill Aitken, Mteeve Amugune, Arianna Andreangeli, Jonathan Ansell, Kate Ash-Irisarri, Michael Barany, Laura Bickerton, Richard Blythe, Catherine Bovill, Holly Branigan, Aidan Brown, Rory Callison, Jeremy Carrette, Leigh Chalmers, Neil Chue Hong, Juan Cruz, Sarah Cunningham-Burley, Sumari Dancer, Luigi Del Debbio, Chris Dent, Charlotte Desvages, Simone Dimartino, Claire Duncanson, Murray Earle, Tonks Fawcett, Samantha Fawkner, Manuel Fernandez-Gotz, Chris French, Vashti Galpin, Soledad Garcia Ferrari, Benjamin Goddard, Richard Gratwick, Colm Harmon, Gareth Harrison, Tina Harrison, David Hay, Pia Helbing, Melissa Highton, James Hopgood, Jenny Hoy, Emma Hunter, Gbenga Ibikunle, David Ingram, Jakov Jandric, Meryl Kenny, Linda Kirstein, David Kluth, Andy Law, Tom Leinster, Ashley Lloyd, Antony Maciocia, Peter Mathieson, Steven Morley, Chris Mowat, Simon Mudd, Lyndsay Murray, Rupert Nash, Pau Navarro, Emmanuel Okunlola, Natalia Penar, Jon Pridham, David Quinn, Rebecca Reynolds, Ricardo Ribeiro Ferreira, Ken Rice, Eberhard Sauer, Bernd Schroers, Geoff Simm, Stewart Smith, Tim Stratford, Alex Thomson, Tamara Trodd, Uzma Tufail-Hanif, Nadia Tuzi, Patrick Walsh, Christopher Weir, Ben Wynne, Alper Yildirim

In attendance: Adam Bunni, Olivia Hayes, Cristina Matthews, Dean Pateman, Nichola Kett, Richard Kenway, Sinead Docherty

Apologies: Clark Barwick, Sian Bayne, Shereen Benjamin, Clare Blackburn, Richard Blythe, Christina Boswell, Olivia Eadie, Laura Bradley, Mary Brennan, Tom Bruce, John Cairns, Jane Calvert, Celine Caquineau, Kevin Collins, Martin Corley, Sharon Cowan, Chris Cox, Jeremy Crang, Jo Danbolt, Jamie Davies, Ricardo De Oliveira Almeida, Chris Dent, John Devaney, James Dunlop, Agata Dunsmore, Jite Eferakorho, Darrick Evensen, Anne-Maree Farrell, Susan Farrington, Valentina Ferlito, Emily Ford-Halliday, Stuart Gilfillan, Iain Gordon, Patrick Hadoke, Elaine Haycock-Stuart, Thorunn Helgason, Gavin Jack, Laura Jeffery, Itamar Kastner, Jim Kaufman, Tobias Kelly, George Kinnear, Steff Lewis, Jason Love, Sophia Lycouris, Lorna Marson, Catherine Martin, Lesley McAra, Alistair McCormick, Gavin McLachlan, Heather McQueen, Avery Meiksin, John Menzies, Carmel Moran, Andrew Morris, Susan Morrow, Rachel Muers, Bryne Ngwenya, Diana Paton, Josephine Pemberton, Sarah Prescott, Colin Pulham, Simon Riley, Aryelly Rodriguez Carbonell, Hollie Rowlands, Maximilian Ruffert, Ewelina Rydzewska-Fazekas, Tobias Schwarz, Pablo Schyfter Camacho, Robert Semple, Mike Shipston, Sue Sierra, James Smith, Emily Taylor, Melissa Terras, Jeremy Upton, Stephen Warrington, Michele Weiland, Iain Wright, Ingrid Young, Marion Schmid, Lisa Boden, Tom Booth

The Convener, Principal Professor Sir Peter Mathieson, opened the meeting and noted that Senate had not reached quorum. The Convener confirmed that the meeting would proceed and Senate would be able to consider any non-contentious items of business, indicating that the Senate Clerk would continue to monitor quorum for the duration of the meeting.

The Convener invited the Senate Clerk to provide an update on the attendance of student representatives. The Senate Clerk confirmed that there were fewer student representatives in attendance as many had concluded their term at the end of May and the new student Sabbatical Officers were unable to attend the reconvened meeting due to a prior engagement. The reconvened meeting falls between two student membership cycles with many new undergraduate representatives to take up their positions in early October.

The Convener informed members that there was a strong wish from some members that the meeting take place ahead of the next academic cycle to conclude the incomplete business from the 22 May meeting and expressed his regret that the student involvement will be limited due to the timing of the meeting.

ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

1. Award of degrees: delegation of authority to Boards of Examiners – S 23/24 3J - CLOSED

For approval

Dr Adam Bunni, Head of Academic Policy and Regulation, Registry Services introduced the paper. He provided an outline of the paper and noted that degrees are currently conferred by graduation meetings of Senate, which take place immediately prior to graduation ceremonies, with the decisions based on the recommendation of the Board of Examiners. He explained that the graduation meetings do not have arrangements for quorum and do not provide any scrutiny of the decisions made by the Board of Examiners. The paper proposes to permanently delegate the powers for the awarding of degrees to Boards of Examiners. From a student perspective, this would not change their experience of graduation. From an operational perspective, this would not change the operation of Boards of Examiners and would remove the requirement for graduation meetings of Senate to take place prior to graduation ceremonies.

Dr Bunni explained that there is precedent for the delegation of authority; degree awarding powers were delegated to Boards of Examiners during Covid. He also confirmed that if Senate approved the delegation, this would require an amendment to the Senate Standing Orders which would be brought to the next Ordinary meeting of Senate.

The Convener informed Senate that the Students' Association representatives had been in touch prior to the meeting to express their support for this item. He explained that Senate can proceed to approve this item if they consider this to be uncontroversial.

Senate members made the following points:

- A member expressed their agreement with the desirability of reducing the timelines around conferral of awards but highlighted concerns regarding the removal of a time lapse between Boards of Examiners and graduation meetings to resolve any administrative errors which may occur.
- A member stated they felt that the item was highly contentious and should be considered by a quorate meeting of Senate. The member also felt the issue should be referred to the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group for consideration. The member expressed a view that the delegation of authority used

during Covid should not be considered precedent and that there is dissatisfaction among some colleagues with how delegation was managed during this period. The member also expressed a view that scrutiny is not adequate at Boards of Examiners and there needs to be an independent scrutiny function, which Senate should fulfil. The member expressed a view that awardees and their families appreciate the graduation meetings of Senate and that there is a process in place for handling the small number of exceptions which arise during the year and which require consideration sooner than the next graduation cycle.

- Another member felt that the proposal to permanently delegate authority was contentious, and expressed a preference for delegating the authority on a trial basis and then looking to amend the Standing Orders following a trial period during which any issues could be ironed out. The member expressed a view that the ceremonial function of a graduation meeting was nice as a performative piece for students.
- The Deputy Secretary Students, Ms Lucy Evans acknowledged that the item was considered contentious and that a decision would not be taken today. She acknowledged the comments made regarding processing errors and that work will take place to review the process and work to reduce errors. She explained that the proposal is seeking to improve the student experience for students, by not allowing it to be impacted by a small number of isolated errors.
- In response to comments made, Dr Adam Bunni explained that a delay could be built into the process to allow for errors to be captured and resolved ahead of award publication. He also acknowledged that the delegation could be undertaken on a trial basis for a year, though highlighted that the Senate Standing Orders would be contradictory to practices during that time.

Dr Bunni highlighted that the current process for holding a graduation meeting of Senate does not provide for any scrutiny of Board of Examiner decisions and therefore these would not pick up any errors or corrections. He stated that Senate could still carry out an oversight role by receiving reports of errors where these occur. Finally, he noted that if Senate has wider concerns regarding the robustness of Board of Examiner measures, these are broader than the proposed delegation of authority and greater discussion including identification of the issues would be required.

- A member stated they were unclear on the purpose of Senate graduation meetings and that they believed that students are unaware these take place prior to graduation. They noted that many attendees at these meetings are not members of Senate.
- The Dean of the Edinburgh Medical School, Professor David Kluth, stated that the proposal is an essential change to allow large cohorts of students to graduate outside the standard-graduation cycle. Professor Kluth noted that forthcoming changes to medical education would require large cohorts of medical students to receive their awards in a timely fashion and these would have to continue to be managed by exception if the delegation was not approved.

The Convener explained that as the item was considered contentious and Senate was not quorate a decision could not be taken on the paper. Therefore, Senate did not reach a decision on this item.

2. Senate Committee Administration

For approval:

- **Senate Exception Committee Membership & Terms of Reference - S 23/24 3K**

Senate was invited to approve the Senate Exception Committee Membership and Terms of Reference. No comments or objections were raised and therefore this item was deemed uncontentious and Senate approved the item.

- **Senate Standing Committee Membership - S 23/24 3L**

The Convener explained that a series of amendments had been received for the Senate Standing Committees' Membership paper. Accordingly, this item was considered contentious and a decision could not be taken as Senate was not quorate. However, the Convener allowed a short discussion on this item to take place, ahead of the paper returning to a future meeting of Senate.

The Conveners of Senate Standing Committees were invited to introduce the paper. Professor Colm Harmon, Convener of the Senate Education Committee highlighted that the paper acknowledges the work of the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group and that changes to Committees may come forward in the future and that the Committee membership had been formed in line with current practice. He also acknowledged the amendments to the paper had been received. Additionally, Professor Harmon noted that the elected Senate members on Standing Committees had been confirmed in the previous 24 hours, however those members are not named in the paper presented to Senate today.

Senate members made the following points:

- A member queried which amendments were deemed contentious and asked whether the paper and the amendments could be considered as uncontentious. The Conveners of Senate Standing Committees stated that the Convener had the discretion to determine whether an item was considered contentious or not. The member also asked for an explanation of why there were unfilled elected member vacancies on the Senate Committees and queried whether the timing of the elections for these could have been a contributing factor.

The Convener confirmed that the presence of amendments deemed the item contentious. He explained that Senate is asked to reach a decision on the amendments, ahead of a decision on the item, and therefore this would require a vote be taken. This cannot take place outwith a quorate meeting of Senate.

- A member suggested that the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group be asked to establish why there remain unfilled elected member positions on Senate Committees. The member highlighted the focus of the Committees on teaching-related matters, and noted this may exclude staff who hold research-focussed positions.
- A member highlighted Standing Order 22 which states that members of Senate would be invited to submit nominations for the members of the Committees. They explained that compliance with Standing Order 22 has been raised previously however no changes to the process for establishing Committee membership had taken place. The member expressed a view that some interesting perspectives

could be sought from the wider University community by implementing the process outlined in Standing Order 22.

The member later explained that some individuals who could usefully serve on Committees include staff who are not members of Senate and therefore would not be included in the opportunity to stand for election to a Senate Committee.

- Professor Tina Harrison, Convener of the Senate Quality Assurance Committee explained that Senate members are invited to self-nominate for membership of the Committee via the election process. She also highlighted that the Committees require relevant expertise and individuals with responsibility for defined areas within Colleges and Schools to ensure that any actions or decisions taken by Committees can be implemented at a local level.

In response to comments regarding the individuals who could usefully serve on Committees, Professor Harrison highlighted the presence of co-opted spaces on the Senate Quality Assurance Committee and welcomed suggestions from members for individuals who could fill co-opted positions. She explained that the paper and associated amendments did not require consideration or approval for co-opted positions to be filled.

- Two members stated that paper authors had had an opportunity to incorporate revisions in response to amendments prior to the paper returning to Senate.

In response to comments regarding incorporating amendments to the paper, Professor Colm Harmon agreed to consider with the Standing Committee Conveners whether this could take place ahead of a future meeting.

- One member acknowledged the importance of adhering to procedure and referred to the Convener's statement that the item is considered contentious.

In response the Convener reiterated that the practice and procedure of Senate is that amendments require a decision be taken this would require a vote. This cannot take place out with a quorate meeting of Senate.

- Another member referred to Standing Order 15 and requested that as the meeting was not quorate, further discussion on this item be held over until Senate can reach a decision.

As the item was considered contentious and Senate was not quorate, a decision could not be taken on the paper.

- Senate Standing Committee Priorities - S 23/24 3M

The Convener explained that a series of amendments had been received for the Senate Standing Committees Priorities paper and therefore this item was considered contentious and a decision could not be taken as Senate was not quorate. A short discussion on this item would take place, ahead of the paper returning to a future meeting of Senate.

The Conveners of Senate Standing Committees were invited to introduce the paper. Professor Harmon explained that establishing priorities for the Standing Committees is an annual process, and that these have been discussed by the full Committee with revisions made in response to Committee member comments. Professor Harmon also acknowledged the presence of an amendment to the SQAC priorities.

Professor Harrison explained that the proposed amendment to the SQAC priorities raises a specific ask of SQAC which relates to student support. Professor Harrison

explained that oversight of student support is already a priority area for SQAC and the Committee provides oversight and evaluation through this. She explained that this remains an ongoing priority for the Committee and therefore does not require a separate and additional priority to be established.

Senate members made the following points:

- A member reiterated their earlier query on which amendments were deemed contentious and asked whether the paper and the amendments could be considered as uncontentious.
- A member stated that paper authors had had an opportunity to incorporate revisions in response to amendments prior to the paper returning to Senate.
- Another member referred to Standing Order 15 and requested that as the meeting was not quorate, further discussion on this item be held over until Senate can reach a decision.

As the item was considered contentious and Senate was not quorate, a decision could not be taken on the paper.

For information:

- **Senate Standing Committee Upcoming Business - S 23/24 3N**

This paper was provided for information and no comments were raised.

3. Senate Task and Finish Group Update & Proposals - S 23/24 3O

For approval

The Convener explained that there are a series of proposals regarding meeting format that Senate has been asked to consider and decide on. He explained that discussion of this item would identify whether there were areas of contention and whether a decision could be taken on these.

The Senate Clerk, Olivia Hayes introduced the item. She explained that the Task and Finish Group had held two meetings to date. At these meetings, the group has discussed the prioritisation of recommendations and is working through these in order of priority. She also explained that the group identified a series of practical measures that are intended to enhance meetings and the procedures surrounding these. These proposals are presented in the paper. She explained that consultation was undertaken via the Members Portal with a 15% response rate. The group strongly encourages member feedback and engagement with future consultation on proposals to help aide the group to formulate proposals for Senate to consider and approve.

Ms Hayes explained that Senate was asked to decide between a 4x3 hour or 6x2 hour meeting format, and whether meetings should take place in semester time or across the entire academic year. She highlighted that there is a gap in student representation during the period May-September and that meetings which take place during this period may exclude student representation. She also noted previous challenges in reaching quorum for meetings held outside the standard University semester.

Finally, she explained that the group is seeking in-principle support for the recording of meetings to support the drafting of minutes. If supported, then a formal proposal for recording meetings will return to a future meeting of Senate.

The Convener invited Senate to consider each of the proposals in turn and asked members to raise objections where they felt these were contentious.

The Convener invited Senate to consider increasing the overall meeting time to 12 hours. No comments or objections were raised and therefore this proposal was approved.

The Convener invited Senate members to raise comment on the 4x3 and 6x2 hour meeting format. No comments were raised.

The Convener stated that his view is that a meeting format of 4x3 hours is uncontentious and invited Senate to approve this format. No comments or objections were raised and therefore a 4x3 hour format was approved.

The Convener invited Senate members to raise comment on confining meetings to a standard University semester or holding these across the entire calendar year. No comments were raised.

The Convener stated that his view is that a meeting held within the standard university semester is uncontentious and invited Senate to approve this proposal. No comments or objections were raised and therefore this format was approved.

The Convener invited Senate members to raise comment on revising the meeting time to 1-4pm. One member requested that meetings commence at 1:10pm in line with the standard University timetable. The Senate Clerk confirmed that this change was uncontentious.

The Convener stated that his view is that holding meetings from 1:10-4pm was uncontentious and invited Senate to approve this proposal. No comments or objections were raised and therefore this was approved.

The Convener invited Senate members to raise comment on meetings taking place in hybrid format as standard.

The Convener stated that his view is that meetings taking place in hybrid format as standard was uncontentious and invited Senate to approve this proposal. No comments or objections were raised and therefore this was approved.

The Convener invited Senate members to raise comment on meetings being recorded for the purposes of taking minutes.

The Convener stated that his view is that in-principle support for meetings being recorded was uncontentious and invited Senate to give in-principle support for this proposal. No comments or objections were raised and therefore this in-principle support was given.

Ahead of the conclusion of the meeting, members raised the following points:

- Several items were unable to be considered due to amendments being raised. It was requested that paper authors work with proposers of amendments to refine papers to be returned to Senate.

- A member requested that e-Senate be used to clear any business unable to be considered at the inquorate meeting. The Convener reminded Senate that items for approval cannot be taken through a meeting of e-Senate.
- Members of the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group explained that the group has been discussing measures to engage and consult with membership on papers prior to these being brought to Senate and the group will continue to work towards establishing measures to help facilitate papers being presented in their final format for future meetings.

ITEMS TO COMMENT

Members were invited to comment on the following items via an e-Senate meeting which took place from Monday 3 June - 12pm, Friday 14 June.

People & Money Improvement Plan 24-26 - S 23/24 3Q

To comment

Eight members provided comment on this item.

One member expressed their content with the plan outlined, with another stating it is useful to receive the report though expressing that there appear to be ongoing issues which are not covered in the report.

Four members expressed dissatisfaction with the plan and that the plan did not provide clear deliverables or target dates for addressing the known issues. Members expressed concern that the plan did not sufficiently take account of the impact of staff working with the current system. Two members expressed discontent with the Impact Assessments summary provided within the paper with one member expressing concern regarding the workload implications and impact on staff morale. One member also felt that the plan did not adequately outline the prioritisation process for improvements, however noted that the paper may not be an appropriate avenue for conveying this detail.

Two members queried the absence of detail around what the University is doing in relation to Human Resources related matters and queried whether this indicates that no specific action is taking place.

Three members provided feedback and technical examples on specific issues experienced in relation to the People and Money system. Members provided examples of technical issues experienced within the system which included but were not limited to: challenges with basic functions for end users, feedback on user-functionality of the system including search functions, budget coding and search fields, approval processes, communications with users and access for staff located overseas. Members also expressed concern regarding the ongoing impact of these technical issues on staff workload and morale with particular concern expressed regarding impact on professional services and research staff.

One member stated their concern that the report does not address motions previously approved by Senate.

The comments were passed to the author of the paper.

Court Resolutions – Personal Chairs - S 23/24 3R

To comment

Four members provided comment on this item.

Two members expressed their support for the creation of the Personal Chairs.
One member queried whether the paper was complete and one member expressed their congratulations to the staff successfully nominated for Personal Chairs.

The comments were passed to the author of the paper.



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Senatus Academicus

Wednesday 9 October 2024, 1:10-4pm
Auditorium A (Shirley Hall), Chancellor's Building, Little France

Unconfirmed Minute

Attendees: Peter Adkins, Gill Aitken, Andrew Alexander, Mohammad Amir Anwar, Mteeve Amugune, James Andrew, Ruth Andrew, Jonathan Ansell, David Argyle, Kate Ash-Irisarri, Liz Baggs, Michael Barany, Matthew Bell, Shereen Benjamin, Philip Best, Richard Blythe, Christina Boswell, Catherine Bovill, Julian Bradfield, Barry Bradford, Laura Bradley, Mary Brennan, Paul Brennan, Carol Campbell, Celine Caqueneau, Leigh Chalmers, Seongsook Choi, Neil Chue Hong, Aurora Constantin, Sam Coombes, Martin Corley, Juan Cruz, Kirsty Day, Afshan Dean, Jean-Christophe Denis, Chris Dent, Charlotte Desvages, Sameer Dhumale, Kevin Donovan, Julia Dorin, Leonidas Dumas, Claire Duncanson, Agata Dunsmore, Constantinos Eleftheriou, Ruth Elliott, Andrea English, Mark Evans, Omolabake Fakunle, Tonks Fawcett, Valentina Ferlito, Manuel Fernandez-Gotz, Emily Ford-Halliday, Chris French, Vashti Galpin, Akrit Ghimire, Antonis Giannopoulos, Stuart Gilfillan, Laura Glendinning, Benjamin Goddard, Justin Goodrich, Iain Gordon, Kim Graham, Liz Grant, Mohini Gray, Patrick Hadoke, Karen Halliday, Rachel Happer, Colm Harmon, David Hay, Thorunn Helgason, Dora Herndon, Melissa Highton, Jane Hislop, James Hopgood, Emma Hunter, David Ingram, Julie Jacko, Jakov Jandric, Amanda Jarvis, Susan Jarvis, Aarnesh Kapoor, Itamar Kastner, Meryl Kenny, Linda Kirstein, David Kluth, Barry Laird, Steff Lewis, Dawn Livingstone, Ewa Luger, Antony Maciocia, Cait MacPhee, Guangzhao Mao, Lorna Marson, Peter Mathieson (Convener), Lesley McAra, Hayley McCormack, Avery Meiksin, Tijana Mitic, James Mooney, Steven Morley, Ben Morse, Chris Mowat, Simon Mudd, Rupert Nash, Bryne Ngwenya, Steven O'Hagan, Richard Oosterhoff, Diana Paton, Cheryl Patrick, Jamie Pearce, Josephine Pemberton, Nick Polydorides, Jon Pridham, Colin Pulham, David Quinn, Syjil Ramjuthan, John Rappa, Tianyi Ren, Ricardo Ribeiro Ferreira, Ken Rice, Simon Riley, Aryelly Rodriguez Carbonell, Brodie Runciman, Enrique Sanchez Molano, Giulio Santori, Eberhard Sauer, Bernd Schroers, Tobias Schwarz, Pablo Schyfter Camacho, Sean Smith, Stewart Smith, Antonella Sorace, Perdita Stevens, Gavin Sullivan, Emily Taylor, Jessica Thackeray, Sally Till, Tamara Trodd, Jeremy Upton, Niki Vermeulen, Natasha Vijendren, Dylan Walch, Patrick Walsh, Lena Wanggren, Stephen Warrington, Michele Weiland, Charles West, Indigo Williams, Mark Williams, Iain Wright, David Wyllie, Ben Wynne, Maryam Yusuf.

In attendance: Adam Bunni, Gary Blackie, Lisa Dawson, Sinéad Docherty, Arlene Duffin, Lucy Evans, Richard Kenway, Nichola Kett, Cristina Matthews, Dean Pateman, Fraser Rudge (Clerk).

Apologies: Niall Anderson, Nikos Avramidis, Kelly Blacklock, Lisa Boden, Aidan Brown, Tom Bruce, Mette Cameron, Tony Carbery, Kevin Collins, Jeremy Crang, Jo Danbolt, Sumari Dancer, John Devaney, Kate Davison, Kevin Dhaliwal, Simone Dimartino, Paul Du Plessis, Susan Dunnett, Olivia Eadie, Murray Earle, Anne-Maree Farrell, Susan Farrington, Sue Fletcher-Watson, Richard Gratwick, Helen Hastie, Jenny Hoy, Marc J Metzger, Gavin Jack, Jim Kaufman, George Kinnear, Kaitlyn Louth, Jason Love, Sophia Lycouris, Catherine Martin, Sarah McAllister, Gavin McLachlan, John Menzies, Andrew Morris, Judith Newton, Wayne Powell, Sarah Prescott, Carin Runciman, Ewelina Rydzewska-Fazekas, Jo Shaw, Mike Shipston, Geoff Simm, David Smith, James Smith, Alex Thomson, Shannon Vallor, Philip Wadler, Kate Wilson.

Prior to the meeting commencing, Senate members were reminded that in principle agreement to record Senate meetings had been granted at the meeting of 18 June 2024 to aid in the production of the minutes. Members were advised that a privacy statement had been drafted and had been included within the meeting information. Members agreed that the meeting could be recorded.

1 Welcome and Apologies

The Convener, Principal Sir Professor Peter Mathieson, welcomed members to the first Senate meeting of the 2024-25 academic session, and extended a warm welcome to all those joining for the first time. It was confirmed that Senate had reached quorum.

2 Minutes and e-Senate Reports

Senate was advised that a member considered the minutes of the meetings held on 22 May 2024 (S 24/25 1A) and 18 June 2024 (S 24/25 1B) to be contentious, and the member also observed that Senate members' comments had not been published in full for Senate to review in relation to the e-Senate report of 11-25 September 2024 (S 24/25 1C). The Convener agreed that an out of meeting process be conducted to consider proposed corrections to the minutes and e-Senate report.

The Convener observed that the University Court did not receive Senate minutes until they had been approved by Senate and commented that lengthy delays between Senate meetings and confirmed minutes being presented to Court may adversely affect Senate effectiveness. It was confirmed that efforts would be made to issue unconfirmed minutes as soon as possible following meetings.

Noting the e-Senate report, the Convener congratulated the new Emeritus Professors on behalf of Senate.

2.1 Matters arising and the Senate Action Log

There were two matters arising from the minutes of the previous meetings.

2.1.1 Meeting of 22 May 2024

Under minute eight, Taught Postgraduate Curriculum Framework, it was observed that the minute stated that the Edinburgh Student Vision would be provided to the first Senate meeting of 2024-25. It was further observed that Senate had approved a motion at its meeting of February 2024 that requested that final approval of the Edinburgh Student Vision be brought to Senate, without delegation to any other body, as soon as possible. The Vice-Principal Students, Professor Colm Harmon, agreed that Edinburgh Student Vision would be included on the agenda of the December 2024 Senate meeting.

2.1.2 Meeting of 18 June 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2024 contained members' comments arising from the e-Senate of 3-14 June 2024. Under the heading, People & Money Improvement Plan 24-26, it was observed that Senate members' comments had been passed to the author of the e-Senate paper and it was queried whether there should also be a standing item on the Senate Action Log. The Provost, Professor Kim Graham, provided a brief update on the work of the University Initiatives Portfolio Board (UIPB) and the associated two-year roadmap for addressing issues associated with the People and Money system.

Action: The Provost agreed to provide an update at the December 2024 Senate meeting.

2.1.3 Action Log

Senate noted the status of actions as detailed within the Action Log (S 24/25 1D).

3 Convener's Communications

The Convener provided a verbal update to Senate on the financial context of the University and the UK higher education sector, consideration by the University Court of the University's Responsible Investment Policy, and the status of government funding associated with the procurement of an exascale supercomputer.

The Convener acknowledged that updates on Research Ethics and Defence, and on Timetabling, would be provided elsewhere on the agenda (minutes eight and ten refer).

3.1 Financial Context

Senate was advised that the UK higher education sector was experiencing a period of significant financial challenge, and the Convener spoke briefly on how the finances of universities were being affected by increased estates and staff costs, that public funding was insufficient to meet the full cost of student tuition, and that recruitment of international students had decreased.

The Convener reported that the University of Edinburgh had been fortunate to observe continued growth in international student numbers but added that such growth had been insufficient to meet the University's increased expenditure. The Convener commented that the University needed to take action to ensure it maintained its strong financial position, and explained briefly the ways in which the University could do so through income generation and reduction in expenditure.

The Convener observed that the number of staff at the University had grown significantly in recent years, and that staff costs had increased following the changes to the pay grade scale. Senate was advised that the University's Senior Leadership Team had agreed to implement constraints on the recruitment of new and replacement staff for the foreseeable future. The Convener clarified that the University had not imposed a recruitment freeze and explained that new staff appointments were only to be made in exceptional circumstances, where such roles would be critical to the University's mission. The Convener reported that, in the period since constraints had been placed on staff recruitment, there had been a reduction in the number of professional services staff employed by the University. A comparable reduction in academic staff numbers had not been observed, and the Convener commented that a reduction in staff numbers across both groups would be required. Separately, it was commented that the University would be exploring opportunities to reduce expenditure through improved procurement practices.

3.2 Responsible Investment

The Convener reported on work associated with the review of the University's investments and investment related policies. It was explained that two short life working groups had been formed to consider the definition of armaments for investments, and investment approaches in the international context. Senate was informed that both groups had made recommendations for consideration by the University Court, and that Court had since considered these recommendations at a special meeting on 3 October and then at its ordinary meeting of 7 October 2024. Separately, it was reported that the University had consulted on its approach to responsible investment, and that approximately 1900

responses had been received. Senate was further advised communications arising from consideration by Court were being prepared and would be issued shortly.

3.3 Exascale

The Convener commented that the outgoing UK Government had committed in writing to commission an exascale computer at the University of Edinburgh, and reported that the incoming UK Government had since conducted a review of capital commitments and had withdrawn the investment.

Members were advised that the University had conducted a significant amount of preparatory work in advance of procuring an exascale supercomputer, and that discussions with the UK Government regarding funding were ongoing as to its future. The Convener commented that a final decision on the funding was anticipated at the end of October 2024, as part of the UK Government's spending review. Senate was also advised that the funding associated with Artificial Intelligence Research Resource Plus (AIRR+) had been cut.

4 Edinburgh University Students' Association - Vice President Education Priorities 2024-25

Senate noted the priorities of the Edinburgh University Students' Association Vice President Education and the Sabbatical team for the 2024-25 academic year as detailed in the paper (S 24/25 1E).

The EUSA Vice President Education, Dylan Walch, contextualised the priorities within the student experience, and commented that students needed to:

- Receive sufficient course-related information to make informed choices about their studies.
- Be able to identify and locate sources of information, guidance, and support at the point it is required and in an easily accessible format.
- Receive appropriate support to mitigate external factors that can affect basic needs and adversely affect academic potential.
- Develop a feeling of belonging with peers and staff, and to be able to approach academic staff for pastoral support when required.

The Convener thanked the EUSA Vice President Education and invited comments from Senate members. Several Senate members separately thanked the EUSA Vice President Education, and the Edinburgh University Students' Association sabbatical team, for their work to enhance the student experience. The Provost reflected on discussions held with the sabbatical team and commented that the priorities were well aligned with those of the University's senior leadership team.

It was queried how the University, and Senate, could best support the Edinburgh University Students' Association to achieve its priorities. The EUSA Vice President Education commented briefly on how Senate members could help to facilitate the student voice during meetings of Senate, and in providing greater clarity on where the student experience was considered within Senate and its standing committees. It was commented that work to improve the student voice was ongoing with key members of staff, and as part of the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group. Senate was advised that a Student Experience Framework had been developed by the Students' Association to support consideration of the student experience by university committees. A copy of the framework would be shared with Senate in due course.

Senate discussed the mechanisms through which it sought student feedback, and how this feedback was acted upon. It was observed that student representatives devoted time and effort to the improvement of teaching and learning at the University, but they may not benefit directly from their contribution. The EUSA Vice President Education commented that it was important that students received appropriate reward and recognition for contributing to the effective governance of the University. It was observed that the remuneration process in use at the Edinburgh University Students' Association appeared to be effective, and it was queried whether a similar approach could be used by the University.

A member commented that it was important to address issues affecting the personal and academic lives of students holistically, and that they expected the new Director of Students posts would help in this regard. Separately, the Convener updated Senate on recent discussion at the University Court on student support and added that this had been well received by Court members. The Convener commented on a conversation regarding the Student Support Model, where it had been perceived that academic advising had been diminished following the introduction of the Student Support Model. The Convener advised that the Student Support Model had been intended to augment, rather than replace, academic advising. Communications would be shared through colleges and schools to reassert the expectation that academic staff provide academic advice to students.

A member commented on the importance of academic staff having sufficient time to discuss students' academic options and career aspirations, and a request was made to consider mechanisms to facilitate this as part of the ongoing evaluation of the Student Support Model. The Vice-Principal Students commented briefly on the evaluation process, which was being facilitated by the University's colleges. A Senate member commented on the experience of academic staff, who had anticipated an adverse impact on relationships between students and academic staff due to the introduction of the Student Support Model. The member further commented that some academic staff had felt unsupported when providing academic support to students. The EUSA Vice President Education thanked Senate for the comments received and suggested that, in addition to providing advice, academic staff could also support students with course choices by providing course review documentation from prior years.

5 Award of degrees: delegation of authority to Boards of Examiners

By a majority vote, Senate approved the proposal to delegate authority to Boards of Examiners, on a trial basis, to award or confer degrees. The outcome of the vote was as follows: 95 members approved, 32 members did not approve, and 5 members abstained.

Dr Adam Bunni, Head of Academic Policy and Regulation, introduced the paper (S 24/25 1F CLOSED). It was explained that the proposal paper had been revised following discussion at the June 2024 meeting of Senate and following consultation with Senate members via the Senate Members Portal. Members were advised that the proposed delegation of authority would initially be limited to the period between 1 January and 31 December 2025. The trial delegation period would be reviewed in the 2025-26 academic session, with a view to permanent delegation if Senate was satisfied the trial had been successful.

Senate discussed the proposal extensively, and members considered the potential benefits to all students arising from having earlier confirmation of their award; which could include the facilitation of further study; the facilitation of visa-related applications; or support in securing employment and, by extension, reducing the potential for individuals to experience financial difficulty from being out of work. It was commented that the proposal would also support the University in providing medical students with their awards within externally mandated timescales. Specific reference was made to the introduction of medical licensing

assessments by the General Medical Council. The EUSA President, Dora Herndon, confirmed that the Edinburgh University Students' Association endorsed the proposal.

Members considered whether the role of boards of examiners and external examiners would change following approval of the proposal. It was observed that the period around board of examiners meetings was busy, and it was commented that the proposed change may place additional pressure on professional services staff to ensure that errors did not occur. Separately, a member commented on the varying ability of staff to understand data generated for boards of examiners and, by extension, the ability to identify errors. There was a brief discussion on the risk of the University issuing an inflated degree certificate in error, and for this certificate to be misused by the recipient. Members expressed differing opinions on the likelihood and impact of errors that might arise from reducing the timescale between the board of examiners confirming an award, an award decision being confirmed to the student, and the student receiving their award.

To provide staff with the opportunity to identify and correct errors, it was suggested that a delay be implemented between an award decision being made by a board of examiners and an award being conferred. It was separately suggested that an additional stage could be added to the board of examiners process. It was observed that the University did not collate data on errors associated with the award of degrees, and it was commented that such errors would likely be easier to prevent than to fix. Members were advised that consideration had been given to the timescale between a board of examiners conferring an award and the award being issued, and that it was anticipated that there would still be sufficient time to identify and correct errors. It was advised that Taught Assessment Regulation 64 made provision for the University to correct errors and amend its records. It was observed that, for the majority of students, provision of degree certificates would remain at graduation ceremonies and, consequently, the risk profile between the proposed and existing practices was likely to be similar.

A member commented on the historical and ceremonial value associated with retaining Senate graduation meetings. Senate members separately commented that the meetings occurred very rapidly, with uncertain memberships, and out of sight of those graduating.

6 Senate Committee Administration

6.1 Senate Standing Committee Membership (S 24/25 1G)

Without requiring a vote, Senate approved the memberships of the Academic Policy and Regulation Committee, the Senate Education Committee, and the Senate Quality Assurance Committee.

Senate approved a motion to reopen the election process for Senate-elected members to vacancies on the Senate Education Committee and the Senate Quality Assurance Committee by a majority vote: 91 members approved, 8 members did not approve, and 12 members abstained. There was a brief discussion on the election process and timescale.

The following amendment to the paper was accepted without requiring a vote. *“Senate notes the contexts described in paragraphs 18 and 19 of paper S 23/24 3L about the Task and Finish Group’s role in developing proposals that will affect committee memberships and remits, and that the group has not had time yet to bring these proposals to Senate. Senate approves this continuation of the existing committee structure on an interim basis pending revisions to committee structures, memberships, and remits that Senate may consider in the current academic year or subsequently.”*

The following amendment to the paper was accepted without requiring a vote. *“Senate notes that these committee compositions are being made exceptionally outwith the requirements of Standing Orders paragraph 22.”* It was observed that the Standing Order stated that “all members of Senatus shall be invited annually to submit suggestions for membership of these Committees”, and that this had not happened. Separately, it was commented that the Senate Standing Orders had not been updated to reflect the inclusion of Senate-elected members on the Senate Standing Committees, and that the Senate Standing Orders were in need of review and revision.

6.2 Senate Standing Committee Priorities (S 24/25 1H)

Senate noted the Senate Standing Committees priorities for academic year 2024/25 (paper S 24/25 1H).

It was observed that the paper had been held over from the May and June meetings of Senate, and that Senate had previously been asked to approve the priorities. It was clarified that subsequent review of the Senate Standing Orders and of the Committees’ terms of reference identified that explicit Senate approval was not required. Senate was asked to ‘note’ the priorities, and to disregard reference within the paper asking Senate to ‘endorse’ the priorities. Members were advised that the terms of reference for the Senate Standing Committees, as approved by Senate, stated that the Committees would “follow a schedule of business set prior to the start of the academic year and which is agreed through consultation with Senate, the Conveners of the other Senate Committees, and other relevant members of the community”. A brief summary of the consultation process was outlined.

A member queried whether the Senate Education Committee priority relating to the student experience, and actions taken in response to student survey results, would include surveys that were specific to international students such as the International Student Barometer. The Vice Principal Students agreed that it was helpful to understand the student experience from multiple perspectives, and that the University was considering augmenting its mechanisms for facilitating the student voice with the International Student Barometer.

6.2.1 Member proposed amendment

Senate approved the following amendment by a majority vote: 54 members approved, 43 members did not approve, and 16 members abstained. *“Senate would like SQAC 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.”*

Prior to the vote occurring, it was reported that the Senate Quality Assurance Committee’s existing priorities related to areas of external compliance that could not easily be deprioritised. To reduce the potential for duplication of effort, an alternative proposal was presented for actions to be placed against relevant members of university staff to report on existing plans for evaluation of the aforementioned topics. Following receipt of the reports, Senate could then take an informed decision on assigning such a priority. The proposer of the amendment expressed the preference that the associated work be progressed through the University’s governance structure as detailed within the amendment, so that Senate be able to provide oversight of, and engage with, the associated work.

6.2.2 Member proposed amendment

The following amendment to the paper was accepted without requiring a vote.

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

- 1. 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.*
- 2. Build capacity in Senate to understand and to scrutinise academic policy, strategy, and external compliance activities related to the committee’s remit.”*

The Vice Principal Students commented that work was underway to address the related recommendations arising from AdvanceHE report on Senate Effectiveness, and that the Senate Standing Committees would support the work of the Task and Finish Group. The Convener of the Academic Policy and Regulation Committee, Professor Paddy Hadoke, added that he did not consider the amendment to be contentious but did observe that some of the amendments presented to the meeting appeared to question Senate’s delegation of authority to the Senate standing committees. It was suggested that Senate members could approach the Conveners of the Senate standing committees should they have any queries or concerns about the operation of the committees.

A Senate member observed the operational role of the Senate standing committees and commented that they would appreciate the opportunity for Senate to have a more active role in providing oversight and scrutiny of institutional developments before they are finalised by the relevant Senate standing committee. It was added that the Senate membership would likely be able to make meaningful contributions prior to a paper being finalised. The Convener of the Academic Policy and Regulation Committee commented that the membership of the Senate standing committees included Senate elected-member representatives and that the Senate members were able to contribute to the work of the standing committees through these representatives. It was separately commented that normal governance practice suggested that decisions made by a standing committee, acting within its remit, should not be subject to significant discussion or revision by the committee it reported to.

6.2.3 Member proposed amendment

Senate discussed, but did not accept or vote on, the following amendments.

“Senate would like SEC to report to Senate on the impacts of austerity measures including budget cuts and hiring freezes on academic work (research and teaching, and associated support workload) and student experience at the university, as well as the process of planning and implementing austerity measures to appropriately account for academic and student experience impacts. A timeline for these austerity measures and their review should be clearly identified.”

“Senate would like SQAC to report to Senate on the QA measures taken at different levels of the university to identify and mitigate the impact of austerity measures on academic work and student experience. A timeline for these austerity measures and their review should be clearly identified.”

The Vice Principal Students commented that, for both amendments, the term ‘austerity measures’ was not adequately defined and would require clarification prior to consideration by Senate and its standing committees. Separately, the Vice Principal Students commented that the intended action did not appear to be within the remits of the Senate standing committees, and that the committees did not have the means to conduct such a review.

Separately, the Convener clarified that the University had not imposed a recruitment freeze, rather recruitment was to be restrained with new staff appointments only to be made in exceptional circumstances where such roles were critical to the University’s mission.

Members proposing the amendment commented that there was scope for greater clarity on university actions related to cost control and restraint on staff recruitment; and that the restraint on staff recruitment had already been perceived to have adversely impacted the ability of academic staff to provide teaching, support students, and further research activity.

The Convener observed that the terminology used within the proposed amendment was contentious, as it related the current financial situation and matters that were at the discretion of individual budget holders who held delegated authority. Alternative wording for the amendment was proposed verbally but was not used to amend the amendment within the meeting.

It was observed that schools could report on issues affecting them, including restraints on recruitment or budgetary issues, as part of the annual quality report process. A Senate member requested that, in due course, that Senate receive a report on relevant feedback on issues arising from the school quality reports. A member of the Senate Quality Assurance Committee explained that the school quality reports were focused on teaching and delivery of postgraduate research activity. They interpreted the intention of the amendment as seeking an impact assessment of a business decision and commented that they did not consider such action to sit within the remit of the committees.

6.2.4 Member proposed amendment

The following amendment to the paper was accepted without requiring a vote.

“Senate tasks SEC, SQAC, and APRC to evaluate from their respective remits the current situation and proposed alternatives for regulations and approaches for examination formats, with particular attention to resit examinations, and to bring any proposals for policy or strategy revisions to examinations and resits for the full Senate’s consideration and approval.”

The Vice-Principal Students, Professor Colm Harmon, explained that analysis of institutional data on assessment and of sectoral benchmarking was underway. A paper would be produced for initial consideration by the Senate standing committees, and that the final paper and any recommendations arising would be presented to Senate for consideration and approval.

6.3 Annual Report of the Senate Standing Committees 2023-24

Senate noted the annual reports for the 2023-24 academic session from the Education Committee, the Academic Policy and Regulations Committee, and the Quality Assurance Committee (paper S 24/25 11).

6.4 Senate Standing Committees – upcoming business

Senate noted the main points of activity and business that the Senate Standing Committees would consider between October and December 2024 (paper S 24/25 1J).

7 Senate External Review Task and Finish Group

The Academic Registrar, Lisa Dawson, provided a verbal update to Senate on the work of the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group.

It was reported that several practical measures approved at the June 2024 meeting of Senate had since been implemented, including:

- the annual meeting time for Senate being increased to 12 hours;
- the adoption of a meeting format of four, three hour long, meetings;
- meetings being scheduled within the standard university semester;
- meetings being scheduled to commence at 1.10pm, and conclude by 4pm;
- meetings arranged in a hybrid format as standard;
- the arrangement of informal networking events for members prior to Senate meetings; and
- the development of privacy statement to accompany the recording of Senate meetings, to support the drafting of minutes.

Senate was informed that the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group had developed a proposal to form a Senate Business Committee, which was intended to provide an effective and transparent agenda setting process for meetings of Senate and e-Senate. It was explained that the proposal would shortly be circulated to Senate members for consultation. Following which, it was intended that the proposal paper and accompanying implementation plan be finalised and brought to the December 2024 Senate meeting for approval.

Senate members were advised that the Task and Finish Group's next priority was to contribute to the external review recommendation that the Vice Principal Students "reviews the Terms of Reference, coverage and scope of the three Senate Committees with a view to identifying any overlap and considering if they together cover all university academic priorities." It was reported that, as part of this process, members of the Task and Finish Group had recently attended meetings of the three Senate standing committees.

The Convener of the Task and Finish Group added that any proposals arising from the Group would be put to Senate for consultation prior to Senate approval being sought. Senate members were encouraged to engage with consultation requests.

The Convener thanked members of the Task and Finish Group for their ongoing work in support of Senate.

8 Research Ethics and Defence and Security

The Vice-Principal Research and Enterprise, Professor Christina Boswell, provided a verbal update to Senate in her capacity as Convener of the Research Ethics for Defence Working Group.

It was explained that the Research Ethics for Defence Working Group had been established following consideration of the Research and Partnerships in the Defence Sector paper (S 23/24 3P) considered at the 22 May 2024 meeting of Senate. The Working Group had since

met four times and was anticipated to meet for a final time in November 2024. Following which, it was expected that the report and recommendations would be finalised and presented for consideration by the Research Ethics and Integrity Review Group, the Research Strategy Group, and the University Executive (for changes to the Research Ethics Policy). Members were advised that the final report and recommendations would be presented to the February 2025 meeting of Senate for consideration.

The Vice-Principal Research and Enterprise thanked members of the working group and the paper authors for their collegiate consideration of the issues. It was reported that constructive discussion had been underlined by mutual respect across two aspects. Firstly, the recognition shown by participants that the University did conduct, and should continue to conduct, defence and security related research which could have positive applications and societal benefits. Secondly, the recognition that such research needed to be, and benefited from being, governed by a robust framework of ethical standards and due diligence.

Senate was advised that the Working Group had agreed several interim recommendations, which were summarised as follows.

- That the University Ethics Policy be amended to include a clearer statement on the values guiding research.
- That an annex be added to the University Ethics Policy setting out further guidance on addressing ethical risks in research on/related to Defence and Security.
- That implementation of the aforementioned changes be operationalised through the new University-wide ethics form, and accompanying processes for mitigating risks and for escalating and reviewing high risk projects.
- That there be a clearer interface and alignment between research ethics processes and the Income Due Diligence Group.
- A provisional audit of projects identified as relating to defence and security be conducted pending finalisation of the new guidance.
- Following agreement on the new principles and processes, the University conducts a full review of all live projects within the scope of the new guidance.

In response to a query on the usage of the terms 'defence' and 'security', it was clarified that the Working Group had discussed the definitions extensively and had agreed to use the broader term 'defence and security'.

A member queried how the new guidance would interact with research partnerships. The Vice-Principal Research and Enterprise explained that interaction would continue to occur through the established ethical approval and due diligence procedures. It was added that the Working Group had been reviewing these procedures to identify whether there would be any gaps or loopholes following the introduction of the revised guidance.

Two members echoed earlier comments on the collegiate and constructive approach taken by the working group. A member observed, having recently attended a UKRI event, that the work undertaken stood the University in good stead and ahead of comparable institutions.

9 2023-24 Internal Effectiveness Review of Senate and its Standing Committees

Senate noted the findings and actions arising from the 2023-24 Internal Effectiveness Review of Senate and its Standing Committees (paper S 24/25 1K).

10 Review of Timetabling Processes

The Deputy Secretary Students, Lucy Evans, provided a brief verbal update to Senate on timetabling, and advised that a further update would be provided at the next meeting.

The Deputy Secretary Students recognised the critical importance of teaching time to the student experience and acknowledged that there had been timetabling-related issues at the start of the 2024-25 academic year, for which she apologised.

It was explained that the effectiveness of the timetabling system had been adversely affected by several issues which included the need to migrate to new timetabling software; integration issues between the new timetabling software and Learn; by ongoing work on Appleton tower; and due to the receipt of a significant number of late requests to amend the timetable. Members were advised that, in the period since August 2024, approximately 9000 requests had been submitted to amend the timetable with the majority of these requests having been made in September 2024.

The Deputy Secretary Students reported that the legacy timetable system had been replaced, and that immediate actions had been taken to address acute issues. Senate was advised that a project was in development, with staff and student input, to ensure holistic and long-term improvements to the timetabling system. The project was expected to cover timetabling related policies and processes, work to ensure the suitability of teaching rooms, and work to reduce the number of change requests submitted.

In response to an invitation to comment from the Convener, the EUSA Vice President Education commented that the ability to attend lectures and classes was foundational to students' learning, and that he hoped the timetabling project would deliver tangible benefits to the student experience.

11 Date of next meeting: 11 December 2024



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Electronic Senate

11 to 25 September 2024

e-Senate Report

Comments raised via e-Senate can be accessed on the [Senate Members Portal](#).

1 Conferment of the title of Professor Emeritus / Emerita (e-S 24/25 1A)

Senate approved the conferment of the title of Professor Emeritus / Emerita on the following professors:

- Professor Chris Carr, Business School
- Professor Peter Dayan, School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures
- Professor Roger Jeffery, School of Social and Political Science
- Professor David Robertson, School of Informatics
- Professor Malcolm Douglas Walkinshaw, School of Biological Sciences
- Professor Christopher Williams, School of Informatics

Senate noted the special minutes provided for each professor.

One member expressed that they considered it to be disrespectful to confer emeritus/emerita status with a Senate members' nil response being regarded as assent, rather than approving at a quorate Senate meeting. The member called for this item of business to be discontinued as part of e-Senate.

Congratulations were extended to the new emeriti, and thanks given to special minute authors. The member observed that not all special minutes referred to forthcoming plans for involvement with the university.

2 Court Resolutions (e-S 24/25 1B)

Senate was invited to comment on the following draft resolutions of the University Court:

No. 99/2024: Foundation of a Personal Chair of AI, Memory and War

No.100/2024: Foundation of a Personal Chair of Educational Change and Diversity

Three members commented on this item. Two members commented that it would be beneficial for Senate to receive further information on what each Personal Chair would entail. One member commented that they welcomed the creation of the Personal Chairs, the creation of which they considered to be particularly timely.

Senate members' comments have been shared with the paper author.

3 Report from the Senate Exception Committee (e-S 24/25 1C CLOSED)

Senate noted the two items of business that had been approved by the Senate Exception Committee in the period between 22 May 2024 and 9 October 2024.

One member of the Senate Exception Committee commented on the degree of urgency associated with the items; and separately requested that future items of Senate Exception Committee business explicitly state that the requirements for award have been met and confirmed by the relevant Board of Examiners. Senate Support will provide such confirmation for future items of Senate Exception Committee business where relevant.

4 Communications from the University Court (e-S 24/25 1D)

Senate noted the communications from the University Court as detailed within the paper, and which related to the University Court meeting of 17 June 2024.

Three members of Senate commented on this item.

Two members commented on the report and recommendations arising from the Externally-Facilitated Effectiveness Review of the University of Edinburgh's University Court and Committees. Comments were made on the applicability of recommendations from the Court review to Senate, particularly relating to the length and complexity of committee documentation and the need to provide papers that are fit for purpose; on the value of providing clarity to members on the respective roles and responsibilities of the University Court and Senate and the need for executive staff to appreciate the governance role of these bodies; on the need for discussion of Senate's legislative context parallel to the discussion of Court's; and of the need for both Senate and Court effectiveness reviews to consider the wider university community's views in evaluating effectiveness.

One member commented on the process of providing Senate communications to Court, and vice versa; and commented that they would appreciate information from Court on the agreed financial principles referenced in the report, including the reasoning for maintaining a large projected revenue surplus through lean years at potential cost to academic programming and student welfare.

Two members commented on discussion at the University Court on the Equality Diversity & Inclusion Data Report 2024. The members sought information on how the University supported groups affected by external events; and how the University fostered positive relations between groups with different protected characteristics in view of the member's perception that some recent events had caused an adverse impact on relations.

Senate members' comments have been shared with the paper author.

5 Report from Knowledge Strategy Committee (e-S 24/25 1E)

Senate noted the report from the Knowledge Strategy Committee as detailed within the paper, and which related to the Committee's meeting of 30 May 2024.

Two members of Senate commented on this item.

One member commented that they considered the current standard of accessibility and quality of management information and analytics data to be poor, and commented on the importance of this for staff to be able to support accreditation processes such as Athena SWAN and the Race Equality Charter.

One member commented on the need to give appropriate attention to inclusive planning and risk management when addressing the issues associated with the University's digital estate.

Senate members' comments have been shared with the paper author.

6 Report from the Central Academic Promotions Committee (e-S 24/25 1F)

Senate noted the report of the Central Academic Promotions Committee.



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Electronic Senate

13 to 27 November 2024

e-Senate Report

Comments raised via e-Senate can be accessed on the [Senate Members Portal](#).

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

Senate approved the conferment of the title of Professor Emeritus / Emerita on the following professors:

- 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

Senate noted the special minutes provided for each professor.

Two members commented on this item.

One member commented that the special minutes represented a valuable opportunity to indicate how emeritus and emerita professors would continue to be a part of the university community; and the member considered that the special minutes could have provided additional information in this regard. The member quoted the [Emeritus Professor Procedure](#), which stated that special minutes should include "a note on how they intend to spend their retirement."

Separately, the member commented that they considered it to be disrespectful to confer emeritus/emera status by assent rather than affirmation at a quorate Senate meeting, and called for this item of business to be move to ordinary Senate meetings.

One member simply communicated their approval.

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

Senate noted information on the proposed dates in 2025 for the nomination and election of:

- Staff seeking election to Senate.
- Elected members to Senate standing committees.

Three members commented on this item.

One member welcomed discussion within the paper around increasing nominations to Senate and its standing committees, and commented that they felt that workload was a significant barrier preventing participation by staff in university governance.

The member commented that they would welcome workload being recognised within the upcoming Senate elections paper.

One member recommended that provision be made in the schedule for reopening nominations in any categories of membership in which there were fewer nominees than vacancies; and commented that they had anecdotally heard that colleagues had declined to nominate themselves because they assumed that there would be a sufficient number of nominations.

One member simply communicated their approval.

The comments have been noted by the paper author, and will be used to inform the paper on Senate elections to be drafted for the February 2025 meeting.

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

Senate noted the communications from the University Court as detailed within the paper and which related to Court's special meeting of 3 October 2024, and to the ordinary meeting of 7 October 2024. Four members commented on this item.

One member requested that an update be provided to Senate on progress associated with the externally-facilitated review of Court effectiveness, as detailed under point four.

The member also commented, in relation to point 5, that they welcomed the goal of rigorously assessing the impact of feedback turnaround times on NSS scores. The member commented that they would find it useful to receive information on associated indicators of success.

One member commented that they would find it useful to receive information on the projects and associated resource implications referred to under point seven.

One member commented that they felt that the outcome of the meeting on divestment could be more clearly communicated with Senate and the wider University body.

One member simply communicated that they had noted the paper.

Senate members' comments have been shared with the paper author.

4 Current Progress within the Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression Working Group (e-S24/252D)

Senate noted the update on the current progress of the University Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression Working Group; and the following dates that had been provisionally identified 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

Two members of Senate commented on this item.

One member commented that they were concerned that the terms of reference for the Working Group had not been approved by Senate. The member further queried how many Working Group members had specific academic research expertise on the topic of academic freedom and freedom of expression; observing that this was a particular area of research excellence at the University.

One member simply communicated that they had noted the paper.

Senate members' comments have been shared with the paper author.

Senate

11 December 2024

Senate Action Log

Meeting date	Paper	Paper status	Action	Responsible	Target date	Action status	Update
22-May-24	S 23/24 2A	OPEN	Action: Senate Clerk to refer comments regarding e-Senate and closing feedback loop to the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group.	Senate Clerk	October 2024	Complete	Comments were shared with the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group via email.
22-May-24	S 23/24 2B	OPEN	Senate Convener and Senate Clerk to consider communication pathway for reporting back to Senate.	Senate Convener and Senate Clerk	December 2024	Complete	Relevant minute extract and response on page two.
09-Oct-24	S 24/25 1C	OPEN	Update on People and Money to be provided to the December 2024 Senate meeting.	Provost	11 December 2024	Complete	See agenda item 5 - Update on the Finance, HR and Research Improvement Programme refers.

A summary of previous actions can be viewed on the [Senate Members Portal](#).

Extract of minute: Matters Arising - S 23/24 2B

The Convener highlighted that a summary of actions completed from the Senate Action Log was circulated as a paper to note. The Action Log includes an additional column with a brief summary of the outcome. The Action Log remains a live document and will continue to be updated.

A member expressed the understanding that the action log was intended to bring Senate clarity as to the outcomes of decisions Senate has made but was concerned that it has turned out to be narrowly tailored to track only whether decisions have been communicated rather than what actions have followed from the decisions. The member noted that the Principal had last year not accepted a paper asking for updates on decisions Senate had taken and it was explained that the action log was the appropriate mechanism for tracking decisions of Senate. The member expressed the view that the lack of information about the effect of Senate decisions is a matter of great concern for understanding Senate's effectiveness.

The member urged Senate to think about the bigger picture of what Senate does and the consequences of its decisions. The member stated that the Action Log is narrowly tailored around tracking the communication of Senate decisions to areas responsible and that if Senate decisions are to have meaning these should be recorded on the Action Log for tracking as appropriate. The member concluded that it is important to understand whether Senate decisions are being carried out by responsible areas and the Action Log should provide the mechanism for tracking this and providing feedback on Senate's effectiveness.

The Convener explained that the Senate action log was to record where Senate takes an action. The Convener agreed that there needs to be an improved communication pathway for other parties to report back to Senate, and will consider how this can be taken forward.

Action: Senate Convener and Senate Clerk to consider communication pathway for reporting back to Senate.

Proposed response

The following is proposed to address actions, through the Senate action log, that are assigned to third parties outside of the Senate reporting structure.

- Retain action for Senate Support to contact relevant third party.
- A separate action will be added for the third party to provide a written or verbal update to Senate. The action to remain 'ongoing' until such a report is provided to Senate, or it is confirmed that such a report cannot be provided.

Senate**11 December 2024****Update on the Finance, HR and Research Improvement Programme****Description of paper**

1. This paper provides Senate with an update on the Finance, HR and Research Improvement Programme. The purpose of this Programme is to develop our use of our People and Money system to support its users more effectively.

Action requested / recommendation

2. To receive an update on the Finance, HR and Research Improvement Programme.

Background and context

3. The People and Money system launched in three phases between 2020 and 2022, introducing new (Oracle based) systems and business processes that, while effective in some areas of our operation, were disruptive of many others. In parallel new structures and roles were implemented for the HR and Finance services. Following an external review, an outline plan for proposed improvements was endorsed by the University Executive (December 2023) and by University Court (February 2024). The Finance, Research and HR Improvement Programme was created (March 2024) as a 2-year effort to coordinate the necessary change.
4. At its meeting of 9 October 2024, Senate briefly discussed the improvement plan and it was agreed that an update be provided to the 11 December 2024 meeting of Senate.

Discussion

5. Governance and Engagement

The programme is one of a set of change programmes for which the University Initiatives Portfolio Board (UIPB) (chaired by our Provost, with cross University membership) has oversight. Following the Internal Review of Strategic Change and Continuous Improvement, commissioned by University Executive, the programme governance structure and operations have been updated to ensure an effective approach to manage the complete programme lifecycle is in place. Oversight of the programme itself is through a board (currently meeting monthly) with representation from all colleges and the main business units. Within the programme we divide into projects comprising of work packages to deliver targeted improvement outcomes, each of which engages with a user group that provides operational expertise and representation from relevant areas of the University. To maintain close consistency across projects, we also convene sub boards for Finance, Research and for HR to provide detailed governance at the appropriate level. Town hall meetings were held in June in each College to discuss programme plans and discuss obstacles/opportunities. An online information hub¹ is maintained, as a single source of key information. This gives information on the programme's work packages and progress plus a guide to the programme board. Leaders across the University are also invited to 'Leaders Update' sessions where they receive key information and support regarding the programmes within the UIPB's portfolio.

¹ <https://uoe.sharepoint.com/sites/HRandFinanceTransformation/SitePages/PeopleandMoney.aspx>

6. Programme of Work

Our current prioritisation of projects is given below. We distinguish work that is already underway; work starting now; and work in planning. This phasing is necessary because we must consult with those expert in the various activities, across the University, and we must also ensure that we have the capacity to deliver the necessary change to time, acknowledging competition for resources. To optimise resource utilisation we run a prioritized rolling programme, planning packages of work and then initiating each project once we know it is viable. Many projects run for lengthy periods because they take time to fully embed across the University; however, all target producing benefits early.

7. Work already underway:

- **HR improvement:** Our HR Process Improvement Review and Prioritisation survey (plus related implementation groups) identified processes / functionalities requiring improvements and business area priorities for embedding and enhancing HR processes and HR reports. The areas addressed are: training, recruitment, onboarding, service requests, alerts/notifications and personal data management. This is a lengthy project of continuous improvement with the first tranche of deliver due early 2025.
- **Research salary management:** To justify and align research finances across the University, we must correctly attribute directly incurred staff costs to each individual research project. Currently, the allocation of salaries to the appropriate project code(s) requires a multi-step process involving manual workarounds. We will automate and streamline the allocation of staff costs, ensuring timely and accurate salary postings to research projects. This will reduce manual interventions, posting errors, and processing delays, while providing a robust audit trail for funders.

8. Work starting now:

- **Reporting:** Ensuring that staff who aren't members of the Finance service but who are responsible for providing oversight and management of financial data have easier, independent access to reporting, by: defining a more extensive document reporting framework; defining key "personas" within the framework that match the needs of common roles with respect to our finance data; for these personas, building secure reporting mechanisms; establishing a governance structure for reporting as this evolves.
- **Purchase-to-pay improvement:** Improving end-to-end procurement processes through: a more efficient and effective process for managing order processing and payment of (reducing invoice holds, with more accurate recharging to correct cost centres); reduction in time required within Procurement to raise purchase orders and manage associated invoice queries; and an improved and expanded supplier catalogue.

9. Areas in planning (dependent on viability and packaging into work plans):

- Edinburgh Research Office process consolidation
- Payroll and pensions
- Staff cost management
- VAT processes
- Invoice flows and appropriate payment routes
- Budget holder approvals

- Research collaborator payments
- Financial Planning
- Tuition fee planning/reporting
- Supplier support

10. In addition to these target areas, selected because our discussions with business units identified them as priorities, we also must manage crosscutting themes that effect many work plans. These include:

- Integration of systems that interact with the People and Money system. People and Money holds our master data regarding Finance and HR resulting in a requirement to interface to/from a number of systems that utilise and or produce financial and/or HR data. Effective integrations ensure data integrity, ease of control reconciliations, management of errors and ongoing alignment where data changes are applied in either system. Work in this area was descoped from the initial finance launch and it is important this is now addressed to eliminate complex manual interventions and residual data integrity risks.
- Changes to the Oracle (People and Money) system's user interface. Although our Information Systems Group manages routine system upgrades, a more extensive change to the Oracle (People and Money) system (labelled "Redwood" by Oracle) is in prospect that will affect the structure of interactions with it, as well as its look and feel. Given this, we have agreed to bring oversight of Redwood change into the scope of the programme, although Information Systems of course maintains responsibility for the necessary systems engineering.

Resource implications

11. There are no additional resource implications associated with providing this update.

Risk management

12. There are no additional risk management implications associated with providing this update.

Equality & diversity

13. There are no additional equality and diversity implications associated with providing this update.

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

14. Senate will receive this update at its meeting of 11 December 2024, and relevant discussion will be captured in the associated minute of the meeting.

Author

Professor Dave Robertson,
Programme Sponsor
Gillian Richardson,
Director of Strategic Change (Interim)
November 2024

Presenter

Professor Dave Robertson,
Programme Sponsor

Freedom of Information - Open

Senate**11 December 2024****Timetabling and Course Selection****Description of paper**

1. This paper provides an update on work to improve timetabling and course selection for students and staff.

Action requested/Recommendation

2. To receive an update on Timetabling and Course Selection.

Background and context

3. We need to continue developing the necessary infrastructure for an inclusive joined-up experience, ensuring that every student's journey is as easy as possible and that access to support is consistent, flexible and connected (SES Strategic Vision September 2022). We need to get the basics right for applicants, students and staff (Strategy 2030 for Student Experience - s12) and be recognised amongst staff for "having more user-friendly processes and efficient systems" (Strategy 2030 for Efficient systems - s4)
4. Students and staff have persistently fed back their dissatisfaction with their experience of timetabling and course selection, this includes the staff that work directly to administer these activities.
5. Students have persistently fed back they have timetables provided late and with changes made, often weeks after the start of teaching and this is evidenced by our timetable changes tracker. They also tell us they are not able to enrol on the courses they understood were available to them.
6. Staff who teach experience late changes as a result of clashes and unsuitable rooms which means they cannot plan or teach effectively. Professional staff involved in the timetabling and the course selection process find it laborious, confusing, time consuming and all receive large numbers of queries from students, many expressing dissatisfaction.
7. Further considerations include the need to establish foundations for benefits to be realised from Curriculum Transformation Programme and to achieve effective utilisation of fit-for-purpose teaching space.
8. Following initial work undertaken within the Student Lifecycle Management Group it was clear that to fully respond to these issues, a University-wide change project was required.
9. In April 2024, UIPB endorsed a project brief for the proposed Project, with a request to develop a business case. Following that endorsement, a project team and a project governance group was set up led by the Project Co-Sponsors, Iain Gordon, Vice Principal and Head of College of Science and Engineering and Lucy Evans, Deputy Secretary, Students The project team held a series of workshops with stakeholders from all three Colleges, including academics and professional services staff to contribute to the proposals.

10. The full proposal for this Project has now been approved by University Executive, following endorsement by the University Initiatives Portfolio Board.

Discussion

11. This Project contributes to a broader approach to consider how we will improve student and staff experience by changing how we design and deliver our academic administration and support functions. It aims to:
 - Deliver a stable, detailed and accurate timetable to support students' learning;
 - Allow students to choose from a suite of courses that are available to them within transparent parameters;
 - Provide staff with a stable and accurate timetable to be able to plan their other University commitments;
 - Achieve improved proactive and effective working practices for staff in teaching administration, including consolidated and simpler processes, improved planning and reduction in urgent/complex resolutions to queries.
12. The Project requires change across the University.
 - a) A culture shift: We will establish a culture where both research and teaching are equally valued and prioritised to improve the student experience. The project will also help develop a more predictable and data-driven environment where information on teaching resource is transparent and easily accessible.
 - b) A timeline shift: All academics and professional services staff across the University to work to consistent academic planning dates. We will work to move those timelines forward so both students and teaching staff can access a reliable timetable earlier.
 - c) A policy and process shift: With new or revised policy and processes to be applied to deliver and reduce the amount of administration around academic planning.
13. The Project will have regular review points, including scope, costs, timescales, benefits and risks, the project will manage risks identified during each phase.
14. From January 2025, the project will start detailed planning and analysis. This will run until the end of academic year 2024/5 with a review point before design starts.
15. A Project Board will be established, reporting and escalating risks to a new Student Experience Programme Board to capture all student experience initiatives. Risks requiring portfolio escalation will be raised to UIPB.
16. We will establish a Design Group with academics and professional services staff from across Colleges, supported by a project team.
17. We will regularly communicate with our University community, including the provision of updates to University Senate, Executive and Court, at appropriate milestones.

Resource implications

18. There are no specific resource requests in this paper. Resourcing for delivery of the project was captured in the Project Initiation proposal. We note the ongoing work of colleagues in Schools and central services towards the delivery of this Project and other student experience initiatives.

Risk management

19. Failure to address student experience would mean we have not met our strategic ambitions as set out in Strategy 2030. It also carries reputational risk and continues to affect the University's standing in national league tables.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

20. This paper would support the SDG "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" as part the strategic objective to improve student experience. The proposals would not hinder the achievement of any other UN SDGs or exacerbate the Climate Emergency.

Equality & diversity

21. Our work in student experience will support greater equality, diversity and inclusion for students and staff within our community. A full EIQA was submitted as part of the Project Initiation proposal.

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

22. This paper presents an update to note. We will regularly communicate the work of this Project as noted above.

Further information

Author

Lucy Evans
Deputy Secretary Students

Presenter

Lucy Evans
Deputy Secretary Students

Freedom of Information - Open.

SENATE**11th December 2024****Edinburgh Student Vision****Description of paper**

1. The Edinburgh Student Vision provides a statement of what the University community wants the curriculum (and Curriculum Transformation) to provide for students and graduates. This paper describes the process used to develop, consult on, test and refine the vision; together with plans for its use and the development of associated resources and guidance.
2. The Edinburgh Student Vision contributes to the following outcomes set out in Strategy 2030: ii), iv), vi) & xii)

Action requested / Recommendation

3. Senate is asked to discuss the Edinburgh Student Vision and to approve it for use as a key reference point for the Curriculum Transformation Programme and for learning & teaching more broadly. This includes the development of materials, guidance and resources to support its use by different audiences alongside the Undergraduate (UG) and Taught Postgraduate (PGT) Curriculum Frameworks and Skills for Success Framework.

Background and context

4. The development of the Edinburgh Student Vision is a key step in the Curriculum Transformation Programme, providing an importance reference point for the Undergraduate (UG) and Taught Postgraduate (PGT) Curriculum Frameworks. Our aim is to present a clear and simple vision that will guide the development of our curriculum and approaches to teaching and assessment, and be something that students and staff will recognise and relate to.
5. A draft Edinburgh Student Vision was published in April 2022. This has been used to support subsequent engagement with Schools, staff, students and other stakeholders, the majority of whom have been supportive of the substance of the vision.
6. In February 2024 Senate approved the following motion:
“2.1 Senate notes the general positive reception of the Edinburgh Student Vision (ESV), and in accordance with the governance expectations approved in 2023, requests that final approval of the Edinburgh Student Vision (ESV) will be brought to Senate, without delegation to any other body, as soon as possible.”
7. The revised text of the Edinburgh Student Vision (Table 1) has been informed by two further pieces of consultation and testing. These comprised a market sensitivity assessment of the Edinburgh Student Vision with potential applicants and current students, and targeted engagement activities with staff and students to confirm its relevance.

Discussion

8. A three-stage process was used to prepare the draft Edinburgh Student Vision¹. The initial exploration stage took place between July and December 2021. A range of methods were used to draw in a varied and broad range of perspectives from

¹ Further details on the development of the Edinburgh Student Vision, including material gathered through engagement with staff and students, consultation and testing are available on the Curriculum Transformation Hub (SharePoint site open to all University staff and students) at [Edinburgh Student Vision December 2024](#)

individuals and groups. Curriculum Transformation workstreams undertook focussed pieces of research and analysis, including a survey of recent graduates and discussions with employers. These insights were shared at a meeting of workstream and group members at the end of November 2021 that led to the production of a draft vision in April 2022.

9. A consultation on the draft vision took place between April and June 2022 using a range of methods and with different audiences. It has been used subsequently to support engagement with Schools and Deaneries, workshops with students (including those from a Widening Participation background), and discussions with external groups and organisations. The substance of the vision has been supported by the majority of respondents and other stakeholders. This positive reaction was noted by Senate in February 2024 who asked that a final version be brought to Senate for final approval as soon as possible.

The Edinburgh Student Vision

All Edinburgh students have the opportunity to become:

- **Confident in their discipline:** with advanced specialist skills, knowledge and experience.
- **Ready to thrive in a changing world:** having developed the skills to be reflexive learners imbued with a critical mindset, inclusive and open to diverse perspectives, with an enduring commitment to lifelong learning.
- **Highly employable:** can translate experience and capacities to career success, on graduation and beyond, seeking congruence with their own values and aspirations.
- **Valued collaborators:** with effective written and verbal communication skills, ability to work constructively with people across a range of contexts and advocate for themselves and others.

By including six key components in the design of programmes:

- Provides **disciplinary depth, identity and expertise:** with students able to synthesise and apply learning, having developed their specialist knowledge and understanding, research skills and an appreciation of the research process.
- Includes **experiential, cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural learning:** with students able to work well with others, understand and use different perspectives, and develop strong communication and collaboration skills.
- Supports the development of **curious and confident learners:** who are critical thinkers, innovative, agile, resilient, creative, compassionate and empathetic.
- Develops high levels of **digital and data literacy:** with students informed and active, confident in a range of environments and uses, with a mature understanding of ethical and societal considerations.
- Has a clear focus on **integrity, ethics and is values-driven:** promoting honesty, equity, inclusion, respect, cultural humility, and a willingness to challenge structural enablement and embedded advantage.
- Builds **understanding and engagement with global challenges:** to develop skills in solution design and delivery, able to explain and grasp the relative importance of different actions, work constructively across different contexts and be empowered to take action.

Table 1 – Edinburgh Student Vision (December 2024)

10. The revised text of the Edinburgh Student Vision (Table 1) has been informed by two further pieces of consultation and testing.

11. **Market Sensitivity Assessment**

During autumn 2023 and spring 2024 the Curriculum Transformation Programme (CTP) commissioned Progressive (an external market research agency based in Scotland) to undertake a market sensitivity assessment of the Edinburgh Student Vision and proposals for new UG and PGT Curriculum Frameworks. Their remit was to test the understanding and appeal of the Student Vision and Curriculum Framework proposition with current and potential students (undergraduate and taught postgraduate). They approached this task through a mix of qualitative (focus groups) and quantitative (surveys) methods². The priority for CTP was to ensure that there is nothing in the Edinburgh Student Vision or Curriculum Frameworks that will put off or be viewed negatively by significant numbers of potential applicants or types of applicants (e.g. those with a Widening Participation background) and to gather feedback that would be used to refine the proposition and its presentation.

12. The results from this work were encouraging. No major concerns were identified, with strong support for the Edinburgh Student Vision objectives (81-91% for current and potential undergraduates; 77-92% for current and potential postgraduates) together with useful feedback around opportunities to refine its presentation.

13. **Refinement of the Edinburgh Student Vision**

This feedback, together with the results of all previous consultation and engagement activities, was used to commission Nous Group (an external Higher Education Consultancy) to test and refine the Edinburgh Student Vision during autumn 2024.

14. At its meeting on 7th November 2024, Senate Education Committee approved plans to introduce a new Skills for Success Framework as a replacement for the current University Graduate Attributes framework³. This brings together the skills and attributes students build and develop while studying at Edinburgh, through curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities and learning.

15. The Edinburgh Student Vision and Skills for Success Framework are complementary and can be used in combination to support a range of audiences and purposes. The Student Vision describes what we want students to gain from the curriculum, while the Skills Framework sets out the skills and attributes that students will be supported and encouraged to develop, helping to enable achievement of the Edinburgh Student Vision. It therefore made sense to ask Nous to review and refine the Edinburgh Student Vision and Skills for Success Framework together to ensure their relevance to staff and students.

16. Nous combined the results of the work undertaken to date in developing the Student Vision and Skills Framework, the outputs of previous engagement and research into comparator institutions to recommend a set of updates to both the Vision and Framework that were tested and validated through workshops and other engagement activities with staff and students.

17. Comparator research indicates a high level of alignment in the content and form of the Student Vision and Skills Framework with equivalent documents in other institutions.

18. Analysis of the work done to date in Edinburgh emphasised the importance of the Vision and Framework being something that students and staff can relate to, with examples of how they can be applied. For students a key requirement is to use simple, concise language that is easy to understand, accompanied by engaging and

² Survey responses from 483 prospective and 486 undergraduates, 486 prospective and 707 current postgraduates. 30 focus group participants.

³ Paper SEC 24/25 2D - <https://registryservices.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2024-11/7%20November%202024%20-%20Agenda%20and%20Papers.pdf>

relevant visuals. There were also specific words and phrases that were particularly important, problematic or confusing for different audiences.

19. Nous made recommendations for several modest refinements to the wording and format of the Vision and Framework. These were then tested with 33 staff and student representatives at five workshops in November along with 160 students at pop up events held in different areas of the University. This informed the final version of the Edinburgh Student Vision presented in this paper and will be used to refine the Skills for Success Framework.
20. Nous will provide a set of visual representations of the vision and framework that can be tailored for use with different audiences.
21. Getting the phrasing right is a difficult balancing act. Our key priority is to use language that is meaningful for students. This can lead to concerns around over-simplification. This will be a key consideration as we develop supporting resources and materials for different audiences, purposes and contexts.

22. Embedding and using the Edinburgh Student Vision

The use and embedding of the Edinburgh Student Vision and Skills for Success Framework for different audiences and purposes will be taken forward through the CTP. These plans include:

23. Use of the vision and framework to inform marketing materials for prospective students, including use in communications and Open Day scripts;
24. Development of course and programme design resources and support for teaching staff to assist them in using and responding to the vision and skills framework in curriculum design and approaches to teaching and assessment;
25. Use as a reference point to inform course and programme design and approvals;
26. Use in the development of self-reflection tools and guidance on course selection for current students; and
27. Use to provide a common language and reference point that staff supporting learning can use, for example when Student Advisors are supporting course selection and enrolment.

Resource implications

28. The CTP Outline and Full Business Cases considered and approved by the University Initiatives Portfolio Board (UIPB) and University Executive in July 2024 include funding for the development of the resources and guidance material described in this paper and to support the adoption of the Edinburgh Student Vision and Skills for Success Framework.

Risk Management

29. The CTP team maintain a risk register which is reviewed, presented and discussed at the CTP Implementation Group and Programme Board. Market sensitivity testing was undertaken to assess and mitigate the risk of a negative reaction from applicants and students.

Responding to the Climate Emergency and Sustainable Development Goals

30. Curriculum Transformation and the Edinburgh Student Vision will support a positive contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the University including objectives around inclusive and equitable access to education (SDG4) and action to combat climate change and its impact (SDG13).

Equality and Diversity

31. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) for the overall approach to Curriculum Transformation, the organisation and management of the Curriculum Transformation

Programme was completed in November 2022. Further EqIA will be undertaken as part of the development and implementation phases of Curriculum Transformation.

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

32. An update and briefing on the next steps with the Edinburgh Student Vision (and Skills for Success Framework) will be prepared and circulated to School, College and Service contacts early in the new year. This will be included in general CTP updates and communications provided to Heads of School, Colleges, Senate Committees, Directors of Teaching and other groups alongside updates via the Bulletin and Curriculum Transformation Hub.
33. Specific next steps will be discussed with College Education Committees and taken to the appropriate committees of Senate for consideration.
34. The CTP Implementation Group will have oversight of the practical management of these next steps, including inclusion in the CTP Theories of Change based evaluation framework that is being developed.

Consultation

35. See discussion.

Further information

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25th November 2024

Freedom of information

Open

Senate

11 December 2024

Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030 and Implementation Plan

Description of paper

1. The Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030, and associated implementation plan, as presented to the 7 November 2024 meeting of the Senate Education Committee.

Action requested / recommendation

2. Senate is to receive an update on the development of the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030 and the plans for implementation.

Background and context

3. The QAA ELIR 2021 review recommended: “... *in view of the current transition between the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2017 and future plans, the University should provide institutional oversight, and ensure clarity for staff, on the strategic direction underpinning current learning and teaching developments.*”
4. The QAA QESR 2023 review strengthened the recommendation to develop a University Learning and Teaching Strategy requiring that: “*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*”
5. Since the Learning and Teaching Strategy was discussed at the May 2024 meeting, further consultations were carried out, including meetings with Heads of Schools. These meetings confirmed broad support for the Learning and Teaching Strategy; Schools felt that the Strategy gave direction without being prescriptive, and afforded Schools flexibility in how they responded to the Strategy in ways appropriate to their context.

Discussion

6. The Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030 is being developed to provide a roadmap to achieve the learning and teaching focused purpose of Strategy 2030, specifically that: **our teaching will match the excellence of our research. We will improve and sustain student satisfaction and wellbeing.**
7. The purpose of the Learning and Teaching Strategy is to stimulate developments to our educational offer ensuring it remains fit to equip our students for the futures

they will be entering, to promote and support inspiring teaching, and engage and empower our learners. These three core purposes of our Learning and Teaching Strategy are shaped by our institutional values set out in Strategy 2030 and underpinned by a set of enablers that support our learning and teaching processes, our students' wellbeing and academic development, and the development of our teaching staff.

8. There is necessarily a degree of overlap between the 'curriculum for the future' and the Curriculum Transformation Programme. CTP is a major curriculum transformation programme and will enable implementation of a number of the curriculum elements of the Strategy. However, there is considerable scope for Schools to demonstrate their alignment to the Strategy at a local level.
9. The full Strategy and implementation plan is included as appendix one.
10. An extract from the draft minutes of the November 2024 Senate Education Committee meeting is included as appendix two.

Resource implications

11. The main purpose of the Learning and Teaching Strategy is to guide and focus the utilisation of existing resource. Resource implications associated with major developments to the curriculum are already factored into the resourcing of the Curriculum Transformation Programme. A number of the key enablers (e.g. SLMG, estates, student support etc.) also have resources allocated to them.

Risk management

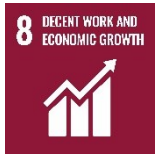
12. There is a risk to learning and teaching and the student experience in not having a Learning and Teaching Strategy in place. Without a Strategy the University lacks a unified direction in its education goals and we may fail to achieve our ambition set out in Strategy 2030. A lack of a Strategy may also result in ineffective resource allocation. There is a further risk that without a Strategy we fail to meet the recommendations from the QESR leading to consequences in our next external review.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

13. Once completed, the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030 will contribute to the following SDGs:



Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all



Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all

Equality & diversity

14. Equity, diversity and inclusion have been, and continue to be, major considerations of the Learning and Teaching Strategy. EDI is a core value underpinning Strategy 2030 and the Learning and Teaching Strategy. Once approved, an EqlA will be conducted prior to implementation.

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

15. Once approved, the Deputy Vice Principal Students (Enhancement) will work with Communications and Marketing, Colleges and Schools to develop a communication of the Strategy. A high-level implementation plan has been included that largely focuses on University-level actions. Together with the Vice Principal Students and Deputy Secretary Students, a series of meetings have been arranged with Heads of Schools from January 2025 that will provide an opportunity to discuss Schools' roles in implementation of the Strategy. A light-touch evaluation of progress against the actions will be planned for the mid-way point of the strategy (in three years), with a fuller evaluation nearer to the end of the Strategy period (2030).

Authors

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Lauren Harrison, Senior Projects Officer, Students

2/12/24

Presenter

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Freedom of Information - Open

Appendix one:



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH

Learning & Teaching Strategy 2030

University of Edinburgh

Professor Tina Harrison, *Deputy Vice-Principal Students (Enhancement)*

Lauren Harrison, *Senior Projects Officer - Students*

Introduction

At the University of Edinburgh, we place our students and their educational journey at the core of our mission. Aligned with our Strategy 2030, we are dedicated to providing an extraordinary learning experience, continually enhancing our students' satisfaction and wellbeing. This commitment is deeply embedded in our values, guiding us towards creating a supportive, inspiring, and enriching environment for every student. This Learning and Teaching Strategy aligns with and supports the goals of Strategy 2030, that:

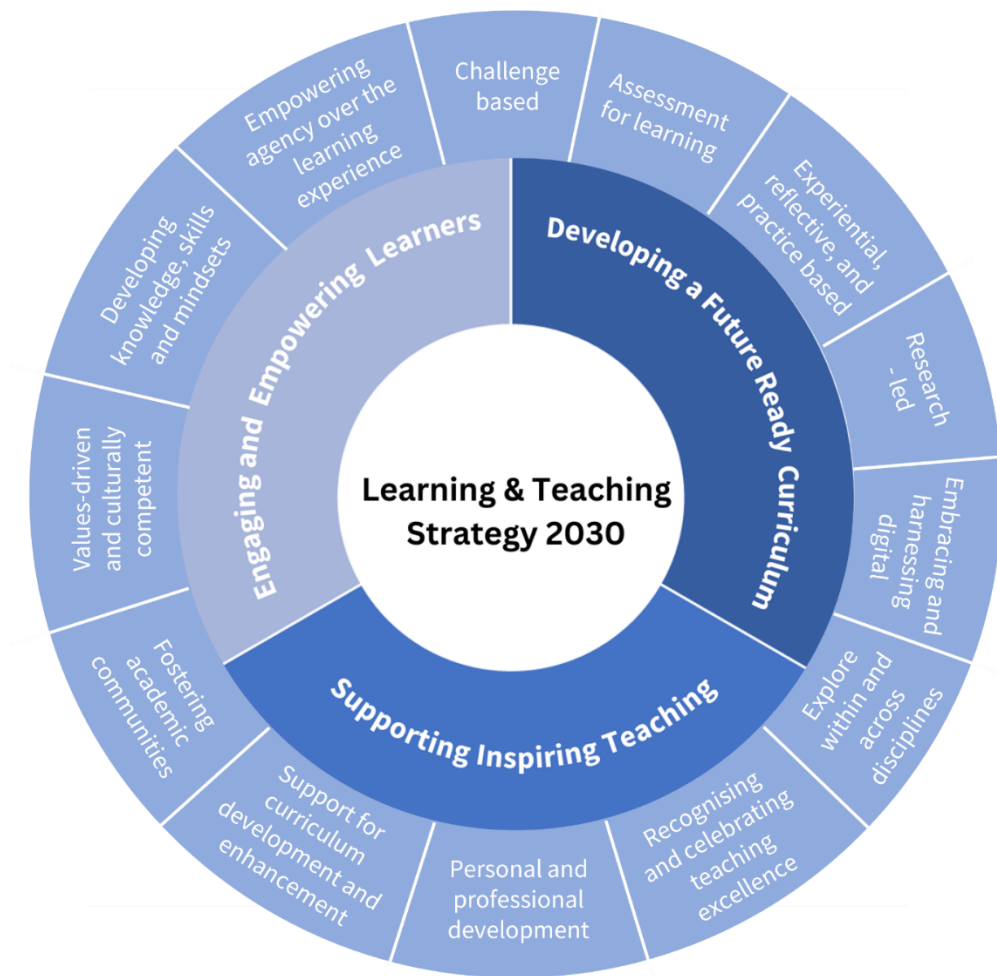
- We will support and promote teaching that focusses on experience, employability, and an understanding of the value of creativity, curiosity, and even failure. We will encourage discussion and engagement with staff, students, and partners.
- We celebrate our students making the world a better place. We will keep attracting and retaining ambitious students, maximising their potential to ensure that our graduates go on to achieve success in whatever they do, wherever they go.
- We will widen participation so that students from any background can come to study with us. We will offer accessible, responsive and efficient educational services as well as personal, pastoral and professional support. We will encourage a culture of lifelong learning and attachment to our University community, letting every student know how much we value them, from the first time we meet them, to their graduation and for the rest of their lives.
- We will not grow for growths sake. We will improve our student experience while aiming to keep our undergraduate community at a stable size. In reshaping our teaching for the future, we expect to expand interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary, postgraduate and digital education.



The Learning and Teaching Strategy also aligns with the Edinburgh Student Vision that sets out a roadmap for the qualities and capabilities required in the development of our students as learners ready to thrive in a changing world. As such, the purpose of the Learning and Teaching Strategy is to stimulate developments to our educational offer ensuring it remains fit to equip our students for the futures they will be entering, to promote and support inspiring teaching, and engage and empower our learners.

These three purposes of our Learning and Teaching Strategy are shaped by our institutional values set out in Strategy 2030 and underpinned by a set of enablers that support our learning and teaching processes, our students' wellbeing and academic development, and the development of our teaching staff.

The success of this Strategy will be measured by the extent to which the implementation plan is put into practice across schools and departments. We want to ensure that Edinburgh becomes a better place to learn and cultivate lifelong learning, a better place to teach and support education, and the extent to which our graduates are equipped to thrive in an uncertain world and enrich their communities.



Our Values

Our values, set out in Strategy 2030, guide and motivate our wider educational purpose and this Teaching and Learning Strategy:

- We aim to achieve excellence in all that we do, always being principled, considerate, and respectful.
- Our teaching and research are relevant to society and we are diverse, inclusive, and accessible to all.
- We foster a welcoming community, where students, staff, alumni, and friends feel proud to be a part of our university.
- We are ambitious, bold, and act with integrity, always being willing to listen.
- We celebrate and strengthen our deep-rooted and distinctive internationalism, attracting the world's best minds and building innovative global partnerships for research, teaching and impact.
- We are a place of transformation and of self-improvement, driven to achieve benefit for individuals, communities, societies, and our world.

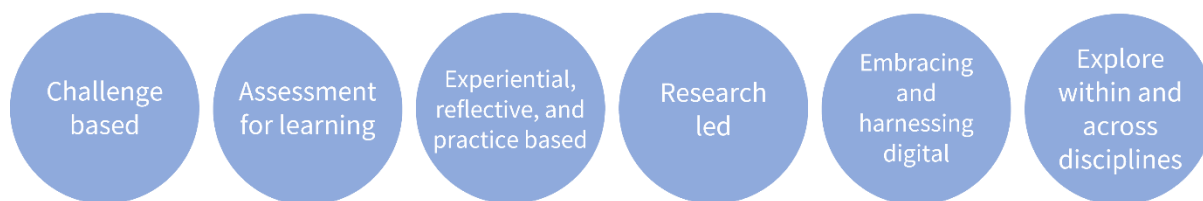


Three Core Purposes

To ensure we equip our students as life-long learners to thrive in a changing world, there are three inter-related core purposes of this Learning and Teaching Strategy:

1. To stimulate the development of a curriculum that is future ready;
2. To engage and empower learners;
3. To promote and support inspiring teaching.

Developing a Future Ready Curriculum



As the external environment rapidly evolves, so too must our approaches to learning and teaching to ensure that our students are equipped with the skills, knowledge and attitudes to thrive in an increasingly complex and changing world. Our curriculum will serve as a vehicle for transformation; a catalyst for personal growth, innovation and societal change. This will be achieved by the following:

Explore Within and Across Disciplines

Disciplinary depth will remain an essential foundation of our degree programmes, fostering expertise and mastery, ensuring our students become practitioners within a specific field. This not only equips our students with essential knowledge and skills, but also cultivates critical thinking, creativity, intellectual curiosity and the ability to engage with complex concepts. In addition, we will provide increased opportunities for transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary opportunities, encouraging students to draw connections across disciplines, yielding fresh perspectives and solutions, preparing students for the multifaceted challenges of the 21st century.

Research Led

As a research-intensive University we will ensure our teaching benefits from our research. We will actively engage our students in the process of knowledge creation and exploration, and we will afford them opportunities to work with our researchers. Through exposure to current research findings, methodologies, and debates within their respective fields of study we will help our students to develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter, contributing to the advancement of their disciplines. By engaging our students in research-led learning we will develop their critical enquiry skills, inspire creativity in problem solving, and prepare our students for potential careers in research, academia or industry.

Challenge Based

Our educational approach takes a global view, recognising that the challenges we face are interconnected across nations and cultures. Consistent with our values, we will position our curriculum to meaningfully embed discussions of global challenges and provide opportunities for our students to become immersed in real-world problems and address society's most pressing issues. Challenge-led teaching will exceed traditional educational boundaries, integrating disciplines and perspectives to address multifaceted problems, and equip students with the knowledge, skills, and mindsets necessary to navigate and contribute to a more sustainable and equitable future.

Experiential, Reflective, and Practice Based

We will increase opportunities for experiential, reflective, and practice-based learning by embedding these approaches throughout our curriculum. Experiential and practice-based learning will involve students engaged in “doing” and will include reflective practices that encourage students to critically analyse their experiences and foster personal growth. By integrating these approaches to learning and teaching, we will foster deeper understanding, skill development, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, teamwork, and adaptability, and better preparing students for their futures.

Assessment for Learning

We will increase our use of authentic forms of assessment – those aligned closely with real-world challenges and tasks. We will ensure our assessment supports learning by implementing approaches that prioritise ongoing feedback, self-reflection and student agency. We will foster a culture where assessment is seen as a tool for growth, creating space for experimentation and failure, rather than simply a tool for evaluation. We will make space for assessment for learning by reducing over-assessment at the course level and providing opportunities for programmatic assessment. Through these practices our assessment will become more integrated with our teaching, more collaborative and supportive.

Embracing and Harnessing Digital, Data and AI

Our students are entering an increasingly data, digital and AI-driven world. Our curriculum will embrace opportunities to cultivate and embed digital literacy, data fluency and AI proficiency. We will teach our students to be data literate, and work with data effectively, and make data-driven decisions. Building on our research strengths in AI, we will position our curriculum to engage proactively with AI, harnessing the benefits it has to offer whilst shaping its ethical implementation and educating our students to make responsible use of it.

Engaging and Empowering Learners

Challenge based

Empowering agency over the learning experience

Developing knowledge, skills and mindsets

Values driven and culturally competent

Fostering academic communities

To engage and empower learners we will support students, and promote and enable more student-centred active learning approaches where students have increased agency over their learning experience.

Empowering Agency over the Learning Experience

Students are more engaged when they are active participants in their own learning journey. We will provide opportunities for students to take ownership of their learning, make informed choices, and pursue their academic interests with autonomy. We will foster an environment that emphasises the process over the product, allowing learners to take academic risks whilst providing a safe space where failure is seen as an opportunity for growth. By valuing student agency, we aim to cultivate lifelong learners who are motivated, curious, and equipped to thrive in a rapidly evolving world.

Values Driven and Culturally Competent

We will cultivate values-driven and culturally sensitive learners who are prepared to navigate an interconnected world with empathy, respect, and integrity. We will instil in our students a deep understanding of ethical principles, social responsibility, and cultural sensitivity. We will encourage critical reflection on personal values and beliefs while fostering an appreciation for diverse perspectives and experiences. We will empower our students to confront systemic inequalities, and contribute positively to their communities, both locally and globally.

Developing Knowledge, Skills and Mindsets

We will foster a learning environment in which students feel safe and supported while being appropriately challenged. We will equip learners to develop the attitudes, skills and attributes they need to succeed academically and professionally. We will provide opportunities for our students to navigate challenges, bounce back from setbacks and adapt to new situations. We will encourage risk-taking and experimentation and foster an environment conducive to growth, enabling students to build confidence in their abilities and ideas. We will support our students to recognise their own biases and behaviours while considering a holistic vision that encompasses all learner contexts.

Challenge Based

Through challenge-based learning we will empower learners to become proactive agents of innovation and change. We will immerse students in authentic, real-world problems or challenges that will spark their curiosity, creativity and problem-solving skills. We will provide opportunities for our students to actively engage in identifying, analysing and addressing societal issues, inspiring them to apply their learning to real-world problems and explore innovative solutions. We will enable students to experience perspectives from other disciplines, work collaboratively with their peers, encourage them to question assumptions, think critically and challenge the status quo.

Fostering Academic Communities

By cultivating a sense of belonging, collaboration and shared purpose among students and staff, we will create an environment where learners feel motivated to participate actively in their education. We will promote opportunities for students to connect with their peers and staff who share their interests and passions and cultivate relationships that are essential to enabling wellbeing and academic success. We will actively engage students in the learning process, valuing their perspectives, and fostering a collaborative environment where knowledge is co-constructed.

Supporting Inspiring Teaching

Fostering
academic
communities

Personal and
professional
development

Support for
curriculum
development and
enhancement

Recognising
and celebrating
teaching
excellence

Explore
within and
across
disciplines

Our staff are key to delivering an inspiring learning and teaching experience. We will create an environment where they are supported to succeed, empowered to be creative, and provided with opportunities for professional development and growth.

Personal and Professional Development

Continuous development is crucial for everyone involved in teaching, demonstrating and tutoring to stay current, innovative, and effective in their roles. We will ensure that everyone involved in teaching (including tutors and demonstrators) is supported to perform their roles effectively, and can access appropriate opportunities for continued personal and professional development. We will promote mentoring and networking opportunities, enabling staff to connect with peers, share ideas and practices, and collaborate on innovative teaching initiatives and educational research.

Recognising and Celebrating Inspiring Teaching

We will build on our existing awards and recognition schemes to seek further opportunities to identify, celebrate and share innovative and effective pedagogical approaches, inspiring teaching practices and commitment to student learning. We will work with our students to identify exceptional educational experiences and educators and elevate their contributions to the academic community. Through this, we seek to inspire our colleagues to continuously improve and embrace best practices in their teaching.

Fostering Academic Communities

Academic communities are essential for creating an inclusive, vibrant and supportive learning environment and a sense of belonging. We will promote opportunities for student-student, staff-staff, and student-staff communities, fostering a culture of collaboration and cultivating an environment in which students and staff feel supported, valued, and empowered to succeed. We will foster team approaches to the design and delivery of teaching and involve students as partners in learning, teaching and assessment.

Support for Curriculum Development and Enhancement

To deliver on our ambitions for a curriculum for the future, we will empower and support colleagues to engage in curriculum development and enhancement and encourage innovation in teaching and assessment. We will encourage collaboration between subject experts and innovative pedagogical researchers, ensuring our curriculum development is informed by research. We will make space and time for curriculum development. We will cultivate an environment of continual feedback from students, alumni, and employers, incorporating their

experiences and insights to ensure that curricula remain relevant and aligned with real-world applications.

Explore Within and Across Disciplines

We will foster in-depth, specialised knowledge within disciplines alongside diverse learning opportunities. We will harness the disciplinary expertise of our teaching staff and their research to inspire our students and challenge them to master complex theoretical frameworks and real-world applications. By balancing disciplinary depth with interdisciplinary breadth, we equip students with specialised expertise as well as broad perspectives, preparing them to become leaders and innovators capable of making significant contributions to their chosen fields.

Strategy enablers

Underpinning the Learning and Teaching Strategy are several enablers. These include a combination of cultural, governance and infrastructural elements that support the effective implementation of the strategy.

A key enabler for the development of a curriculum for the future is the Curriculum Transformation Programme. CTP will contribute major developments to our postgraduate and undergraduate taught curricula. At the heart of CTP is the development of a new Curriculum Framework (comprising Programme Archetypes and Curriculum Design Principles) for both postgraduate and undergraduate portfolios; an Edinburgh Student Vision, a shared institutional vision to define the distinctive qualities and impact of the curriculum; a skills framework; and the development of Challenge, Experiential and Enrichment elements.



An ethos where change is part of what we do

A core underpinning ethos is continuous improvement. This ethos underpins a rolling programme of continuous improvement of academic administration services. The Student Lifecycle Management Group (SLMG) is leading key activities, through dedicated Continuous Improvement User Groups, related to continuous improvements in the student experience. The aim of these groups is to make small improvements that enhance the experiences of our students and the staff that support them. Continuous Improvement (CI) User Groups are focusing on seven agreed areas: Course enrolment; fees, bursaries and scholarships; orientation and induction; sense of belonging; student voice; space and place; safer suicide strategy.

Developments in our physical and digital learning environments and infrastructure

The new Capital Plan for the period up to July 2027 will contribute to all outcomes in Strategy 2030 including supporting learning and teaching. There is recognition that curriculum reform and the continued evolution of learning and teaching will make different demands on the estate with an anticipated demand for both flexible and specialist learning and study space. To this end, there are plans for the development of a Learning and Teaching Hub in the City Centre, aimed at enhancement of the student experience. This will complement the recent development of the Edinburgh Futures Institute in Central Area, the Nucleus Building at Kings Buildings and the proposed development of a Health and Care Education Hub at the BioQuarter. In addition to these purpose-built facilities, Estates Committee has also approved funding for the Teaching Accommodation Programme (TAP) to improve more than 350 centrally managed general teaching rooms already in use across the estate. The Future Teaching Spaces group has developed a cluster of principles and themes to inform the future of University teaching spaces that connects with the Curriculum Transformation Programme, and the vision and principles outlined in the university's Learning and Teaching Spaces Strategy 2020-2030.

Alongside the physical estate, the Digital Estate Strategy is driving developments in our digital estate and infrastructure to support and enable our ambitions for learning and teaching, as well as ensure that we have the basics in place. The Digital Estate Prioritisation (DEP) Short Life Working Group (a subgroup of Estates Committee) has been established to prioritise the major digital estate investments in the Digital Estate over the next 5 to 10 years. Among the priorities supporting learning and teaching and the student experience is a focus on marking and assessment, including opportunities to identify and support roll out of appropriate e-assessment tools. The FLORA project is reviewing digital exams across the University, and the LOUISA project is focusing on identifying, designing and delivering solutions to optimise LEARN for in-course submission and assessment.

Strong relationship with the students' association and sports union

Our relationship with the Students' Association (EUSA) is crucial to engaging and empowering learners by amplifying the student voice and promoting active participation in their educational experience. Through effective student representation and student voice mechanisms, we create a platform where students can influence decisions that directly impact their learning, well-being, and development. This collaboration ensures that students' needs, feedback, and insights are actively integrated into university initiatives, enhancing the overall learning environment.

The Students' Association and Sports Union play a critical role in supporting the learning and teaching strategy by enriching academic initiatives with experiences that foster holistic student development. They provide opportunities for active learning and skill-building through clubs and societies, promote student-centred learning via representation and feedback channels, and support the learning community with peer networks and social activities. Additionally, they enhance employability by encouraging students to take on leadership roles within clubs and activities.

Staff support and development structures

The Institute for Academic Development (IAD) and the University's People Strategy play integral roles in supporting staff and enabling the implementation of the Strategy. The IAD is a central partner in enhancing inspiring teaching across the University. It offers extensive support for teaching, learning, and researcher development at the University level, delivered directly and in collaboration with Schools and other Services. IAD's approach is guided by three core principles: aligning its initiatives with University and College strategic priorities, working collaboratively with Schools and support services (including EUSA), and addressing a broad spectrum of academic development needs. This approach facilitates seamless support for undergraduate and postgraduate students, early career researchers, and academic staff alike, strengthening connections across all stages of academic development. IAD also focuses on expanding engagement with its resources (e.g., increased participation in IAD events and courses by staff and students) and enhancing the impact of this support locally within Schools and programmes.

The People Strategy is designed to underpin the mission and values of Strategy 2030, creating a supportive community where every member feels a sense of pride and belonging. By fostering an environment that emphasizes growth, transformation, and self-improvement, the People Strategy strengthens the University's role as a force for positive change for individuals, communities, and society. Aligned with Strategy 2030, the People Strategy will inform five-year operational plans across all budget areas, supporting priority initiatives that deliver impactful outcomes in the short, medium, and long term.

Student support eco-system

Our student support ecosystem is a vital component in enabling the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy, with a central focus on fostering engaged and empowered learners who can maximize their educational experience. Through a cohesive network of student support — including our Student Support Model (principally made up of Student Advisers, Wellbeing Advisers and Academic Cohort Leads); Student Peer Support, Teaching Teams; and the wider University Services (including the Careers Service, Disability and Learning Support, and the Student Wellbeing Service) —we provide students with the tools, guidance, and encouragement they need to take ownership of their learning journey.

This ecosystem promotes active engagement by connecting students with resources that complement their academic pursuits, enabling them to overcome challenges, build resilience, and develop essential skills. Peer mentoring and support networks further empower students, creating a community that reinforces collaborative learning and shared growth. By supporting students holistically, the ecosystem encourages deeper engagement in their studies, enhancing their ability to connect classroom learning with real-world applications and future goals. This approach not only supports academic success but also cultivates a fulfilling, transformative learning experience that aligns with the core priorities of our Learning and Teaching Strategy.

Extra and co-curricular learning environment

Extracurricular and co-curricular learning opportunities are essential in supporting the implementation of our Learning and Teaching Strategy, enhancing the academic experience by developing well-rounded, engaged students. Through activities provided by the Students' Association (EUSA), the Sports Union (EUSU), and a variety of student-led clubs, societies, and sports teams, and volunteering opportunities, students can actively participate in experiences that extend beyond the classroom.

These opportunities foster personal growth, build networks, and develop key soft skills—such as teamwork, leadership, communication, and problem-solving—that are invaluable both in academic settings and future careers. Volunteering and community service initiatives connect students with local communities, fostering a sense of social responsibility and broadening their worldview. Additionally, internships, career development programs, and cultural events offer practical experience and exposure to diverse perspectives, making students more adaptable and globally aware.

These experiences not only enrich students' academic journeys but also enhance their employability, enabling them to apply their learning in real-world contexts and develop skills that will support them long after graduation. Through this ecosystem of support and growth, we create an environment where students are empowered to take ownership of their learning, bridging academic knowledge with practical skills and personal development in alignment with our Learning and Teaching Strategy.

Leadership, governance, and institutional oversight

Leadership, governance, and institutional oversight of academic performance and student outcomes are essential to the successful implementation of our Learning and Teaching Strategy. These elements provide a structured yet flexible framework for decision-making, ensuring that strategic priorities remain aligned with the evolving needs of students and the University's goals.

The Senate Education Committee, as the owner of the Learning and Teaching Strategy, sets strategic direction and oversight, aligning initiatives with broader goals and priorities. The Vice Principal Students Leadership Group (VPSLG) complements this governance by creating an open forum for discussing pressing student issues, allowing academic and professional services (PS) staff to share honest insights on emerging challenges and opportunities. Drawing on expertise from across the university, this group fosters collaboration and develops effective solutions grounded in both academic and operational perspectives.

Supporting the VPSLG, the Student Lifecycle Management Group (SLMG) works to coordinate efforts that support the student journey, ensuring operational alignment across key areas. By connecting critical elements of the student lifecycle, the SLMG helps streamline processes and resolve issues efficiently, enhancing students' experiences at every stage.

The Student Experience Delivery and Monitoring Oversight Board (SEDaMOB) adds another layer of governance, providing comprehensive monitoring of key outcomes, tracking metrics related to academic performance, and student experience through College and School management structures. This board aims to ensure oversight of and accountability for agreed actions and deliverables aligned to interventions designed to enhance the student experience.

Strategy Implementation

Effective implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy will involve collaboration among Colleges, Schools, the Students' Association and Services. This high-level implementation plan comprises a number of broader University-level actions to be achieved by 2030. Schools and Colleges will need to take ownership of their own delivery of the Strategy, using it as a reference point from which to shape School and College plans for learning and teaching.

In terms of monitoring progress against the Strategy, a light-touch evaluation of progress against the actions will be planned for the mid-way point of the strategy (in three years), with a fuller evaluation nearer to the end of the Strategy period (2030) that will feed into the development of the next Learning and Teaching Strategy.

Implementation Plan

Priority	Action	Responsible
<i>Developing a Future Ready Curriculum</i>		
Explore Within and Across Disciplines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing opportunities for transdisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary learning within programmes. Development of trans/interdisciplinary enrichment elements within the curriculum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools CTP
Research- Led	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing opportunities for more practical, research-based teaching and learning. Developing our students as researchers. Embedding research skills throughout the curriculum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools Schools Schools
Challenge Based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of a suite of University-wide Challenge Courses. Increasing opportunities in programmes/courses for our students to become immersed in real-world problems and address society's most pressing issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CTP Schools
Experiential, Reflective, and Practice Based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing opportunities for experiential and practice-based learning in programmes. Development of University-wide experiential learning opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools CTP
Assessment for Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase our use of authentic forms of assessment (those aligned closely with real-world challenges and tasks) that engage students as practitioners in their discipline. Continued implementation of the Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools Colleges, Schools
Embracing and Harnessing Digital, Data, and AI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing an institutional approach to AI in learning and teaching. Embedding development of digital literacy, data fluency and AI proficiency in the curriculum. Development of digital literacy, data fluency and AI proficiency in enrichment elements of the curriculum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SEC Colleges, Schools CTP

Engaging and Empowering Learners		
Empowering Agency over the Learning Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing student-led or co-created learning opportunities. Increasing opportunities for active and experiential learning. Improving how we work in partnership with students to listen to and respond to student voices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colleges, Schools Colleges, Schools, CTP Colleges, Schools, SLMG
Values Driven and Culturally Sensitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement with micro-learning courses (e.g. Consent and Active Bystander training) Development of guidance on Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression Harnessing our culturally-rich population. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SMLG Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression Group
Developing knowledge, skills and mindset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of the CTP Edinburgh Student Vision. Implementation of the CTP skills framework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CTP, Schools CTP, Schools
Challenge Based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of a suite of Challenge Courses as part of the new undergraduate curriculum, so that all undergraduate students have an opportunity to take at least one course during their degree. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CTP, Schools
Fostering Academic Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fostering a sense of belonging and community Increasing engagement with peer support Fostering collaboration and team approaches to learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student support, Cohort Leads
Supporting Inspiring Teaching		
Personal and Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working towards all new staff having a recognised teaching accreditation / qualification on appointment or joining one of the IAD's schemes (EdTA, PgCAP, Local EdTA mentoring scheme) and making sufficient progress towards accreditation within their probationary period. Increasing the proportion of existing staff holding a recognised teaching accreditation / qualification, through School-level target setting. Increasing active engagement in (and recording of in annual reviews) continuing professional development for teaching. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IAD, Colleges, Schools IAD, Colleges, Schools Schools, Colleges, HR

<p>Recognising and Celebrating Inspiring Teaching</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognising and celebrating inspiring teaching through EUSA, College, and School Teaching Awards • Expanding the ways in which we share innovative and effective pedagogical approaches, and inspiring teaching practices (e.g. Teaching Matters blogs, Teaching Café's etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EUSA, Colleges, Schools • IAD, Colleges, Schools
<p>Fostering Academic Communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fostering team approaches to course/programme development and delivery • Supporting colleagues through established networks (e.g. IAD Networks - DoT, DoQ, Engage Network etc.) and training opportunities (e.g. Boards of Studies Networks and training). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools, Colleges • IAD, Academic Services, Colleges, Schools
<p>Support for Curriculum Development and Enhancement</p>	<p>Increasing our support for curriculum development and enhancement through engagement with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PGCAP, Edinburgh Teaching Award • Course organiser development • CTP, programme and course design • Support for authentic assessment • Tutors and demonstrators training • Teaching matters blogs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IAD, Schools • IAD, Schools • CTP, Schools • IAD, Colleges, Schools • IAD, Schools • IAD, All
<p>Explore within and across disciplines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing engagement in Challenge Courses • Increasing engagement in co-teaching across disciplines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colleges, Schools • Colleges, Schools, EFI

Appendix Two - Extract from the draft minutes of the November 2024 Senate Education Committee meeting

Senate Education Committee members commented on the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030 and Implementation Plan as follows:

- The Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) required the University to expedite the implementation of a new Strategy, and it would be a positive achievement to fulfil this recommendation during 2024/25.
- The relationship between the Learning and Teaching Strategy and the People Strategy could be better articulated.
- The University's current strengths in this area are not included within the Strategy's introduction. Some text to emphasise these strengths should be incorporated.
- "Student satisfaction" risks being an overloaded term. Could "outcomes" be used more broadly to capture satisfaction, outcomes and attainment?
- "Extraordinary" student experience is referenced. Could this wording be changed? Similarly, the use of "ambitious" students as a term causes concern. Adjectives and adverbs should be reviewed to ensure that EDI and inclusive teaching environments are adequately captured.
- "Teaching staff" ought to be changed to "staff contributing to teaching". While there is a strong training framework for student advisors, the same is required for teaching administration staff.
- While there is an emphasis on research-led teaching, staff who are not paid to provide teaching should be considered. Professional development within the action plan should reference teaching for tutors and demonstrators.
- It is noted that this vocabulary is used in marketing material and Strategy 2030. It was suggested that the bullet points that use Strategy 2030 wording should be removed as they were written in a different context.
- There is a challenge in how activity relating to skills development translates into mapping to support student transitions into employment. It is a missed opportunity if this is not included within the Strategy. There should be a clearer link between careers and the student support ecosystem.
- In terms of challenge-based learning, could this be described as, "within and across" disciplines?
- The Assistant Principal Digital Education will provide wording around various delivery modes for potential inclusion within the digital learning environments section.
- The implementation plan places a high expectation on Schools at a time where they are feeling strain. However, many actions within the plan are already being implemented. Could the implementation plan be reframed to reflect activity that is already underway?
- There is a high focus on courses within the implementation plan. The wider student lifecycle should also be taken into consideration.

- It should be taken into consideration that points which are relevant to Schools also apply to the Edinburgh Futures Institute.

The Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) thanked members for their valuable feedback. It was suggested to members that details within the implementation plan continue to be refined with Schools and that the high-level three categories within the Strategy move forward. Members noted that Communications and Marketing are ready to begin developing a communication plan for the Strategy, once approved.

The Convener highlighted that there was no fundamental disagreement from the Committee towards the Strategy. The Committee agreed that the Strategy undergo a final revision of relevant sections, with final approval being subject to electronic consultation with members.

<p>Action: The Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) to lead on revising the Strategy prior to final consultation with members electronically.</p>

Senate

11 December 2024

Senate External Review Task and Finish Group: Proposal to form a Senate Business Committee

Description of paper

1. This paper seeks Senate's approval to form a Senate Business Committee, and contains a proposal developed by the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group in response to AdvanceHE's 2023 review of Senate effectiveness.
2. The remit of the Senate Business Committee would be to provide an effective and transparent agenda setting process for meetings of the University Senate; and to scrutinise papers prior to consideration by Senate.

Action requested / recommendation

3. Senate is invited to Approve:
 - a. the proposal to form the Senate Business Committee (appendix one), on a trial basis to 31 July 2026.
 - b. the associated implementation plan (appendix two).

Background and context

4. An externally facilitated review of Senate and its committees by AdvanceHE took place in 2022/23. The final report and proposed actions in response to the review were considered at the Senate meeting of 11 October 2023.
5. Senate approved the formation of the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group at its meeting of 7 February 2024; with the Group to be responsible for considering the recommendations arising from the external review and for developing proposals for consideration by Senate.
6. At its meetings of 23 May and 13 June 2024, the Group discussed recommendations and suggestions relating to Student Voice (R4, R5 & S3) and focussed on formulating proposals in response to the recommendation on Agenda Setting (R6). The Group also considered the results of a benchmarking exercise, which summarised the practices at a total of eight institutions, comprised of five Scottish institutions (including one Russell Group institution) and three English Russell Group institutions.
7. In response to recommendation six, a draft proposal for a Senate Business Committee was presented to the Group at its meeting of 13 June 2024. This proposal was then amended based on group discussion, and was circulated to

Senate for consultation in October 2024. The Group considered the responses to the consultation at its meeting of 6 November 2024, and the finalised proposal is being presented to the December 2024 Senate meeting for approval.

8. The remit and membership of the Senate Business Committee has been informed by the benchmarking of other institutions, and the composition of University of Edinburgh's Senate. Each role holder either has responsibility for a key area within the Senate remit, and/or is responsible for representing the views of their constituency. Elected academic members would be responsible for representing the interests of their college.
9. In developing this proposal, consideration has been given to enhancing the student voice on Senate. The Group has heard from student representatives on their experiences of Senate, particularly with regard to induction, agenda setting and student contributions within meetings.

Discussion

10. Existing practice is that the Senate Convener, with support from colleagues in Registry Services, sets the Senate agenda. In advance of a Senate meeting, papers may be submitted for inclusion on the Senate agenda. Senate Standing Order number five specifies that, following consideration of the minutes, "*the order of business thereafter shall, subject to the discretion of the President, be as stated in the Billet*". As President, the Senate Convener decides which items and papers are included on the Senate agenda.
11. The AdvanceHE report (page 18) acknowledged that the agenda setting process had been controversial, and had led to considerable frustration amongst some Senate members who had felt that their voice had been muted.
12. The AdvanceHE report also observed that many universities used Senate agenda setting committees, and recommended that the remit of the Senate Exception Committee be revised to support the agenda setting process. At its meeting of 23 May 2024, the Task and Finish Group concluded that it would be more appropriate for another body to support Senate agenda setting.
13. From discussion, the Group articulated the following principles regarding the establishment of a Senate Business Committee:
 - There should be a single standardised and transparent route for papers to be considered for inclusion on Senate agendas.
 - The Senate Business Committee should have a role in scrutinising papers prior to consideration by Senate to ensure papers contained an appropriate level of detail, provided clarity on the action requested of Senate, and clearly addressed any action points requested by Senate.
 - Senate should be given sufficient time to discuss items of business.
 - The membership of a Senate Business Committee should be reflective of the Senate membership, including ex-officio, elected and student representation.

- That the Student Voice on Senate would be supported through having the Edinburgh University Students' Association (EUSA) Vice-President Education act as Vice-Convener of the Committee.
- The Senate Convener is formally responsible for the approval of the Senate agenda, and a Senate Business Committee would act in an advisory capacity to assist the Convener.
- Any members of the Committee who submit an item for Senate would not contribute to discussions of those papers during Committee meetings.

Consultation

14. Senate members were invited to contribute to a consultation on the proposal to form a Senate Business Committee in October 2024. 27 responses were received, and these were considered at the Group's meeting of Wednesday 6 November 2024. The Senate External Review Task and Finish Group thanked everyone who had contributed to the consultation, and considered the following key themes which had emerged.
15. The Group noted that several consultation responses sought to amend the Committee's composition. Having considered potential amendments, the Group agreed that the Committee's proposed composition should remain as drafted. Separately, it was agreed that the elected academic staff members would be 'elected from the College of...', as opposed to being 'nominated by the College of...'. The Group further agreed that the expedited nomination and election process used to initially elect Senate-elected member representatives to the Senate standing committees should be used to elect academic members to the Senate Business Committee.
16. It was observed that several consultation responses were supportive of the proposal that the EUSA Vice-President Education act as Vice-Convener of the Senate Business Committee. Following discussion, the Group agreed that this should be specified in the proposal paper presented to Senate.
17. The Group discussed consultation responses associated with the Committee's role in scrutinising papers prior to inclusion on the Senate agenda. While agreeing that the Committee should not be a gatekeeper, the Group recognised that Senate had required resubmission of some papers and that the Committee should have a role in reducing the likelihood of this. The Group agreed that the Business Committee should have a role in scrutinising papers prior to consideration by Senate, and that the proposed remit be updated accordingly.
18. A small number of consultation responses commented on prospective issues associated with the routine operation of the Committee. Once formed, relevant consultation responses will be provided to the Committee for consideration.

Resource implications

19. There are resource implications associated with this proposal. The introduction of a Senate Business Committee would result in additional resource requirements for the Academic Quality and Standards team to operate, and for members to engage with Committee business.

Risk management

20. The Senate Business Committee is intended to provide an effective and transparent agenda setting process for meetings of the University Senate; and to scrutinise papers prior to consideration by Senate. If achieved, the Committee should contribute to more effective meetings of the Senate and should improve the University's governance arrangements.
21. There is a risk to the institutional governance of the University if the recommendations and actions arising from the Senate External Review are not taken forward in a timely and considered manner.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

22. This paper does not respond to the climate emergency or contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals. However, the Senate Business Committee may help to ensure that such issues are considered appropriately by Senate, and that relevant Senate papers contain required information.

Equality & diversity

23. It is anticipated that the Senate Business Committee would support the consideration of equality and diversity by Senate by ensuring that Senate papers contain the required information.

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

24. If formed, the Senate Business Committee would provide regular written reports to Senate. The format of these written reports will be confirmed following the implementation of the Senate Business Committee.
25. The implementation plan is as described in appendix two.
26. The Academic Quality and Standards team, in conjunction with members of the Senate Business Committee, will undertake an effectiveness review by March 2026. This review is expected to include surveys of the membership of Senate and of the Senate Business Committee, and consideration of other relevant metrics as are available. A recommendation will then be made to the Senate

meeting of May 2026 regarding the continuation of the Senate Business Committee, and its potential confirmation as a standing committee of Senate.

Authors

Professor Richard Kenway, Convener of the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group

Fraser Rudge, Senate Clerk

November 2024

Freedom of Information Open

Appendix one - Proposal for a Senate Business Committee

The remit of the Senate Business Committee is to provide an effective and transparent agenda setting process for meetings of the University Senate; and to scrutinise papers prior to consideration by Senate.

The Senate Business Committee is a standing committee of the University Senate.

Terms of Reference:

The Senate Business Committee will:

1. Propose Senate and e-Senate agendas for endorsement by the Senate Convener.
2. Identify items that require substantive discussion and recommend meeting timings.
3. Consider whether items proposed for inclusion at meetings of Senate and e-Senate are within the remit of the Senate or e-Senate.
4. Scrutinise papers prior to consideration by Senate to ensure that all papers contain an appropriate level of detail, provide clarity on the action requested of Senate, and clearly address any action points requested by Senate.
5. Refer items deemed ineligible for Senate or e-Senate consideration to the relevant committee or individual and record within the action log. Report on re-directed items for consideration at meetings of Senate and e-Senate.
6. Oversee the development of an annual schedule of business for Senate.
7. Support effective communications and reporting from, and to, Senate. Advise the Senate Convener on items of interest to Senate and recommend items for inclusion in the Convener's Update.

Composition:

1. Provost (Convener): in their role as Chief Academic Officer of the institution.
2. Students' Association Vice-President Education (Vice-Convener): to represent the views of students.
3. Vice-Principal, Students: to provide input on teaching and learning matters.
4. Vice-Principal, Research: to provide input on research matters.
5. 1 x elected academic staff member elected from the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences.
6. 1 x elected academic staff member elected from the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine.
7. 1 x elected academic staff member elected from the College of Science and Engineering.
8. 1 x elected Professional Services Staff member: may be drawn from the Professional Services staff member on Court and the three College-elected Professional Services staff.
9. 1 x elected student member: may be drawn from any of the student member positions listed in Appendix 2 of the Senate Election Regulations.

Elected members are expected to represent the views of their Senate constituency.

Elected members are elected for a two-year term. Elected members shall cease to be members of the Senate Business Committee once their term of office as a member of Senate concludes.

Attendees:

Senate Clerk: to provide procedural advice and professional support to the Committee.

The Committee may also invite members of the wider University to attend meetings, where appropriate and where it is deemed necessary for the nature of business under consideration.

Quorum:

Half of the membership plus one. One of whom must be the Convener or Vice-Convener.

In the event quorum is not achieved, the meeting will proceed and Senate will be advised within the published Senate agenda.

Ways of working:

- The Senate Business Committee would meet at least 3 weeks prior to Senate meetings.
- The Senate paper deadline would be at least 5 weeks prior to Senate meetings, to allow Committee members sufficient time to read papers and seek input from staff with relevant expertise.
- Where a member is a named author for an item of business proposed for inclusion on a Senate agenda, the member will not participate in the Committee's discussion of the item.
- The minutes of the Committee are to be handled in line with those of Senate Standing Committees.
- Rarely, an emergency item, which arises after the Senate Business Committee has met, may be considered by the Senate Convener, the Committee Convener and Vice-Convener, with the wider Committee kept informed where time allows.

Appendix Two: Senate Business Committee – Proposed Implementation Plan

1. If Senate approves the formation of the Senate Business Committee, the Academic Quality and Standards Services team will attempt to implement the Senate Business Committee in advance of the February 2025 meeting of Senate.
2. Due to the proximity of the December and February Senate meetings (5 February 2024), and due to the upcoming University closure period, there is limited time available to facilitate arrangements. Amendment to the membership and nomination process by Senate may necessitate a delay to the implementation timescale.
3. As the full membership of the Committee is not known, it has not been possible to establish whether a quorate meeting could occur in January 2025. Further, the paper deadline of 8 January remains, and is one week less than the proposal specifies.

Election Process

4. The Task and Finish Group propose that, to appoint new members to the Senate Business Committee as soon as possible, the pragmatic arrangements detailed below will apply in 2024-25.
5. These arrangements are informed by the interim arrangements approved by Senate to appoint elected academic members to Senate Standing Committees in 2022-23 (see paper S22/23 2 D), and apply to the following vacancies:
 - 1 x elected academic staff member elected from the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences.
 - 1 x elected academic staff member elected from the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine.
 - 1 x elected academic staff member elected from the College of Science and Engineering.
 - 1 x elected Professional Services Staff member.
 - 1 x elected student member.
6. Nominations will open on Thursday 12 December, and close at 5pm on Thursday 19 December 2024.
7. If required, lots will be drawn in the morning of Friday 20 December 2024, and the outcome communicated to nominees and the wider Senate membership.

Elected academic staff members

8. The current elected academic staff members of Senate plus Senate Assessors and the Academic Staff Member of Court will have the opportunity to nominate themselves for membership of the Committee. Elected academic staff members are expected to represent the views of their college and must therefore be drawn from the college that they represent. To ensure the widest possible representation, elected academic staff members cannot serve on more than one Senate standing committee.
9. If one eligible nomination is received for a college vacancy, the associated nominee will be duly elected to the Senate Business Committee.
10. If more than one eligible nomination is received for a college vacancy, the drawing of lots will determine which nominee is elected to the Senate Business Committee.

Elected Professional Services Staff member

11. The Professional Services staff member on Court and the three College-elected Professional Services staff will have the opportunity to nominate themselves for membership of the Committee.
12. If one eligible nomination is received for the vacancy, the associated nominee will be duly elected to the Senate Business Committee.
13. If more than one eligible nomination is received for the vacancy, the drawing of lots will determine which nominee is elected to the Senate Business Committee.

Elected student member

14. Apart from the Vice-President Education, who is an ex officio member of the committee, all other student members on Senate will have the opportunity to nominate themselves for membership of the Committee. The nominations process will be organised by the Edinburgh University Students' Association.

Term of office

15. For members elected to the Senate Business Committee in 2024-25, an interim term of office of less than two years will apply and will end on 31 July 2026. A review of the Senate Business Committee is planned for 2026, with Senate being asked to decide on the continued existence of the Senate Business Committee beyond 1 August 2026. Should Senate confirm the Senate Business Committee's position as a standing committee of Senate, then an updated election process will be shared, and Senate will be asked to extend the term of office to two years.
16. Membership of the Senate Business Committee is associated with membership of Senate. Should an elected member cease to be a member of Senate then their membership of the Senate Business Committee will also end and an election for their replacement called.

Implementation timeline

	Action:	Responsible:	Timeline:
Hold nomination process	Eligible Senate members self-nominate to vacancies on the membership.	Senate Clerk	12 – 19 December 2024.
Establish Committee Membership	Confirm the appointment of all members as outlined in the composition section.	Senate Clerk	20 December 2024.
Schedule Initial Meetings	Set dates for meetings in AY 2024-25, ensuring that they are at least 3 weeks prior to Senate meetings.	Senate Clerk	By 23 December 2024.
Develop Annual Schedule of Business	Create a comprehensive annual schedule of business for Senate for 2025-26, including key dates and deadlines.	Senate Business Committee Note: a schedule of routine business exists. To identify priority non-routine business for 2025-26.	By end of AY 2024-25.
Define Agenda Setting Process	Establish a clear process for proposing Senate agendas.	Senate Business Committee	By end of AY 2024-25.
Communication and Reporting Protocols	Develop protocols for effective communication and reporting between the Senate Business Committee and the Senate.	Senate Business Committee	By end of AY 2024-25.
Review and Refer Items	Implement a system for reviewing items proposed for Senate meetings, including criteria for eligibility and referral processes.	Senate Business Committee	By end of AY 2024-25.
Handle Emergency Items	Establish a protocol for handling emergency items that arise after the Committee has met.	Senate Business Committee	By end of AY 2024-25.
Monitor and Evaluate – Initial review	Conduct a full review by March 2026 and make a recommendation to the Senate meeting of May 2026 regarding the continuation of the Senate Business Committee.	Senate Business Committee	By 31 March 2026.

Senate**11 December 2024****Generative AI: Teaching, Learning, Sustainability, and Data Security****Description of Paper**

1. This paper requests information be brought to Senate on University's approach to the use of generative AI by students. We seek greater clarity and oversight of the rules and guidance for the use of generative AI, as well as the implications for teaching, learning, sustainability, and data security.

Action Requested

2. The existing university AI Adoption Task Force is asked to bring a report to the February 2025 Senate meeting on their actions to date and future plans, including:
 - 2.1. What activities have been undertaken by the task force and by what principles they have been guided;
 - 2.2. How the task force was constituted and in what manner consultation has occurred across and beyond the University;
 - 2.3. How the Task Force sees its interaction with Senate as the University's overseer of academic matters, with regards developing policy and guidance for learning and teaching;
 - 2.4. What are the main successes and challenges thus far, including on topics of academic misconduct;
 - 2.5. What future activities are expected in the coming year;
 - 2.6. How AI is furthering or challenging the teaching and learning by students;
 - 2.7. What sources of evidence and expertise have thus far informed decisions – including around learning processes and outcomes – and where evidence gaps are seen;
 - 2.8. How is the Task Force managing the sustainability concerns about generative AI?
 - 2.9. How is the Task Force managing the data privacy and security risks?
3. On the basis of the preparatory work done by the AIATF and other relevant bodies, Senate is asked to discuss the adoption, use, and management of generative AI, including with regard to teaching, learning, sustainability, and data security (including the differential impacts with regard to equality, diversity, and inclusion), with a view to improving Senate's involvement on generative AI in teaching and learning.

4. Senate has the expectation that it will continue to exercise appropriate oversight on the development and approval of policies as they relate to regulating and superintending teaching, and that governance of this will be assured through the Senate sub-committee structure under existing arrangements. Senate should therefore expect this to apply equally to matters relating to generative AI in teaching and learning.

Background and Context

5. Senate is the supreme academic body with the core function of regulating and superintending teaching.
6. Senate members and others have expressed concern with not merely the use of generative AI by students but also how it is being discussed and managed at the University of Edinburgh.
 - 6.1. While Senate Education Committee has a standing item on generative AI, the importance of this topic deserves the wider input and knowledge sharing that full Senate can provide.
7. For instance, in October 2024 new “Guidance for working with Generative AI in your studies” was circulated.
 - 7.1. It is unclear who authored such guidance, what forms of consultation were included, and what principles informed its design. Basic details including how to contact its authors were not included. Its arrival in the middle of the teaching semester contradicted guidance already provided by many course organisers to their students.
 - 7.2. While some weaknesses of generative AI are mentioned briefly, significant issues are unaddressed including (i) evidence on the effects on learning, (ii) the environmental implications of large language models (including how using generative AI affects the University’s own sustainability goals), and (iii) questions of data privacy and security.
 - 7.3. Some members feel it misrepresents what available generative AI tools can do reliably, what Schools and course organisers are already doing about such tools, and how students think about and use such tools.
8. While few would dispute AI is a “fast-moving area,” it has been two years since ChatGPT’s high-profile model launch in November 2022, and very little consultation or formal feedback has occurred within the University of Edinburgh.

Discussion

9. The Senate has an obligation to consider how technological developments are affecting the core work of teaching, including student learning, the integrity of assessments, and the implications for equity and inclusion.

10. While estimates differ, it is widely agreed that generative AI has enormous resource usage, including electricity and water.¹ How the uptake by students and its encouragement in policy affects the University's sustainability commitments is, as yet, not a major source of discussion.²

Resource Implications

11. Members of the AI Adoption Task Force will be asked to prepare a paper for circulation to Senate and join for a discussion at the next meeting.
12. The implications for the University's own finances and other resource use may be considered in light of the rapid uptake of AI. The university currently pays a per-use fee for language model access within ELM, and there are also indirect cost implications of the university's approach to generative tools.

Risk Management

13. Generative AI presents risks and opportunities to universities. Some of the major risks include threats to the integrity of assessments, falling prey to the 'hype cycle' of new technologies, short-circuiting student learning processes (perhaps compounding classed, gendered, racialized, or other existing inequalities), and undermining University sustainability goals. This paper seeks to govern such risks by involving the full Senate more purposefully in questions of generative AI, teaching, and learning.

Responding to the Climate Emergency and Sustainable Development Goals

14. The environmental consequences of generative AI – and its uptake at the University of Edinburgh – is a core motivation for this paper.

Equality and Diversity

15. New technologies often compound existing inequalities in society, in part by providing affordances to populations most able to capitalise on them. Whether and how the use of generative AI is affecting gendered, classed, racialized, and other inequalities is core to the University's appropriate adoption and governance of AI.

¹ For instance, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2024-10-28/jpmorgan-says-ai-power-demand-is-straining-us-water-supplies?embedded-checkout=true> and <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/10/22/climate/ai-big-tech-emissions.html> and <https://jacobin.com/2024/06/ai-data-center-energy-usage-environment>

² Colleagues involved in the Software Sustainability Institute are focused on related questions, but thus far there is less evidence the Sustainability offices of the University are assessing the use of AI.

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

16. Senate will be asked to discuss the paper brought by the AI Adoption Task Force during its February 2025 meeting and to provide ongoing oversight of teaching related matters arising from generative AI through both relevant committees and its full membership.

Consultation

17. The paper is informed by discussions among Elected Senate members, non-member staff and students.

Further Information

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Presenter(s) (if required)

Dr Mohammed Amir Anwar
Dr Charlotte Desvages

Senate**11 December 2024****Budget Resilience, Teaching, and Research****Description of Paper**

1. This paper calls for the formation of a working group to assess the effects on teaching and research activities due to financial challenges facing UK higher education and the academic implications of the University's responses to them.

Action Requested

2. Senate calls for a short-life working group to consult across the University on the effects on teaching and research raised by (i) the significant restraint on new and replacement staff recruitment and (ii) reductions in non-staff spending during this financial year.
3. This working group should be composed of members of Senate, drawn from its elected non-professorial, elected professorial, elected student, and ex-officio members, with a goal of gathering perspectives from across the University's organization and ranks.
4. The working group should consider the implications for above changes with regard to:
 - 4.1. Student learning and experience;
 - 4.2. Staff capacity to deliver innovative and excellent teaching and research;
 - 4.3. Research activity; and
 - 4.4. Partnerships.
5. In addition to quantitative indicators of financial restraint, the working group should solicit input from across the University on what changes have been made on the ground in response to changed budget conditions, including Portfolio Reviews. Among areas of inquiry should be the following, each considered with an eye to the differential effects across staff and students:
 - 5.1. Effects on teaching delivery, including changes to guaranteed hours / tutor hiring and increased workload in lecturing, marking, and student support;
 - 5.2. Effects on programmes and courses, including efforts to boost enrolment, or to reduce courses and degrees;

- 5.3. Effects on research support (including funding and the sustainability of the Small Research Facilities sinking funds model in light of restrictions on capital expenditure);
 - 5.4. Effects on student experience activities;
 - 5.5. Effects of hiring restraint and redundancies (including reductions in staff capacity through non-retention following fixed-term contracts and non-replacement of departing staff; and financial projections motivating severance schemes);
 - 5.6. Opportunity costs associated with hiring restraint, portfolio review, and other measures, including staff time associated with monitoring more intense oversight on activity.
6. The working group should also take steps to improve staff and student understanding of budget planning within Schools and Colleges, including how and why income is allocated, seeking to widen expertise and participation.
 7. This information should be circulated for feedback and discussion within appropriate Senate committees and made available for discussion in a preliminary form at the Senate's February 2025 meeting and, more conclusively, at the May 2025 meeting of Senate. Findings should also be made available to Schools and other entities to inform the 2025-26 planning process.
 - 7.1. The working group should also consider what reporting mechanisms may be institutionalised throughout the University to account for on-the-ground effects on teaching and research due to financial resilience.

Background and Context

8. The University of Edinburgh, like counterparts across the UK, is facing considerable pressures. The causes include public funding for UK students not keeping pace with inflation, impediments to foreign students studying in the UK, and rising costs.
9. In response, the University Executive has announced a number of steps to reduce spending, including refining procurement procedures, implementing significant constraint on new and replacement staff recruitment, selective redundancies, and lowering spending in various schools on activities related to teaching, student experience and research.¹
10. Senate members have noted their own experiences in teaching and research are being affected by these decisions, including covering for unreplaced staff, pressure on small programmes and classes, limited resources for student activities, and limited resources with which to conduct research.

¹ See Prof Sir Peter Mathieson, "Budget setting 2024-25", available at https://mailings.ed.ac.uk/cr/AQiw9w4Q3cttGJq8uDKn-3am9J-DNsGnqXNfQb4NSAnQ05SZoln0Qy3HjR-a_Q and Prof Sir Peter Mathieson, "How the university is responding to financial challenges in the sector," available at https://mailings.ed.ac.uk/cr/AQiw9w4Q9oZ1GJ-puDI3YOSAb_m1wqlqVap138U7JVUzSeYZvjL6X0fHRcCrcg

Discussion

11. While Senate's role does not include financial planning, as the supreme academic body tasked with overseeing teaching and research, it has an important role to understand how financial restraint impacts these core university activities.
12. This paper reflects an earlier discussion within Senate on how to understand "issues affecting [Schools], including restraints on recruitment or budgetary issues." At the October 2024 meeting of Senate, the Vice Principal Students noted that Senate Committees were not well-positioned on this topic because it "did not appear to be within the remits of the Senate standing committees, and the committees did not have the means to conduct such a review." It was suggested that schools' quality report process might be used, though a member of SQAC disputed their applicability.² A working group is proposed as a means to generate cross-University understanding and participation, in ways that other initiatives cannot, while recognising the need to work with existing processes.³
13. As the body responsible for governance of academic strategy at the university, Senate has an interest in ensuring that financial restraint is guided by strategic decision-making that appropriately prioritizes excellence in teaching, research, and student experience. Additionally, as one the key forum for cross-university staff deliberation, its leadership on such cross-cutting issues offers a lens to effects across the university.

Resource Implications

14. While some staff time is required for the working group, existing knowledge and expertise on effects and finances should be readily available.

Risk Management

15. The difficult state of higher education finances represents a meaningful risk to universities' business, and this paper seeks to involve Senate in ensuring that efforts to manage those risks do not unduly jeopardize teaching and research activity.

Responding to the Climate Emergency and Sustainable Development Goals

16. The effect of the budget constraints on the University response to the Climate Emergency and Sustainable Development Goals are currently unclear. The working group may consider these implications.

² Unconfirmed Minutes, 9 October 2024, Senatus Academicus (available at Senate portal).

³ For instance, the Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression Working Group has provided one model for wide participation and collective expertise. Likewise, working groups concerning Responsible Investment during 2024 were able to facilitate participation, including a survey with 1,900 responses.

Equality and Diversity

17. The risks to equality and diversity are heightened in moments of budget constraint – then those least able to shoulder additional burdens are at risk

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

18. An update on working group progress should be provided to Senate's February 2025 meeting and conclusions should be made available for discussion at Senate's May 2025 meeting. Findings should also be made available to Schools, Senate committees, and other entities to inform the 2025-26 planning process. The working group should also consider the scope for institutionalised reporting on the effects on teaching and research due to budget resilience.

Consultation

19. The paper is informed by discussions among Elected Senate members, non-member staff and students. It has also benefitted from the input of senior management during the October 2024 Senate.

Further Information

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Senate

11 December 2024

Senate External Review Recommendation: Standing Committee Remits Interim Update

Description of paper

1. This paper provides Senate with an interim update on progress with the AdvanceHE External Effectiveness Review of Senate recommendation relating to Senate Standing Committee remits.

Action requested / recommendation

2. Senate is invited to note the paper.

Background and context

3. The following recommendation was identified in the AdvanceHE External Effectiveness Review of Senate Report (July 2023):

We recommend that the VP Students reviews the Terms of Reference, coverage and scope of the three Senate Committees with a view to identifying any overlap and considering if they together cover all university academic priorities.

4. A discussion paper was developed to support the progress of this recommendation and was presented at the Task and Finish Group meeting on 6 November 2024 (Appendix 1).

Discussion

5. Discussion at the meeting was useful and wide-ranging. The main themes which arose from the Task and Finish Group discussion were:
 - The need to raise visibility of the student experience and to be explicit about where it is considered. There was no strong preference for if this would mean a separate committee or captured within existing committees. Members recognised that the student experience permeates beyond Senate and its committees and felt it would be useful to clarify where the student experience is considered across all committees and groups and the links between them.
 - The need to clarify where postgraduate research student matters were considered.
6. The outcomes of the Task and Finish Group discussion will be used, alongside the outcomes of other consultations, to develop proposals for change to the Senate standing committee remits.

7. Task and Finish Group members commented that it would be beneficial if Senate's role and remit could be clarified.

Resource implications

8. No resource implications are identified at present. Any changes to Senate standing committee remits would require resource to update and implement. Should any additional committees be created, this would result in additional resource requirements for Academic Standards and Quality to operate and for committee members to participate.

Risk management

9. There is a risk to the institutional governance of the University if the recommendations and actions arising from the Senate External Review are not taken forward in a timely and considered manner.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

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

Equality & diversity

11. No equality and diversity implications are identified at present.

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

12. The Vice Principal Students will continue to lead work to address this recommendation as follows:
 - Undertake further consultation to develop proposals for change.
 - Seek further input to proposals for change at the Task and Finish Group meeting in January 2025.
 - Present outline proposals for change consideration by Senate in February 2025.
 - Seek further input sought from the Task and Finish Group and Senate as appropriate to refine proposals.
 - Present final proposals for change, including updated terms of reference for standing committees, to Senate for approval in May 2025 for implementation in 2025/26.

Author

Professor Colm Harmon, Vice Principal Students
Nichola Kett and Fraser Rudge, Academic
Quality and Standards, November 2024

Presenter

Professor Colm Harmon, Vice
Principal Students

Freedom of Information Open

Appendix One

Task and Finish Group – 6 November 2024

Senate Standing Committees Review – Discussion Paper

External Review Recommendation 17

We recommend that the VP Students reviews the Terms of Reference, coverage and scope of the three Senate Committees with a view to identifying any overlap and considering if they together cover all university academic priorities.

Key points arising from the AdvanceHE External Effectiveness Review of Senate Report (July 2023):

- The committees are “working very well”.
- Senate Education Committee is overstretched and there is some overlap between all three committees (the nature of the overlap is not specified in the report).
- Clearer understanding of delegation needed, including the role of Senate in decisions.

See Appendix A for further information.

Relevant Internal Effectiveness review outcomes

The findings of the AdvanceHE report that SEC is overstretched has been supported by the findings of the Senate standing committees internal effectiveness review survey for 23/24.

In response to the question “The Committee’s remit is clear” the responses were:

- Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC) – 100% agreed
- Senate Education Committee (SEC) – 72% agreed, 28% disagree
- Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) – 91%, 9% neutral

In response to the question “The Committee’s remit is appropriate” the responses were:

- Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC) – 92% agreed, 8% neutral
- Senate Education Committee (SEC) – 64% agreed, 18% neutral, 18% disagree
- Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) – 91%, 9% neutral

From the survey analysis, only the SEC responses resulted in an area for development related to the remit. See Appendix B for further information.

Benchmarking – other Scottish HEIs

The statement in the AdvanceHE report: “The number of Senate Committees is smaller in Edinburgh than is typically the case in other Scottish (and English) institutions” has been corroborated through a benchmarking exercise. Other Scottish universities have committees that appear to give greater prominence to the student experience.

See Appendix C for further information.

Remits of Senate Standing Committees

Senate Education Committee

Education Committee is responsible, on behalf of Senate, for taught and research student matters, particularly strategy and policy concerning learning, teaching and the development of curriculum.

- Promote strategically-led initiatives and university-wide changes designed to enhance the educational experience of students and learners.
- Promote innovations in learning, teaching and assessment, embrace new teaching methods and consider cross-cutting themes such as research-led and technology-enhanced learning, digital and information literacy, education for employability, internationalisation and lifelong learning. Consider and promote local developments or initiatives with substantial implications for University learning and teaching strategy, policy, services or operations.
- Oversee policy relating to students' academic experience and proactively engage with high-level issues and themes arising from student feedback.
- Give specific consideration to instances in which the experience of one particular cohort of students or learners (undergraduate, postgraduate taught or postgraduate research students, and those involved in non-standard programmes) may diverge from that of others.
- Anticipate and prepare for new opportunities and likely future developments in learning and teaching for all cohorts of students and learners.
- 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.

Academic Policy and Regulations Committee

The Academic Policy and Regulations Committee is responsible, on behalf of Senate, for the University's framework of academic policy and regulation, apart from those aspects which are primarily parts of the Quality Assurance Framework.

- Oversee the development, maintenance and implementation of an academic regulatory framework which effectively supports and underpins the University's educational activities.
- Ensure that the academic regulatory framework continues to evolve in order to meet organisational needs and is responsive to changes in University strategy, and in the internal and external environments.
- Scrutinise and approve proposals for new or revised academic policy or regulation, ensuring that policy and regulation is only introduced where it is necessary, and that all policy and regulation is suitably accessible to its intended audience.
- Act with delegated authority from the Senate on matters of student conduct and discipline.
- In taking forward its remit, the Committee will seek consistency and common approaches while supporting and encouraging variation where this is beneficial, particularly if it is in the best interests of students.
- 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.

Senate Quality Assurance Committee

The Quality Assurance Committee is responsible, on behalf of Senate, for the framework which assures standards and enhances the quality of the student learning experience.

- Oversee the delivery and enhancement of the University's quality assurance framework, ensuring that it meets external requirements.
- In partnership with Edinburgh University Students' Association, ensure effective student engagement and representation of student voices in the University's quality framework.
- 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.
- 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.
- Identify areas for innovation and enhancement of the student experience and ensure that these inform Senate Education Committee's policy development.
- 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.
- 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.

Remit of Senate

While the AdvanceHE recommendation relates to a review of the terms of reference of Senate's standing committees, there is an associated lack of clarity on the terms of reference of Senate itself. There is currently no published remit or terms of reference document for the Senate, which is likely to adversely affect shared understanding of governance arrangements.

Within the Senate Members Handbook, Senate is described as "*the supreme academic body of the University, and the role of Senate is defined in legislation, in the Universities (Scotland) Acts and Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016.*"

Under the legislation, Senate's role focusses on academic matters and as set out in the 1889 and 2016 Acts the role of Senate is:

- "*to regulate and superintend the teaching and discipline of the University and to promote research*" (*Universities (Scotland) Act 1889*).
- *[to be] "responsible for the overall planning, co-ordination, development and supervision of the academic work of the institution" (Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016.*"

The [University's website](#) describes Senate's role as including:

- Formally approving the award of University degrees, including honorary degrees
- Approving the conferment of Emeritus status on retiring professors of the University (Information on the [process for the conferral of Emeritus status](#))
- Commenting on draft Resolutions and Ordinances from Court, for example relating to the creation of new degree types or new Chairs (Professorships), or approval of the Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study
- Setting the academic regulatory framework (delegated to the Academic Policy and Regulations Committee)
- Maintaining the quality and standards of the University's awards (delegated to the Quality Assurance Committee)
- Setting the high level policy and strategy on learning, teaching and curriculum development working within the strategic direction contained within the University's Strategic Plan approved by Court and its underlying strategies (largely delegated to the Senate Education Committee)
- Reporting to the Court on any matter referred to the Senate by the Court
- Making a request to Court for a Resolution
- Commenting on draft Resolutions
- Regulating the conduct of students of the University (via the Code of Student Conduct)
- Communicating policies approved by Senate or Senate committees

External regulatory requirements

Scottish Higher Education Institutions operate within Scotland's Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) which sets a significant number of requirements in terms of internal and external review, data and evidence, externality, student engagement and partnership, and reporting. This requires a substantial body of work and an implicit need for a University-level committee with appropriate expertise and authority to support the delivery of and enhancement of the student learning experience resulting from quality processes, working alongside those role holders across the University who have responsibility for managing and delivering these quality processes.

Additionally, much of the work delegated to the Senate Committees is designed to meet the requirements of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

The 2018 Quality Code Advice and Guidance states the following regarding assessment (emphasis added):

"The provider reviews its core practices for standards regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement. **In practice, this means that providers regularly review and enhance their assessment policies, procedures and processes as they relate to standards to ensure they remain fit for purpose.** They consider and act on reports of external examiners and focus on assessment in their course reviews."

The University has in the region of 70 academic policies, sets of regulations and related guidance documents. These documents are reviewed at least every four years in order to meet the expectations under the Quality Code, with much of this work being carried out as routine business by the Senate Committees.

Given the volume of essential and routine business required of Senate means that it is a necessity that much of this is delegated to sub-committees constituted with appropriate expertise and role holders. This was corroborated through external benchmarking also.

University Academic Priorities

Strategy 2030

- Undergraduate curriculum
- Widening participation
- Research impact
- Edinburgh Offer
- Postgraduate education pathways

Strategies

- Digital Strategy
- Learning and Teaching Strategy (to be approved by SEC in November)

Programmes

- Curriculum Transformation
- Student Support Model

Gaps

- 1) Student experience
- 2) Prominence of PGR student experience (the Senate Researcher Experience Committee (REC) was disbanded in May 2019 following a review)¹

Overlaps

As outlined above, the AdvanceHE External Effectiveness Review of Senate Report did not provide further information on the nature of the “some overlap” between all three committees. Additionally, no themes emerged of this nature as a result of the most recent standing committees’ internal effectiveness review. However, there are free text comments which outline that the ownership of some committee business is unclear.

¹ Recommendations:

- Dissolve REC, transferring its responsibilities for strategic postgraduate research student matters to LTC (to be re-named ‘Education Committee’), and its responsibilities for early career researchers to Research Policy Group.
- Curriculum and Student Progression Committee (to be re-named ‘Academic Policy and Regulations Committee’) will continue to oversee the policy and regulatory issues associated with research programmes.

Good governance principles

The [Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance \(2023\)](#), while primarily concerned with corporate rather than academic governance, includes the following paragraphs that members may find it helpful to be cognisant of.

“90. Committee remits and terms of reference must state the extent and limits of the committee’s responsibilities and authority and are expected to be published on the institution’s website. Committees must not exceed their terms of reference and should be so advised by the Secretary to the governing body. Committees must distinguish between issues on which they are empowered to take decisions, and issues that they must refer to the governing body for decision. Where a committee is acting under delegated powers it should submit regular written reports to the governing body on decisions that it has taken on the governing body’s behalf.”

“ACADEMIC BOARD

The governing body has responsibility for the effectiveness of the institution’s academic board.

104. The governing body must ensure that the academic board is appropriately constituted according to relevant legislation and the institution’s governing instruments. The governing body is expected to receive and consider reviews of the academic board’s effectiveness (see Section 5).

105. The governing instruments for each institution will set out how an academic board functions, including how the responsibility for oversight and regulation of the institution’s academic provision is vested in the academic board. The institution is expected to have appropriate measures in place to clarify the different responsibilities of the governing body and the academic board and to encourage a high level of mutual understanding between them.”

QUESTIONS FOR THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP

Having considered the evidence presented in this paper, the Task and Finish group members are asked to consider and respond to the following questions to inform the development of proposals for change:

- Does the existing Senate committee structure have the remits and capacity to cover all university academic priorities and required business?
- What are the gaps and areas of overlap in the current standing committee remits?
- Should the number of standing committees increase?
- Should there be a hierarchy applied to the standing committees to reflect the nature of business and support interactions with Senate?
- How can criteria be established for matters to be escalated to Senate? Relates to recommendation 18.

Next Steps

The Vice Principal Students will continue to lead work to address this recommendation as follows:

1. Use the outcomes of this discussion paper to provide an interim update to Senate in December and develop proposals for change.
2. Seek further input to proposals for change at the Task and Finish Group meeting in January.
3. Present outline proposals for change for discussion and approval to Senate in February.
4. Further input sought from the Task and Finish Group and Senate as appropriate in order to develop
5. Present final proposals for change including updated terms of reference for standing committees to Senate for approval in May for implementation in 2024/25.

Presenter and lead:

Professor Colm Harmon (Convener of SEC)

Paper authors and contributors:

- Adam Bunni (Academic Policy Manager, Academic Quality and Standards, member of APRC)
- Brian Connolly (Academic Policy Manager, Academic Quality and Standards, member of SQAC)
- Lisa Dawson (Academic Registrar, member of APRC)
- Professor Kim Graham (Provost)
- Professor Patrick Hadoke (Convener of APRC)
- Professor Colm Harmon (Convener of SEC)
- Professor Tina Harrison (Convener of SQAC)
- Nichola Kett (Head of Academic Quality and Standards, member of SEC)
- Fraser Rudge (Committees and Governance Manager, Academic Quality and Standards, Senate Clerk)

October 2024

3.10 Senate Committees

There are currently 3 major Senate Committees at Edinburgh, the Senate Education Committee (SEC) the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) and the Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC). The number of Senate Committees is smaller in Edinburgh than is typically the case in other Scottish (and English) institutions. Although the members of the committees are not strictly representatives, collectively these committees provide the relevant expertise for input into policy. The committees are also important for understanding the impact of policies across the university through hearing the voice of the schools (with 3 elected Senate members added in 2021-22), the professional services, students and Senate.

The Senate Committees were each observed by a member of the team. We also interviewed the Chairs of the 3 Committees and a large number of committee members. Senate Committee members also completed a short focussed survey. It is our view that the Committees are working very well:

97% of members thought that the composition of the committees had the right mix of skills and knowledge to enable the committees to make properly considered decisions.

86% of members agreed that the Senate standing committees work effectively and make properly considered decisions.

The key issue that emerged both from the open comments from committee members and our observations was that the SEC was overstretched and there was some overlap across the 3 committees. There is a delicate balance here between size and effectiveness, but some modest re-aligning could be helpful. There were two areas for consideration emerging from the review of Senate committees:

- Firstly, there could be a clearer understanding of delegation to the standing committees (62% of respondents said that delegation to the standing committees is clear and well understood)
- Secondly, there was also a clear message coming back from the Senate Committee analysis that most members did not feel that the Senate added value to the work of the standing committees - only 34% agreed, 14% disagreed and 21% didn't know.

Some of the comments suggest that this may be a communications issue although unusually the percentage agreeing did not increase with duration of membership as is usually the case. It is likely that the perceived lack of value reflects the fact that currently Senate members can only add value to the Committees through questioning the decisions of the standing committee.

Under the Scheme of Delegations nearly all areas of strategy and policy are delegated to the Senate Committees. Senators at large often feel disempowered by this arrangement and perhaps not surprisingly want to have the opportunity to discuss further some of the key strategic decisions that the Committees have made on the part of Senate. The Committees for their part are following the proper delegation of decision making laid out in the guidelines. Currently debate around this issue takes up a lot of Senate's time and causes frustration on all sides. This issue has previously been debated fully at Senate, but it has not yet been possible to reach a solution that will satisfy everyone.

This is clearly a complicated, political and divisive issue that causes considerable bad feeling in Senate. In our view it is vital to get an acceptable compromise on this issue in order to move to more effective governance. We recommend that Senate forms a task and finish group – possibly with some neutral facilitated focus - to explore the feasibility and establish the criteria for referrals and process on behalf of Senate and to define a way that this could work practically. For this suggestion to work there will have to be compromise on both sides, with Senate Committees accepting that there could be some amendments to their proposals and Senate accepting that they cannot expect every decision taken by Senate Committees to be re-considered.

Some universities have successfully used the RACI (Responsive, Accountable, Consulted, Informed) framework to improve connectivity between governance bodies.

Recommendations

R.17. We recommend that the VP Students reviews the Terms of Reference, coverage and scope of the three Senate Committees with a view to identifying any overlap and considering if they together cover all university academic priorities.

R.18. We recommend that Senate establish a task and finish group (ideally with neutral facilitation) to explore the feasibility and establish the criteria for Senate Committee decisions that need further discussion in full Senate before a final decision is made.

Suggestions

S.9. We suggest that the chair of each of the 3 Committee Chairs clarifies the relevant scheme of delegation for their committee.

S.10. We suggest that the Senate gives thought to using a framework such as RACI as a framework for improving understanding and clarity about responsibilities, accountabilities consultation and communication relationships in Senate.

3.8 Senate and Research (Included for reference, separate action being undertaken)

Under the Education (Scotland) Act 2016 ' the core function of the Senate is to regulate and superintend the teaching and discipline of the university and to promote research'. The research role of Senate at Edinburgh is poorly defined and understood and we found limited time given to both Research and Early Stage Researchers students in Senate business.

Only 18% of respondents to the survey agreed that 'the senate operates effectively processes for overseeing and promoting research' Unusually, this view was similar across all categories of respondent.

Senate was kept informed about the REF but Research is not typically foregrounded in Senate discussions and it is not formally a committee responsibility. We were particularly concerned about the lack of focus on Post Graduate Research students in Senate debate.

Recommendation

R.16 We recommend that the VP Research and Enterprise undertakes a review of how Research and especially PGRs could become more mainstreamed into Senate business.

Appendix B – Areas of good practice and for development identified from surveys of standing committee members in summer 2024 (as part of annual internal effectiveness review)

Senate Education Committee (44% response rate)

Good Practice

- The two respondents who were new members to SEC in 2023/24 both agreed that they received an effective induction when they joined the Committee.
- All members agreed or strongly agreed that SEC is supported effectively by Registry Services. Ten respondents were in agreement that the information provided supports effective decision-making by the Committee.
- Ten respondents agreed that the size of the Committee is appropriate for it to operate effectively.
- All respondents agreed they are clear on their role and responsibilities as a member of SEC, with nine members highlighting they are able to engage effectively with the Committee.
- Nine respondents agreed that equality and diversity are appropriately considered and promoted in the work of the Committee.

Areas for Development

1) Committee Remit

- Three respondents disagreed that the remit of SEC is clear.
- Four respondents were not in agreement that the scope of the Committee's remit is appropriate.

Free text comments indicated that the remit of SEC is not as clear as the other two Senate Standing Committees. Feedback noted the ambiguity around whether SEC should maintain ownership of specific items and whether other key issues are not being allocated due focus by SEC or the other Standing Committees. Examples raised of this include assessment and feedback, widening participation and student experience matters. It was noted that SEC could enhance its integration with the other Standing Committees. Comments suggested that the remit and scope of the Committee could be reinforced across the academic year at each meeting.

2) Strategic Impact and Communication to the Wider University

- Four respondents disagreed that the work of the Committee is communicated effectively to the wider University. Only three members agreed.
- Three respondents were not in agreement that that the work of the Committee links to University strategic priorities.
- Four respondents were not in agreement that the work of the Committee makes a positive impact.

Free text comments highlighted that the impact of the Committee's decisions on staff and students should be given more consideration, particularly in cases where staff are required to implement proposals. Feedback noted that the decisions made by the Committee are not communicated clearly enough and at times it is unclear how these decisions are taken forward. Comments suggested that the Committee should consider diversifying its membership and input.

Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (54% response rate)

Good practice

- **Composition and remit:** All respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the composition of the Committee enables it to fulfil its remit, that the Committee's remit is clear, and that they are clear on their roles and responsibilities as a member of the Committee
- **Committee support:** All respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Committee is supported effectively by Registry Services
- **Impact and strategic relevance:** 12 out of 13 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the work of the Committee makes a positive impact and that the work of the Committee links to the University's strategic priorities

Areas for development

- 1) **Survey response rate:** The low response rate to the survey over the past two years (54%-59%) makes it difficult to ensure that the results are sufficiently representative of members' views and that the proposed actions reliably reflect members' priorities for improving the internal effectiveness of the Committee. We will therefore aim to improve response rates for next year's survey.
- 2) **Equality, diversity and EqIAs:** Whilst most respondents (9 out of 13) agreed or strongly agreed that equality and diversity are appropriately considered by the work of the Committee, three respondents were neutral and one disagreed with this statement.
- 3) **Communicating the work of the Committee:** The question with most negative or neutral responses (4 out of 13) was in relation to whether the work of the Committee is communicated effectively to the wider University. Effective communication was identified as a challenge by almost half of the respondents, either specifically regarding the work of the Committee, or regarding the broader challenges of communications across the University. There were mixed responses regarding whether or not the Committee could take further action which would result in improvements to communications. Suggestions included the following areas for improvement, although the mechanism by which to implement these would need to be determined:
 - Improving dissemination of the work of the Committee at School level
 - Improving communications between the Committee and Senate
 - Feeding back to the Committee regarding the impact of its work
 - Consulting with staff and students outside of the Committee regarding the impact of its work

Senate Quality Assurance Committee (73% response rate)

Good Practice

- There were four respondents to the survey who were new to SQAC in 2023/24. In terms of the induction being effective, two strongly agreed, one agreed and one gave a neutral response. The induction was described as "very good" and "helpful".
- All respondents agreed or strongly agreed that SQAC is supported effectively by Registry Services. Support for the Committee was described as "excellent", "of a very high standard" and staff as "congenial and helpful".
- All respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the work of SQAC links to University strategic priorities.
- Ten respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Equality and Diversity are appropriately considered and promoted in the work of the Committee.
- Ten respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they are able to effectively engage with and contribute to the work of the Committee.

Areas for development

1. Effective Communication:

- The area in which negative or neutral responses outweighed positive responses was in relation to the statement that the work of the Committee is communicated effectively to the wider University (item 17). Visibility of the Committee, establishing and promoting the relevance of QA and communication with the wider University were all identified as areas to improve.
- Two respondents noted the perception that QA is seen as a separate strand of work, whereas it should be considered as central to the operation of the University. It was proposed that there may be a role for the Committee in improving its visibility and perceived relevance to the rest of student business.
- One respondent highlighted the challenge of surfacing areas that require further action, and handing the responsibility to another Committee or area of the University to progress and oversee. It was acknowledged that the Committee makes an impact by asking other areas to respond, but there can be frustrations with ownership.
- Three respondents highlighted the challenge around communicating the work of the Committee with the wider University, with particular mention of engaging with academic and professional services staff working at School level.
- One respondent noted that communication should promote meaningful engagement from the wider University, starting with supporting real governance responsibility from wider Senate.

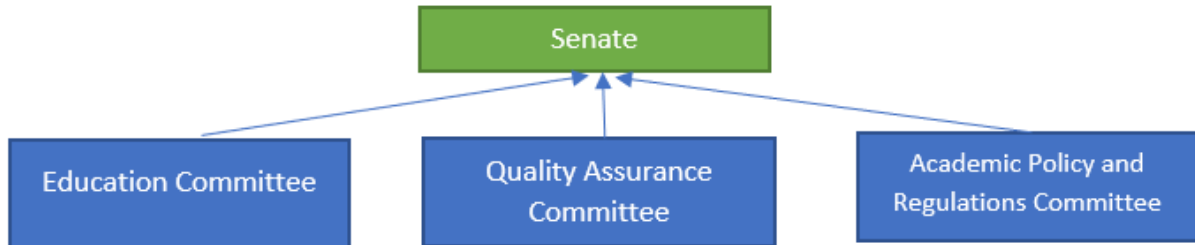
2. EDI and representation

- A theme throughout the free text responses addressed EDI and representation on the Committee. Overall, responses were largely positive to questions about the size and composition of the Committee, and its approach to considering and promoting EDI. One respondent highlighted the discussions of needs and views of the different groups and acknowledgment of the complexity in the area, and another respondent reflected on the thoughtful conversations about how Committee decisions impact on EDI.
- However, there were suggestions of increasing student representation on the Committee and the addition of an EDI leader to Committee membership. Another suggestion proposed that the Committee strengthen its relationship with EDIC to use the expertise of that Committee and its subcommittee structures more effectively where relevant.
- It was also proposed by one respondent that paper authors should be encouraged to make more use of the EDI box on the paper template. It was highlighted that often they say 'no impact' but that in itself may actually be an impact as the University should be striving to enhance EDI in all its work.
- It was noted by one respondent that while the Committee often recognises the need to consider diversity, actual follow-through is less common; there appears to be limitations in the data or other capabilities and a reluctance to formally expect evidence of impact from action on diversity-related QA goals, where the norm is to report forming a working group or studying a problem.

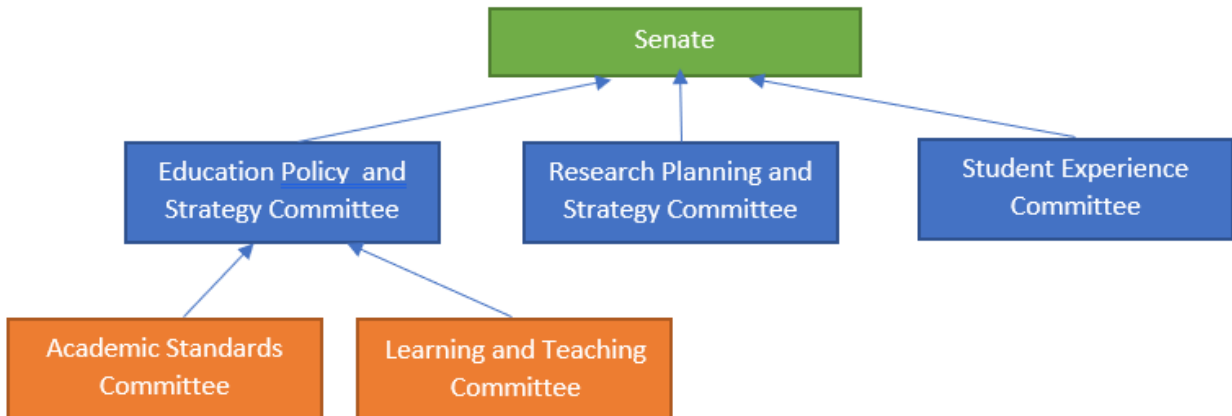
Appendix C – Summary of external benchmarking

Note: this has been kept to high-level academic-related committees and does not include task-specific committees such as honorary degrees, appeals, discipline or Senate business committees.

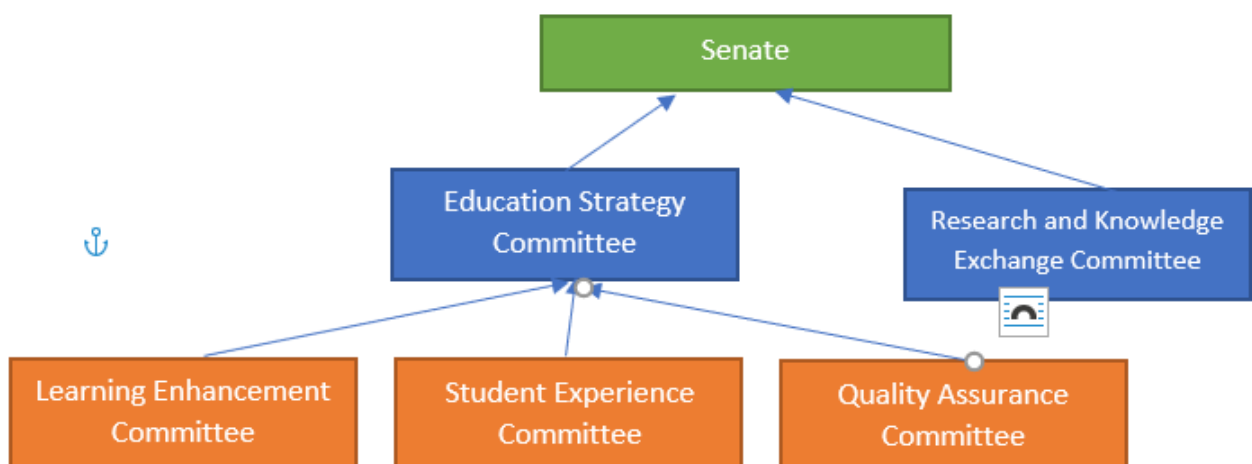
University of Edinburgh



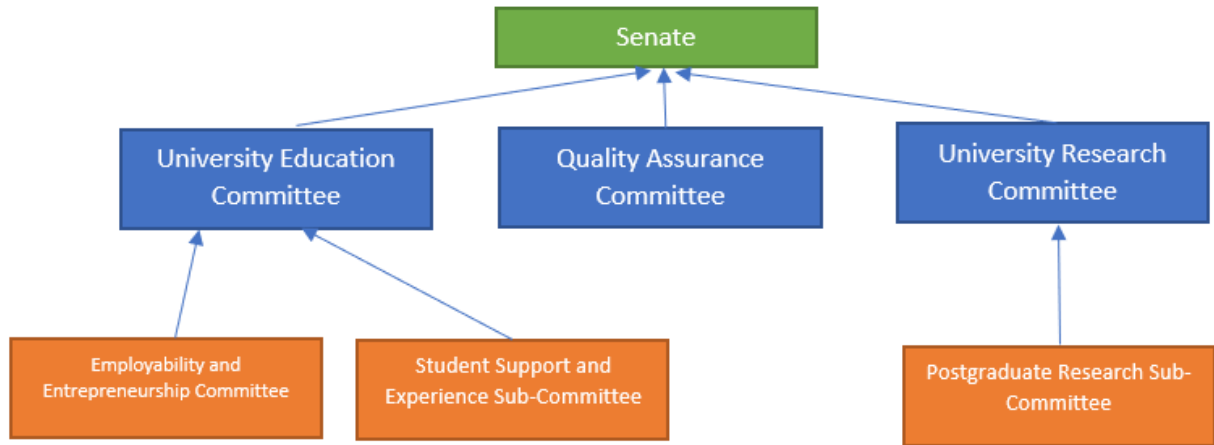
University of Glasgow



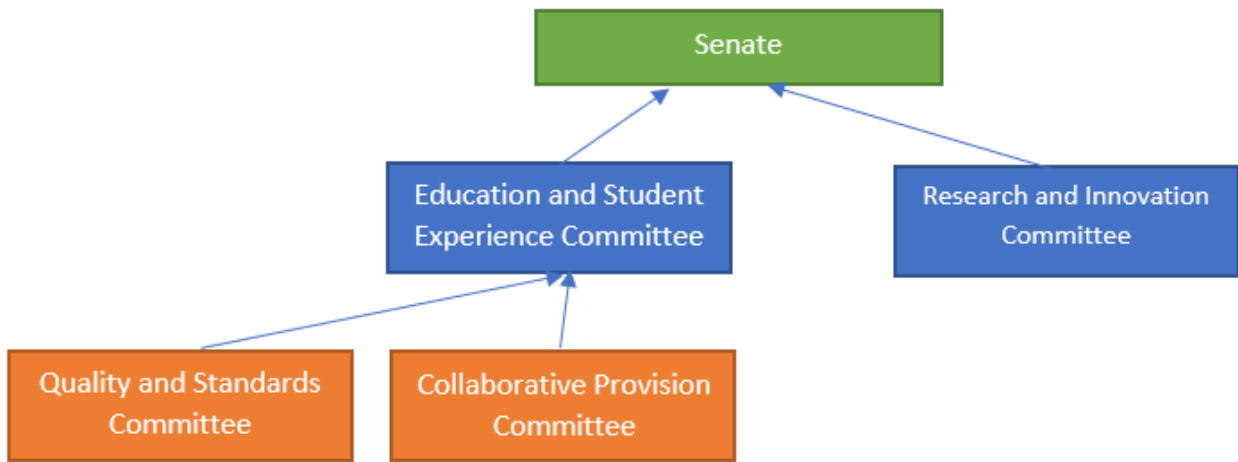
University of Strathclyde



University of Aberdeen



Edinburgh Napier University



Senate**11 December 2024****Senate Standing Committees - Upcoming Business****1 Description of paper**

This paper informs Senate of the main points of activity and business the Senate Standing Committees will consider between December 2024 and February 2025.

2 Action requested / recommendation

Senate is invited to note the upcoming business of the Senate standing committees.

3 Background and context

As has been established as practice, a note of upcoming key items of business from the Senate Standing Committees is a standing item on the agenda for Ordinary meetings of Senate. This is intended to facilitate Senate awareness and oversight of Standing Committee activity. This note does not include a comprehensive overview of all business that the Standing Committees may consider during this period.

4 Discussion

A summary of the Standing Committee upcoming business paper is provided in Appendix 1. This summary is to inform Senate of the main points of activity and business the Senate Standing Committees will consider between December 2024 and February 2025.

5 Resource implications

This paper does not propose any actions. The resource implications of any actions which arise from the discussion would be considered by the relevant Standing Committee.

6 Risk management

This activity supports the university's obligations under the 2023 Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance.

7 Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

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

8 Equality & diversity

This paper does not propose any actions. Any Equality, Diversity and Inclusion actions which arise from the discussion would be referred to the relevant Standing Committee.

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

Any comments raised by Senate will be reported to the Standing Committees at their next meeting.

Additionally, the Senate Committees' Newsletter is prepared after each round of Committee business and this will provide information on business undertaken by Senate and its Standing Committees to the wider University community.

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Professor Patrick Hadoke, Convener of Academic Policy and Regulation Committee

Presenter

Professor Colm Harmon, Convener of Senate Education Committee
Professor Tina Harrison, Convener of Senate Quality Assurance Committee
Professor Patrick Hadoke, Convener of Academic Policy and Regulation Committee

10 Freedom of Information: Open

November 2024

Appendix 1: Senate Standing Committees: upcoming business December 2024 – February 2025**Senate Education Committee (SEC)**

Upcoming business:	Brief description and context:
1. Curriculum Transformation Programme (CTP)	This is a standing item on SEC agendas and a Committee priority for 2024/25. A progress report on the Postgraduate Taught element of CTP will be presented and SEC will discuss the direction of travel and priorities prior to the initial rollout of the new PGT Curriculum Framework from September 2026.
2. Mid-year Reflection on Committee Priorities	The Committee will review progress and updates on its priorities for 2024/25 as part of the mid-year review.
3. SEC Committee Priorities 2025/26	The Committee will discuss and agree proposed priorities for academic year 2025/26. Agree priorities will subsequently be reported to Senate for endorsement.
4. Assessment and Feedback Groups	Assessment and Feedback is a Committee priority for 2024/25 and reports from relevant sub-groups are a standing item on SEC agendas. The Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group meets every two months and updates are routinely provided to the Committee. Similarly, the External Quality Review Oversight Group meets monthly and reports to both SEC and Senate Quality Assurance Committee.
5. PTES and PRES: Institutional Questions 2025	SEC will consider and approve the proposed institutional questions for PTES and PRES 2025. Subject to their approval, these questions will be asked after the core questionnaire and specifically of PGT and PGR students at the University of Edinburgh.
6. Widening Participation	The Head of Widening Participation has accepted an invite to attend the February meeting to provide a strategic update. The Widening Participation Strategy is one of SEC's areas of focus for 2024/25 and considering instances in which the experience of one particular cohort of students or learners may diverge from that of others is one of the points listed within SEC's remit.
7. Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program Update	SEC will receive an update on the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at its February meeting, particularly in connection with the University's strategy on online distance learning.
8. School Accessibility Reviews	The Committee will note an update on the annual Accessibility Reviews conducted via the Learn Ultra project.

Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC)

Upcoming business:	Brief description and context:
1. College Annual Quality Reports	The Committee will consider the annual quality reports from the Colleges at its December meeting. The Committee will discuss themes that have emerged from the reports and agree actions.
2. Student Data Monitoring Task & Finish Group update	SQAC established this task group in April 2024. The group will first meet in October 2024 and will report to SQAC on its initial discussion and actions. The group has been tasked with developing a systematic approach to monitoring student data at university level, which will focus specifically on the awarding gap.
3. Annual Reports 2023/24: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Appeals • Student Conduct • Complaint Handling 	The Committee will consider the annual reports from these service areas and discuss themes and areas for action. This is routine annual business for the Committee.
4. Annual Monitoring templates	The Committee will consider the programme, School and College annual monitoring templates for 2024/25 and be asked to approve any changes to the reporting templates.
5. Report on the Student Support Services Annual Review	Student Support Services reporting is part of the University's quality assurance framework. Services report on student-facing activity and its impact on student experience. The Committee will discuss areas of good practice and consider whether any further actions are required in relation to the themes identified in the report.
6. Mid-year reflection on Committee priorities	The Committee will review progress and updates on its priorities for 2024/25 as part of the mid-year review.
7. Internal Periodic Review: Reports and Responses	The Committee will review final reports and any responses provided by Schools in relation to their Internal Periodic Review.

Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC)

Upcoming business:	Brief description and context:
1. Periodic review of policies	The Committee will consider proposals for essential changes and enhancements to policies due for periodic review in 2024/25, as part of its routine business. At its January meeting, the Committee is expecting to consider for approval amendments to the following policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Withdrawal and Exclusion from Studies Procedure- Authorised Interruption of Study Policy
2. Amendments to the Student Appeals Regulations	Minor amendments to the Student Appeals Regulations in order to align with updates to other policies.
3. Review of the examination diet	The Committee is expecting to receive a report with proposed amendments to the examination diet following a review and consultation across Registry Services and the Colleges.
4. Mid-year reflection on Committee priorities	The Committee will review progress and updates on its priorities for 2024/25 as part of the mid-year review.

Senate

11 December 2024

Senate Standing Committee Election Results – October 2024

Description of paper

1. This paper notifies Senate of the outcome of the October 2024 election process to elect Senate-elected members to the Senate Education Committee and the Senate Quality Assurance Committee.

Action requested / recommendation

2. Senate is invited to note the election outcome.

Background and context

3. At its 9 October meeting, Senate approved a motion to reopen the election process for Senate-elected members to be elected to vacancies on the Senate Education Committee and the Senate Quality Assurance Committee.
4. The elections were conducted in line with the arrangements approved by Senate at its [7 February 2024](#) meeting, subject to updates notified within paper S 24/25 1 G at the [9 October 2024](#) meeting.

Discussion

5. The outcome of the October 2024 election process was as follows:
 - a. **Senate Education Committee.** One eligible nomination was received for the one vacancy on the Senate Education Committee. Professor Ruth Andrew was duly elected.
 - b. **Senate Quality Assurance Committee.** Two eligible nominations were received for the two vacancies on Senate Quality Assurance Committee. Professor Jake Ansell and Professor Patrick Walsh were duly elected.
6. For the 2024-25 academic year, all vacant positions for Senate-elected members on the Senate Standing Committees have been filled.

Resource implications

7. There are no additional resource implications associated with formally declaring the outcome of the above election process.

Risk management

8. There are no additional risk management implications associated with formally declaring the outcome of the above election process.

Equality & diversity

9. There are no additional equality and diversity implications associated with formally declaring the outcome of the above election process.

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

10. Senate members were notified of the election outcome by email from Senate Support on Friday 1 November 2024. The election results have also been published on the [Senate Education Committee](#) and [Senate Quality Assurance Committee](#) membership webpages.

Author

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Registry Services
November 2024

Freedom of Information - Open