



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Senatus Academicus

Wednesday 5 February 2025, 1:10-4pm

Main Lecture Theatre, Swann Building, 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 – 13:15-13:25 (10 minutes)

To approve the minutes of the meetings held on:

- 22 May 2024. **S 24/25 3A**
- 18 June 2024 (includes June 2024 e-Senate report). **S 24/25 3B**
- 9 October 2024. **S 24/25 3C**
- 11 December 2024. **S 24/25 3D**

To approve the e-Senate report of 8-22 January 2025. **S 24/25 3E**

2.1 Matters arising

To consider any matters arising.

2.1.1 Meeting of 9 October 2024

Senate is invited to note the following update.

Under minute eight, Research Ethics and Defence and Security, Senate was advised that the final report and recommendations arising from the Research Ethics for Defence Working Group would be presented to its meeting of 5 February 2025. The associated paper will now be presented to the May 2025 Senate meeting to enable consideration by the Research Ethics and Integrity Review Group and the Research Strategy Group.

2.2 Senate Action Log **S 24/25 3F**

To note updates to the Senate Action Log.

3 Convener's Communications – 13:25-13:35 (10 minutes) **Verbal Update**

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|---|--|----------------------|
| 4 | Senate & Senate Standing Committee Elections 2025/26 – 13:35-13:45 (10 minutes) | S 24/25 3G |
| | To <u>approve</u> the arrangements for the 2025/26 Senate and Senate Standing Committee Elections. | |
| 5 | Conferral of Awards – 13:45-13:50 (5 minutes) | S 24/25 3H
CLOSED |
| | To <u>approve</u> the conferral of awards arising between the 2024 Winter Graduation ceremonies and the commencement of the trial period whereby Boards of Examiners would have delegated authority to award or confer degrees (1 January 2025). | |
| 6 | Report from the AI Adoption Task Force – 13:50-14:10 (20 minutes) | S 24/25 3I |
| | To <u>discuss</u> the report provided in response to paper S 24/25 2K. | |
| | Break 14:10-14:20 (10 minutes) | |
| 7 | Senate External Review Recommendation: Standing Committee Remits Update and Options – 14:20-14:50 (30 minutes) | S 24/25 3J |
| | To <u>note</u> the update on progress, and to <u>discuss</u> the options presented within the paper relating to the consideration of the student experience. | |
| 8 | Senate Standing Committees: Mid-Year Reflection on 2024/25 Priorities and Contribution to 2025/26 Priorities – 14:50-15:10 (20 minutes) | S 24/25 3K |
| | To <u>discuss</u> progress against the 2024/25 priorities, and to <u>discuss</u> potential priorities for 2025/26. | |
| 9 | Budget Resilience, Teaching, and Research Working Group – 15:10-15:20 (10 minutes) | |
| | To <u>receive</u> a verbal update from the Budget Resilience, Teaching, and Research Working Group. | |

Items for information

To note the following:

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|----|---|------------|
| 10 | Court Communications | S 24/25 3L |
| 11 | Research Strategy Group Report | S 24/25 3M |
| 12 | Senate Standing Committees - Upcoming Business | S 24/25 3N |

13 Senate External Review Task and Finish Group - Update

S 24/25 30

14 Date of next meeting: 20 May 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 questioned senior management's credibility in claiming a precarious financial situation while paying a premium to a compulsory travel management service for each and every journey and while the Principal personally travelled in business class.

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 suppressed a paper asking for updates on decisions Senate had taken and was told at the time that the action log would contain these updates, but it has not done so. The member stated 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 expressed his understanding that the Senate action log was to record where Senate is to take some action, rather than where some other party takes an action, and agreed with the member that there needs to be a means to ensure Senate is informed of the outcomes of actions taken by other parties from Senate decisions.

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 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 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.

The Convener invited a response from Lee Hamill, who stated that the university invests in funds that have the highest Ethics, Sustainability, and Governance characteristics and did not have the resources to scrutinise individual company investments.

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, which the member understood from previously approved motions to be the next priority from CTP to come to Senate.
- 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 invited the committee conveners to explain what they considered contentious about the amendments that had been available to them since before the May meeting, and why they did not consider incorporating the amendments ahead of this meeting so that the papers could pass as uncontentious. The member expressed the view that the amendments were all in the spirit of clarification and in line with the paper, and did not understand why the committee conveners opposed them. 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 Caquineau, 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 the process for reaching consensus on the wording of the 22 May 2024 (S 24/25 1A) and 18 June 2024 (S 24/25 1B) minutes had not reached agreement, and the Convener asked Senate's consent to continue to seek agreement outside of the meeting. There were no objections.

The Convener congratulated on behalf of Senate the new Emeritus Professors confirmed in the 11-25 September e-Senate, and asked if there were objections to approving the e-Senate report of 11-25 September 2024 (S 24/25 1C). It was noted in response that members had not had sight of each other's full comments and suggested an out of meeting process be followed for that minute as well. The Convener agreed to this.

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. A member recommended prioritising making draft minutes available as soon as possible after meetings. The Convener said he thought that has always been the case, and hoped that recording the meeting would make this more efficient. He confirmed that every effort would be made to issue unconfirmed minutes that are both comprehensive and quick.

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, expected an overall package around undergraduate proposals to be presented in the Spring meetings and agreed that Edinburgh Student Vision would be included as a distinct item 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. The Convener indicated that a regular report from the University Initiatives Portfolio Board (UIPB) would cover this as well as other items. **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 remarked that many schools have retained shadow academic support systems in the face of perceived hostility from above, and many staff are feeling unsupported and angry. 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. It was noted that the paper appears to delegate unrestricted authority to boards to award any degree, including those outwith the subject of the board, and separately queried whether the process for withholding degree confirmation over fees was compliant with GDPR.

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 observed that the paper did not specify how the trial period would be evaluated.

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. The amendment proposers confirmed that they were happy to use the terminology from the Convener and Vice Principal Students for the amendment. The Convener indicated that rewordings would not be considered on the fly.

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 1I).

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

Senatus Academicus

Wednesday 11 December 2024, 1:10-4pm
Larch Lecture Theatre, Nucleus, Kings Buildings / Microsoft Teams

Unconfirmed Minute

Attendees: Peter Adkins, Gill Aitken, Sham Alhousiki, Niall Anderson, Ruth Andrew, Jake Ansell, Mohammad Amir Anwar, Kate Ash-Irisarri, Liz Baggs, Kasia Banas, Michael Barany, Matt Bell, Shereen Benjamin, Philip Best, Ayesha Bibi, Richard Blythe, Lisa Boden, Catherine Bovill, Barry Bradford, Mary Brennan, Paul Brennan, Aidan Brown, Tom Bruce, Karl Burgess, Mette Cameron, Carol Campbell, Celine Caquineau, Tony Carbery, Jeremy Carrette, Leigh Chalmers, Seongsook Choi, Aurora Constantin, Martin Corley, Miguel Costa-Gomes, Chris Cox, Jeremy Crang, Juan Cruz, Jo Danbolt, Kate Davison, Afshan Dean, Jean-Christophe Denis, Chris Dent, Charlotte Desvages, John Devaney, Simone Dimartino, Julia Dorin, Leonidas Dumas, Claire Duncanson, Ruth Elliott, Andrea English, Omolabake Fakunle, Tonks Fawcett, Valentina Ferlito, Manuel Fernandez-Gotz, Sue Fletcher-Watson, Vashti Galpin, Marc Geddes, Akrit Ghimire, Antonis Giannopoulos, Stuart Gilfillan, Laura Glendinning, Benjamin Goddard, Justin Goodrich, Iain Gordon, Kim Graham, Liz Grant, Richard Gratwick, Paddy Hadoke, Rachel Happer, Colm Harmon, Tina Harrison, Helen Hastie, David Hay, Dora Herndon, Melissa Highton, Jane Hislop, Willem Hollmann, James Hopgood, Jenny Hoy, Emma Hunter, David Ingram, Max Jaede, Jakov Jandric, Amanda Jarvis, Susan Jarvis, Aarnesh Kapoor, Itamar Kastner, Jim Kaufman, Meryl Kenny, George Kinnear, Linda Kirstein, David Kluth, Andy Law, Paul Le Tissier, Tom Leinster, Janice Linne, Dawn Livingstone, Jason Love, Sophia Lycouris, Antony Maciocia, Guangzhao Mao, Peter Mathieson (Convener), Sarah McAllister, Lesley McAra, Hayley McCormack, Mike McGrew, Gavin McLachlan, John Menzies, Marc Metzger, Meera Mokashi, James Mooney, Steven Morley, Ben Morse, Simon Mudd, Rachel Muers, Lyndsay Murray, Zahid Mushtaq, Rupert Nash, Pau Navarro, Judith Newton, Bryne Ngwenya, Steven O'Hagan, Naraya Papilaya, Diana Paton, Jamie Pearce, Nick Polydorides, Sarah Prescott, Jon Pridham, Colin Pulham, Syjil Ramjuthan, John Rappa, Tianyi Ren, Ricardo Ribeiro Ferreira, Ken Rice, Simon Riley, Aryelly Rodriguez Carbonell, Carin Runciman, Enrique Sanchez-Molano, Giulio Santori, Bernd Schroers, Matthias Schwannauer, Pablo Schyfter Camacho, David Smith, Stewart Smith, Antonella Sorace, Perdita Stevens, Emily Taylor, Alex Thomson, Sally Till, Tamara Trodd, Niki Vermeulen, Natasha Vijendren, Julia Voigt, Dylan Walch, Patrick Walsh, Lena Wanggren, Stephen Warrington, Michele Weiland, Charles West, Indigo Williams, Iain Wright, David Wyllie, Ben Wynne.

In attendance: Nina Bremner, Lisa Dawson, Sinéad Docherty, Arlene Duffin, Lucy Evans, Richard Kenway, Nichola Kett, Dean Pateman, Gillian Richardson, David Robertson, Fraser Rudge (Clerk), Michael Rovatsos, Jon Turner, Martin Wilson.

Apologies: Marialuisa Aliotta, David Argyle, Kelly Blacklock, Christina Boswell, Laura Bradley, Neil Chue Hong, Kevin Collins, Hannah Crocombe, Kirsty Day, Kevin Dhaliwal, Murray Earle, Mark Evans, Anne-Maree Farrell, Susan Farrington, Thorunn Helgason, Gavin Jack, Julie Jacko, Barry Laird, Steff Lewis, Ewa Luger, Upasana Mandhata, Lorna Marson, Catherine Martin, Kyleigh Melville, Tijana Mitic, Chris Mowat, Richard Oosterhoff, Cheryl Patrick, Josephine Pemberton, Wayne Powell, Brodie Runciman, Ewelina Rydzewska-Fazekas, Tobias Schwarz, Mike Shipston, Geoff Simm, James Smith, Jessica Thackeray, Shannon Vallor, Philip Wadler, Mark Williams, Maryam Yusuf.

Prior to the meeting commencing, Senate members were reminded that the Senate meeting would be recorded to aid in the production of the minutes as per the Senate Recordings Privacy Statement. Separately, members were advised that an unofficial attempt to record the meeting using an AI notetaker had been identified and blocked. Senate members were reminded that personal recordings of Senate meetings were not permitted.

1 Welcome and Apologies

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

2 Minutes and e-Senate Reports

2.1 Minutes

Senate received the unconfirmed minutes of the meetings of 22 May 2024 (S 24/25 2A), 18 June 2024 (S 24/25 2B), and 9 October 2024 (S 24/25 2C).

The Academic Registrar, Lisa Dawson, provided an update to Senate on the process to consider the minutes held over from previous meetings, set out options for considering the minutes within the meeting, and highlighted relevant extracts from the Senate Standing Orders and the Senate Handbook.

At Senate's meeting of 9 October 2024, it was agreed that proposed corrections to the minutes of 22 May 2024 and 18 June 2024 would be considered through an out-of-meeting process. It was reported that 46 Senate members had participated in this process, which was equivalent to 18% of Senate membership. As a quorum had not been reached, the minutes had been returned to Senate for approval as presented to the October 2024 meeting. It was reported that 38 of the 46 participants in the online process had voted in favour of the proposed corrections.

Reference was made to Senate Standing Order five, which confirmed that minutes could not be approved in an inquorate meeting of Senate, and therefore, a quorum was being applied to the out-of-meeting process to consider the proposed corrections. The Academic Registrar observed that the out-of-meeting process had been introduced in response to feedback that Senate members wanted to spend less time discussing minutes within Senate meetings.

Reference was also made to page 12 of the Senate Handbook, which stated that *"The Senate Clerk is responsible for preparing Minutes of all meetings. The Minutes will convey the decision reached by Senate, key points raised by members and actions arising out of discussions. Minutes will not be a verbatim account of meetings and will give a balanced summary of discussions that took place. Minutes of the previous Ordinary Meeting (including meetings of E-Senate), or any intervening Special Meeting, or any Graduation Meeting and Ceremonial, will be submitted and approved at the opening of the next quorate meeting of Senate."*

It was explained that Senate would have the option to approve the minutes without a vote, approve the minutes with a vote, or vote not to approve the minutes. In the event that Senate voted not to approve the minutes, Senate would be able to consider the proposed corrections within the meeting or via the out-of-meeting process.

It was reported that two members had proposed corrections to the minutes of 9 October 2024, and that a document detailing the proposed corrections and associated consideration had been published on the Senate Members Portal. A member recommended that Senate not approve the minutes on the basis that there remained uncorrected factual inaccuracies, and that the proposed corrections be considered through an out-of-meeting process.

Senate was invited to vote on the minutes. During the voting period, reports were received from members who had experienced difficulty in logging onto Woodclap.

Senate did not approve the minutes of 22 May 2024 (S 24/25 2A) by a majority vote: 42 members approved, 49 members did not approve, and 15 members abstained.

Senate did not approve the minutes of 18 June 2024 (S 24/25 2B) by a majority vote: 42 members approved, 48 members did not approve, and 18 members abstained.

Senate did not approve the minutes of 9 October 2024 (S 24/25 2C) by a majority vote: 49 members approved, 50 members did not approve, and 11 members abstained.

Action: Senate Clerk to facilitate out-of-meeting consideration of the minutes.

2.2 e-Senate report of 11-25 September 2024 (S 24/25 2D)

Without requiring a vote, Senate approved the replacement of text within section three of the e-Senate report of 11-25 September 2024: Report from the Senate Exception Committee. Paragraph two was replaced with the following text:

"One member of the Senate Exception Committee provided corrections to the paper, which Senate Support has made. Future items of Senate Exception Committee business will explicitly confirm, where relevant, that the requirements for award have been met and that the award could not await the next meeting of Senate."

Senate approved the e-Senate report of 11-25 September 2024, by a majority vote: 94 members approved, 5 members did not approve, and 14 members abstained.

2.3 e-Senate report 13-27 November 2024 (S 24/25 2E)

Without requiring a vote, Senate approved the addition of text to section three of the e-Senate report of 13-27 November 2024: Communications from the University Court.

Under item 3, insert: "One member noted that this report appeared to contradict the Principal's claim from the October Senate meeting that he could not report to Court on Senate's business until minutes have been approved."

The Convener acknowledged the inclusion of the Senate member's comment within the e-Senate report; and that he had commented at the October 2024 meeting on the desirability of having minutes approved so that a full report of Senate business could be made to the University Court. It was explained that, in the absence of approved minutes, the Convener could still provide a report to Court but this was limited to a very high-level overview about what Senate discussed and any other items to be brought to the attention of Court.

Senate approved the e-Senate report of 13-27 November 2024, by a majority vote: 104 members approved, 1 member did not approve, and 14 members abstained.

2.4 Matters arising

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the 9 October 2024 meeting.

3 Convener's Communications

The Convener provided a verbal update to Senate on the financial context of the University, and invited comments from the Edinburgh University Students Association Vice-President Education.

3.1 Financial Context

The Convener commented briefly on the financial challenges affecting the University, and on the all-staff meeting with senior leaders held on 10 December 2024.

The Convener explained that the intention of the all-staff meeting was to present information to staff on how the University's current and forecast financial position had been interpreted by the senior leadership team. Senate was advised that around 3000 members of staff joined the all-staff meeting online, and that around 300 members of staff joined the meeting in person. The Convener reflected on the effectiveness of the meeting for communicating the severity and the urgency of the University's financial situation, and acknowledged the meeting format could be improved for future events. In response to a query, the Convener clarified that an Interim Director of Finance had been appointed pending recruitment to the open-ended Director of Finance vacancy.

It was queried why the all-staff meeting had not been recorded for the benefit of staff who had been unable to attend at the time. In response, it was clarified that prior consideration had been given to recording the meeting and that it had been anticipated that there would be sufficient alternative sources of information available to the university community. It was explained that information would be provided through a dedicated SharePoint site, and from further staff engagement opportunities yet to be arranged.

It was separately observed that the process used by staff to prioritise questions in the all-staff meeting had inadvertently resulted in a number of similar questions being asked. It was suggested that an alternative format could include questions from trade union representatives. The Convener acknowledged that changes to the format of future all-staff meetings would be considered, and reflected on the existing communication channels between the senior leadership team and the trade unions.

There were brief discussions on the planned voluntary severance scheme, and on communications relating to the potential for compulsory redundancies; and on the impact of tuition fee increases for international students.

3.2 Communications from the EUSA Vice-President Education

As part of the Convener's Communication item, the Convener invited the Edinburgh University Students' Association (EUSA) Vice-President Education, Dylan Walch, to report on issues affecting the student population that were of relevance to Senate. The EUSA Vice-President Education reported that the Students' Association had received feedback on several issues that were likely to be of interest to Senate.

It was reported that students had provided feedback on challenges associated with transitioning to university, and with adapting to different ways of learning. It was explained that, in several cases, students had fed back that they had not received sufficient

information on how to approach their assessments, and that they were unsure what was expected of them.

Student feedback to EUSA had also indicated that relatively few lectures were being recorded, and the EUSA Vice-President Education commented that there were many valid reasons why students could not attend lectures and would therefore benefit from being able to engage asynchronously. Feedback had also been received on timetabling, and the volume of contact time available to students.

The EUSA Vice-President Education acknowledged that feedback had also been received from students on topics including: housing, travel, inclusivity, student voice, and food provision around campus. Recurrent feedback indicated that students often found it challenging to locate and access various University services.

There was a brief discussion on how the feedback raised would be acted upon to improve the student experience. It was suggested that consideration of the student experience could be enhanced by having student feedback considered more prominently in university papers and committee decisions. It was also suggested that the mechanisms for escalating issues affecting the student experience from school, to college, to university could be improved. Separately, the EUSA Vice-President Education commented that there were effective communication channels between the EUSA sabbatical officers, and the University's senior leadership team.

4 Action Log

Senate noted the status of actions as detailed within the Action Log (S 24/25 2F).

5 Finance, HR and Research Improvement Programme

Senate received the update on the Finance, HR and Research Improvement Programme (S 24/25 2G). Members were invited to submit questions and comments for response from the paper authors Professor Dave Robertson, Programme Sponsor; and Gillian Richardson, Director of Strategic Change (Interim).

Senate members contributing to the discussion recognised the value to Senate provided by the paper, and by the resources accessible through links contained within the paper. However, it was observed that the update and linked resources did not provide clear timelines for the resolution of ongoing issues affecting the student and staff experience; and it was commented that further information could have been provided on the specifically academic costs associated with the ongoing issues. It was requested that, for future updates, additional focus be placed on how academic concerns were being addressed.

The paper authors acknowledged the impact of the ongoing issues to the student and staff experience. It was explained that the improvement programme was tackling issues which had a deep impact on the University's core operations; and that it was important that the programme focused on the priority actions identified. The paper authors commented that it was important that the programme be able to consult with key stakeholders, and for the programme to provide assurance around transparency and decision making. Senate were advised that University staff could access progress updates on the [Finance, HR and Research Improvement Programme Information Hub](#).

The timescale for provision of budgetary reports was queried, and it was commented that it was important for researchers and project managers to have current financial information. It was observed that staff were currently required to use manual workarounds to receive

necessary information. The paper authors acknowledged the importance of accurate financial data for decision-making and management of grant funding, and commented briefly on work undertaken and work planned to address issues associated with reporting. It was explained that further consultation was required in order to define user requirements and that, in time, it was anticipated that associated work would move the University away from manual reporting methods and improve organisational efficiency. Within the workstream, it was observed that research and facilities management reporting had been prioritised. Separately, the paper authors recognised the significant contribution made by the recently disbanded Research Stabilisation Group.

6 Timetabling and Course Selection

Senate received the update on work to improve timetabling and course selection for students and staff (S 24/25 2H). Members were invited to submit questions and comments for response from the project co-sponsors, Lucy Evans, Deputy Secretary Students; and Professor Iain Gordon, Vice Principal, Head of the College of Sciences and Engineering. Prior to Senate discussion, the Deputy Secretary Students commented that several fruitful discussions on timetabling and course selection had been held with colleagues in schools and colleges across the University's, whom she thanked for their contributions.

Several Senate members contributing to the discussion gave thanks for the information provided, and acknowledged that positive progress was being made. It was observed that timetabling affected both the student and staff experience, and members provided examples for context. From the student perspective, it was reported that delayed provision of teaching and exam timetables adversely affected students' ability to plan for travel, and to plan around family and work commitments. It was observed that travel arrangements were often more expensive the later they were made, and that earlier provision of timetables would likely support students' finances.

From the staff perspective, an example was given whereby a lack of clarity on room allocation for a large class had created uncertainty on how to plan teaching activity. In another case, a member of staff had been required to take a prolonged period of annual leave in December because they didn't know when they would be teaching in semester two. Separately, it was commented that student-facing professional services staff would benefit from receiving information which clearly articulated changes to systems and student-facing activities.

Senate discussed briefly the existing systems for course selection, which a member commented had the potential to cause students and staff unnecessary duplication of effort and a poor user experience. It was also queried whether there were plans to allow self-enrolment on courses, and how the University would ensure that students made fully informed choices if so. The project co-sponsors acknowledged existing dissatisfaction with the course enrolment processes, and explained that it was intended to improve course enrolment processes in parallel with work on timetabling.

The timescale for implementation was queried, and it was noted that a period of detailed planning and analysis would occur from January 2025 to the end of the 2024/5 academic year. The project co-sponsors advised Senate that changes were due to be implemented in full prior to September 2027, and that incremental improvements would be implemented sooner wherever possible. It was reported that consideration had been given to the implementation timescale and, while a shorter implementation timescale was desirable, it was considered important allow sufficient time to consult with key stakeholders and to resolve complex issues.

7 Curriculum Transformation update - Edinburgh Student Vision

Senate received a paper which detailed the process used to develop, consult on, test and refine the Edinburgh Student Vision (S 24/25 21). Members were invited to submit questions and comments for response from the paper authors Professor Colm Harmon, Vice Principal Students; and Dr Jon Turner, Curriculum Transformation Programme Lead. Following discussion, Senate approved the Edinburgh Student Vision for use as a key reference point for the Curriculum Transformation Programme and for learning & teaching more broadly.

In introducing the paper, the paper authors explained that Senate had last considered the Edinburgh Student Vision at its meeting of February 2024. In the period since, market sensitivity testing had been conducted with applicants and current students, and the language used within the Edinburgh Student Vision had been tested and refined. Several Senate members contributed to the discussion.

It was queried whether the final component in the design of programmes, to 'build understanding and engagement with global challenges', would be problematic for staff within 'pure' academic disciplines. In response, Dr Turner commented that consideration was being given to how the University can use both the core disciplinary elements of degree programmes and the elective space for students. He further commented that there was a desire to provide students with additional opportunities to engage with global challenges through the introduction of challenge courses and cross-university experiential learning courses as electives. Another member commented that they considered it important to recognise that each element of the Edinburgh Student Vision could also be achieved within a discipline, and cautioned against the perception that cross-disciplinary, elective courses, were the only route to meet the Edinburgh Student Vision.

A member commented that they were pleased to see reference within the student attributes to being inclusive and open to diverse perspectives, but were disappointed that there was no reference within programme attributes to academic freedom or the skills and dispositions which underpin academic freedom. The 'ability to disagree well' was given as an example.

Usage of the term "highly employable" was queried. It was explained that, while consultation with staff had indicated a preference for a term that was broader than 'employability', market sensitivity testing had highlighted employability as being of significant importance to students and applicants.

A member asked how minor edits for syntax and clarity should be made, and members were advised that these should be sent to Dr Jon Turner and would be addressed before the wording was finalised.

Noting reference within the paper to consultation, a member commented that they would have not been aware of work on the Edinburgh Student Vision if they hadn't been a member of Senate. It was suggested that additional communication with the wider University Community would have been beneficial. Two Senate members commented that they considered Senate to have been well engaged throughout the process. In response, the paper authors commented that work on the Edinburgh Student Vision had been ongoing for a long time, and that broad consultation early in the development process had transitioned into more targeted engagement recently. Separately, a member commented that they would have appreciated further information on how the Edinburgh Student Vision had developed over time. In response, Senate were advised that a document was due to be published on the Curriculum Transformation Programme Hub SharePoint site which would include detailed annotations of the changes made.

A member invited the paper authors to comment on their expectations with regards to implementation; and separately commented that they had found existing resources to be helpful in defining specialist professional programs alongside the University's vision. The paper authors commented that they viewed the Edinburgh Student Vision as aspirational and ambitious; that consideration was being given as to how the Vision could be integrated into relevant documentation and approvals processes, and that additional resources and support were being developed. Reference was also made to the Skills for Success Framework and the Curriculum Framework. Separately, it was recognised that the design components of the Edinburgh Student Vision would already be embedded within much of the University's curriculum, and that staff would be able to expand on what existed already.

In response to an invitation to comment from the Convener, the EUSA VP Education commented that the Students Association' were happy with the Edinburgh Student Vision as drafted and were looked forward to receiving associated information on implementation.

8 Update on the Learning and Teaching Strategy

Senate received the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030, and associated implementation plan, as had been presented to the 7 November 2024 meeting of the Senate Education Committee (paper S 24/25 2P). An extract from the draft minutes of the November 2024 Senate Education Committee meeting was also provided for information, and which detailed amendments to be actioned which had arisen from that meeting.

Members were invited to submit questions and comments for response from Professor Colm Harmon, Vice Principal Students; and Professor Tina Harrison, Deputy Vice-Principal Students (Enhancement). Prior to discussion, Senate received information on the consultation process associated with the Learning and Teaching Strategy, which had included targeted consultation with key stakeholders in schools and colleges; consideration at relevant meetings, and via a SharePoint site open to all staff. There had also been liaison with colleagues developing the Edinburgh Student Vision.

Members were also updated on recent consideration by the Senate Education Committee, where the fundamental areas covered within the Strategy had been met with broad approval with some minor amendments suggested. Senate members were invited to consider and comment on the Strategy prior to its return to the Senate Education Committee for final consideration and approval.

A member commented on linkages between university strategies and resourcing, and it was queried whether any investment would be made in support of the Learning and Teaching Strategy. It was explained that no additional investment had been approved for the implementation of the Strategy, and that the Strategy was intended to act as a framework to guide activities and processes that were resourced through existing university structures.

It was queried what key performance indicators would be used to monitor and evaluate the success of the Strategy. In response, it was commented that the Senate Education Committee had given initial consideration to the associated implementation plan, and it was commented that the Learning and Teaching Strategy had been intended as a framework to support existing activity. Senate was informed that, from consultation with heads of school, a preference had been stated for measurement through existing university key performance indicators, and that additional indicators were not desirable. Members were informed that the Senate Education Committee, in dialogue with Senate, would give ongoing consideration of the implementation plan and required new key performance indicators.

9 Senate External Review Task and Finish Group - Senate Business Committee Proposal

Senate received the proposal to form a Senate Business Committee, which had been developed by the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group in response to AdvanceHE's 2023 review of Senate effectiveness (paper S 24/25 2J).

Members were invited to submit questions and comments for response from the Convener of the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group, Professor Richard Kenway. Prior to discussion, the Convener of the Task and Finish Group thanked Senate members for contributing to the consultation exercise held, and encouraged members to engage with forthcoming consultation requests. Separately, it was commented that there were several interconnected issues highlighted within the Advance HE External Review report and that it would be helpful to implement changes approved by Senate as rapidly as possible to support their timely monitoring and evaluation.

A member commented on the proportion of student members on Senate, and the differing terms of office between student and staff Senate members. It was suggested that, following the initial trial period, changes be made to the composition of the Senate Business Committee to allow new staff and student members to be elected each year. It was suggested that elections for staff representatives be staggered over a two-year period; and that the maximum term of office for an elected member of staff be set at two years. The Convener of the Task and Finish Group, welcomed the suggestions, and commented that they could be considered as part of the planned review of the trial period. Separately, it was observed that the elected student representative would be the only member of the Committee who was not being paid for their time. As a point of equality and equity, it was requested that elected student representatives receive payment for their role on the Committee. It was further commented that doing so would help to ensure students from more diverse backgrounds were able to participate. The Convener and Academic Registrar acknowledged that the request, and advised that there were ongoing discussions with HR that were of relevance.

It was queried whether the elected members of the Senate Business Committee would be expected to consult with, and report back to, their constituency. If so, there would likely be significant workload implications for the members. It was further commented that the role of equitably representing large constituencies, which may have discordant views, would likely be challenging. The Convener of the Task and Finish Group acknowledged the concern, and explained that the Group had sought to ensure that all of the different constituencies of Senate were represented on the Senate Business Committee. Professor Kim Graham, Provost and Convener of the proposed Senate Business Committee, also acknowledged the concern and commented that further consideration would be given once the Committee had been formed.

It was noted that there were only four professional services members on Senate, and it was suggested that the elected professional services vacancy be shared to enable staff to alternate during periods of peak workload.

The following amendment to the paper was accepted without requiring a vote. As a point of clarification, the following text replaced point 5 of the terms of reference.

"Support the development of papers that can effectively serve Senate's governance remit, including inviting contributions from relevant university committees or individuals where applicable. The Committee may suggest that aspects of papers be pursued outwith Senate or further developed for a future meeting."

Without requiring a vote, Senate approved the proposal to form a Senate Business Committee.

Noting the proposed implementation plan, the Convener of the Senate Business Committee commented that there may be insufficient time before the February 2025 meeting of Senate for the Senate Business Committee to be constituted and put into operation. There was a brief discussion on whether the Senate Business Committee could have a role in considering issues associated with the minutes of Senate meetings.

Action: Senate Clerk to implement the Senate Business Committee.

10 Generative AI: Teaching, Learning, Sustainability, and Data Security

Senate received a paper which sought to provide clarity and oversight of policy and guidance on the use of generative AI, as well as the implications for teaching, learning, sustainability, and data security (paper S 24/25 2K).

The paper was introduced by two of the paper authors, Dr Charlotte Desvages and Professor Rachel Muers, who explained that the paper had been prompted by concerns around the use of generative AI by students; and by how the usage of generative AI was being discussed and managed by the University. Particular reference was made to the 'Guidance for working with Generative AI in your studies' document which had been published in October 2024. The paper authors elaborated on the concerns raised within the paper as follows.

Firstly, it was explained that concerns had been raised regarding how the use of generative AI could affect teaching and learning, and also of the suitability of a one-size-fits all approach. Accordingly, the paper authors sought for associated university policy or guidance to be grounded in evidence from pedagogical research and for it to respect pedagogical differences across different disciplines.

Secondly, there were environmental concerns associated with the usage of generative AI. It was observed that usage of generative AI could adversely affect the University's core commitments around sustainability and net zero; and that such concerns could be compounded were usage of AI to be incentivised by the University. It was separately commented that the 'Guidance for working with Generative AI in your studies' did not satisfactorily cover the University's sustainability commitments, and that further information was required to help students think critically on the use of generative AI in the context of its environmental impacts.

Thirdly, there were overarching concerns around the governance arrangements associated with consideration of generative AI. The paper authors argued that Senate was the appropriate governing body for consideration of matters relating to generative AI, and that Senate members could provide meaningful support for the development of generative AI policy and guidance.

The Convener invited Senate members to comment on the paper, and explained that Gavin McLachlan, Vice-Principal and Chief Information Officer, and Librarian; and Professor Michael Rovatsos, Convener of the AI Adoption Task Force, were present and could comment where required.

Separate from consideration by the AI Adoption Task Force, Professor Mary Brennan, Dean of Education in the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, began Senate discussion by reporting that there had also been extensive consideration on the usage of generative AI by staff within and between the University's colleges, and with colleagues at other higher education institutions. It was commented that staff networks and workshops were being arranged to support discussion on the opportunities and threats arising from generative AI, how generative AI could be effectively used within an academic setting, and what concerns staff had regarding its usage. It was also reported that initial discussions had highlighted that students now had a strong lived experience of using generative AI, and that generative AI was being used frequently at both the secondary and tertiary levels of education.

Senate members discussed the potential benefits to students from the use of generative AI, and several members commented that they expected the majority of students were now using generative AI to supplement their studies. It was suggested that generative AI could be used by students to supplement learning, to scaffold assessments, and to develop skills that would support their employability. It was commented that generative AI was not inherently bad, and that students had sought guidance on how to use it appropriately. It was further commented that students would welcome the opportunity to be consulted as part of the development of AI related policy and guidance. A member commented that they were concerned about the potential for university communications to students to support a narrative that increased use of AI was inevitable, and suggested that the commercial interests of AI providers were not necessarily aligned with those of students and staff.

The financial and environmental cost of the University's provision of ELM (Edinburgh (access to) Language Models) to all staff and students was queried; and it was asked if such costs could be expected to grow as usage increased and if the University could measure such increases. The Vice-Principal and Chief Information Officer, and Librarian acknowledged that the University incurred financial costs from the usage of ELM, and observed that alternative AI platforms placed financial costs on users. It was explained that the universal provision of ELM to students was intended to ensure equitable access to generative AI, and that it would help to mitigate against associated forms of digital poverty.

The Vice-Principal and Chief Information Officer, and Librarian explained that the University's Sustainable IT Group considered the sustainability and environmental impacts of all of the University's IT infrastructure, including that associated with provision of ELM. It was further explained that ELM was operated from existing University hardware, and that work was underway to introduce an alternative open-source large language model under ELM that would be hosted within the University. This was described as low-power AI, and was anticipated to significantly reduce the environmental impact arising from the University's usage of generative AI, and which would have a significantly lower environmental cost than alternative internet-based large language models.

Members were informed that data protection considerations had also informed the provision of ELM. It was explained that the University had a zero data retention contract with its provider, and that this meant that none of the data input into ELM was used to train commercially available AI models. All individual inputs onto ELM were held only in that instance, and were housed on the University's secure servers. Accordingly, students and staff were encouraged to use ELM instead of commercially available AI tools.

Professor Michael Rovatsos, Convener of the AI Adoption Task Force, explained that the Task Force had evolved from a short life working group that had initially been asked to produce recommendations for the Senior Leadership Team on the opportunities and challenges associated with generative AI. It was clarified that the Task Force was not part of the University's governance structure, and was primarily concerned with building the University's capacity to effectively engage with generative AI. In reference to the 'Guidance for working with Generative AI in your studies' document, it was explained that the associated guidance had been reviewed by the AI Adoption Task Force and had been informed by consultation facilitated by the Deputy Vice-Principal Students (Enhancement). It was further explained that the guidance had been developed in a fast moving and ambiguous situation.

The Deputy Vice-Principal Students (Enhancement) commented that the guidance document would continue to evolve, that further review activity was planned for early 2025, and that there would be opportunities for students and staff to engage with the review. It was added that information on the types of questions that students would like to be addressed by university guidance would be particularly helpful for the review. It was briefly explained that university guidance had initially sought to respond to concerns around the misuse of generative AI, and that the focus had shifted to how generative AI could be used appropriately. It was also explained that academic staff were able to communicate to students where the use of generative AI would not be appropriate in learning, teaching and assessment. Separately, the Deputy Vice-Principal Students (Enhancement) commented that recent feedback from an employer panel had indicated that employers were asking for universities to help students develop the ability to use AI responsibly and effectively.

The Convener of the AI Adoption Task Force noted the request within the paper for information on evidence used by the AI Adoption Task Force, and clarified that the Task Force didn't hold pedagogical evidence for decision making and that extensive research would be required to obtain such evidence. There was a brief discussion on whether, in the absence of evidence, it was appropriate to issue university-level guidance that could affect students' learning outcomes. It was explained that students had sought guidance on how to use generative AI appropriately, and that the development and issuance of such guidance was reflective of the reality that students were already using generative AI. A Senate member commented that AI related research was being conducted across the University and elsewhere, and that such research could be used to inform future work. Another member commented that they had found the guidance to be helpful; and they spoke briefly on the use of 'truth boxes' which allowed students, where applicable, to explain how they had used generative AI. Separately, a member commented that the guidance had been interpreted as university policy, and added that clarification on the ability of schools and colleges to develop generative AI related policies would be appreciated.

The Convener of the AI Adoption Task Force concluded the discussion by offering a brief reflection on the discussion. It was commented that differing viewpoints on the appropriate use of generative AI could make decision making controversial; that the University community would appreciate clarity on the decision-making pathways used to consider issues associated with generative AI; and that work around the curriculum and the Edinburgh Student Vision could provide useful opportunities to discuss what students should learn about generative AI and on how they should be assessed.

Members were advised that a response paper from the AI Adoption Task Force would be presented to the February 2025 meeting of Senate.

Action: AI Adoption Task Force to respond to Senate's request for information.

11 Budget Resilience, Teaching, and Research

Senate received a paper which sought the formation of a Senate 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 these challenges (paper S 24/25 2L).

Members were invited to submit questions and comments for response from the paper authors Dr Itamar Kastner, Dr Stuart Gilfillan, Professor David Ingram, and Professor Diana Paton. In introducing the paper, it was commented that the formation of the working group would provide a mechanism for Senate to receive information on how financial constraints were affecting the University.

A member reflected on implications associated with the quantity and quality of teaching provided to students, and reflected that a reduction in quantity would not necessarily lead to a reduction in quality. Separately, there was a brief discussion on balancing the level of investment committed to new initiatives against the University's financial circumstances.

A member queried whether the financial situation could lead to a cap being applied to academic promotions, and suggested that the working group could look at the impact of the financial situation on academic promotions. The Convener informed Senate of discussions relevant to the suggestion. It was reported that consideration had been given to capping or freezing academic promotions, or changing the timescale for promotion rounds, and that such options had been discounted on the grounds that they would be likely to disincentivise a key population that the University sought to incentivise.

A member reflected on whether, if the University's financial situation deteriorated, the perceived potential for compulsory redundancies would dissuade staff with disabilities, illness or caring commitments from seeking promotion or from disclosing such information to the University. The member suggested that the Working Group could consider such issues. The Convener acknowledged the concerns raised, and commented that he would support such consideration by the Working Group.

It was suggested that the Working Group could support the review of the Student Support Model, and assess the level of resourcing and the associated implications for the experience of students and professional services staff.

Without requiring a vote, Senate approved the proposal to form a working group.

The paper authors thanked Senate for approving the proposal to form the working group, and explained that the next steps would include issuing a call to the Senate membership for volunteers to join the group. A request was made for a member of the senior leadership team to volunteer to join the working group.

Action: Authors of paper S 24/25 2L to implement the Senate working group on Budget Resilience, Teaching, and Research.

Items for information

12 Senate Standing Committees

12.1 Standing Committee Remits - Interim Update

Senate noted the interim update on progress with the AdvanceHE External Effectiveness Review of Senate recommendation relating to Senate Standing Committee remits (paper S 24/25 2M).

12.2 Senate Standing Committees – upcoming business

Senate noted the main points of activity and business that the Senate Standing Committees would consider between December 2024 and February 2025 (paper S 24/25 2N).

12.3 Outcome of elections to Senate Standing Committees

Senate noted the outcome of the October 2024 election process to elect Senate-elected members to the Senate Education Committee and to the Senate Quality Assurance Committee (paper S 24/25 2O).

13 Date of next meeting: 5 February 2025



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Electronic Senate

8 to 22 January 2025

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 3A)

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

- Professor Brendan Corcoran, Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies
- Professor Jean Manson, Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies

Senate noted the special minutes provided for each professor.

Five members commented on this item.

Three members communicated their approval, and one member communicated that they had noted the paper.

One member commented that they appreciated the special minutes providing information on how the professors would remain active in academic work. 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 moved to ordinary Senate meetings. They observed that doing so should not affect meeting time.

2 Court Resolutions (e-S24/25 3B)

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

- No. 1/2025: Alteration of the title of Personal Chair of Politics
- No. 2/2025: Foundation of a Personal Chair of Neuroinflammatory Medicine

Six members commented on this item.

One member communicated their approval, and three members communicated that they had noted the paper.

Two members commented on an error identified within paragraph five of the paper, resource implications. In response a correction was made to paragraph five, and a revised version of the paper was issued.

One member sought further information on the rationale for altering the title of the Personal Chair of Politics.

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

3 Report from the Knowledge Strategy Committee (e-S24/25 3C)

Senate noted the report from the Knowledge Strategy Committee (KSC) as detailed within the paper, and which related to the Committee's meeting of 29 October 2024.

Six members of Senate commented on this item. Four members communicated that they had noted the paper.

One member commented on item one, Artificial Intelligence Adoption Task Force Update. The member commented that they were concerned that guidance provided on generative AI did not adequately consider variation in teaching across the University, and the potential for the guidance to undermine colleagues' teaching. Separately, the member commented that they appreciated reference within the report on the importance of governance for generative AI related policies and strategies; and added that Senate had a key role in providing such governance.

One member commented on item three, Chief Information Officer Update. The member queried whether more information could be provided to Senate on the impact of consolidation in the technology sector, and on the impact of long-term costs to the budget of the Information Services Group.

Two members commented on item four, Knowledge Strategy Committee Governance Update, which detailed initial consideration of a proposal for changes to the committee structure for Knowledge Strategy Committee and its three thematic committees: IT Committee, Library Committee and the University Collections Advisory Committee (UCAC). It was proposed that:

- The Knowledge Strategy Committee be disbanded.
- The Library Committee and the University Collections Advisory Committee be merged, and for the resulting committee to replace KSC as the joint committee of Court and Senate.
- The IT Committee to become a management/operational committee, reporting into the University Executive, but with digital estate projects with a value above £2m progressing to the Estates Committee.

One member commented that full consultation with Senate on the changes was required. They also sought clarification on which academic-related items of IT Committee business should be reported to, or approved by, Senate.

A member commented that proposals for modifying Senate standing committees should be undertaken in coordination with ongoing work on reviewing the remits and terms of reference of Senate's standing committees. The member commented that Senate did not appear to have much ownership or evidence of agency regarding the Knowledge Strategy Committee, and that the proposal represented an opportunity to such ownership and agency to be created.

Senate members' comments have been shared with the paper author, and will be reported to the Knowledge Strategy Committee meeting of 30 January 2025.

4 Report from the Central Academic Promotions Committee (e-S 24/25 3D)

Senate noted the report of the Central Academic Promotions Committee.

Senate

5 February 2025

Senate Action Log

Meeting date	Paper	Paper status	Action	Responsible	Target date	Action status	Update
11-12-24	S 24/25 2A S 24/25 2B S 24/25 2C	OPEN	Senate Clerk to facilitate out-of-meeting consideration of proposed corrections to the minutes of the May, June, and October 2024 Senate meetings.	Senate Clerk	05-02-25	Complete.	A quorate out-of-meeting process has been conducted. The minutes presented to the February 2025 meeting have been revised in line with the outcome of this process.
11-12-24	S 24/25 2J	OPEN	Senate Clerk to implement the Senate Business Committee.	Senate Clerk	20-05-25	Ongoing.	Nominations processes have been conducted for vacancies for elected student and elected staff members. The outcome of these processes will be communicated separately. Meeting times have been identified for the inaugural meeting (4 March), and for the operational meeting to be held in advance of the May 2025 Senate meeting (29 April).

Meeting date	Paper	Paper status	Action	Responsible	Target date	Action status	Update
11-12-24	S 24/25 2K	OPEN	AI Adoption Task Force to respond to Senate's request for information request.	AI Adoption Task Force	05-02-25	Complete.	Agenda item six, and paper S 24/25 3I refer.
11-12-24	S 24/25 2L	OPEN	Paper authors to implement the Senate Working Group on Budget Resilience, Teaching, and Research.	Authors of paper S 24/25 2L	05-02-25		Agenda item nine refers. Senate to receive a verbal update.

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

Senate**5 February 2025****Senate & Senate Standing Committee Elections 2025-26****Description of paper**

1. This paper details proposed arrangements for the operation of the 2025 elections for academic staff to Senate; and elections of Senate-elected academic members to the Senate Standing Committees.

Action requested / recommendation

2. Senate is asked to approve the items below for the elections to Senate and the Senate Standing Committees:
 - The dates for opening the call for nominations and for submission of nominations.
 - The periods for voting.
 - The appointment of the Returning Officer and Deputy Returning Officer.
 - A standardised term of office of three years (see paragraphs 13-19 for further information).

Background and context

3. Annual elections are held to elect academic staff members to Senate. These elections are conducted under the [Senate Election Regulations](#). Under University Ordinance 212 (Composition of the Senatus Academicus), academic staff elect from their own number 200 members of the Senate.
4. As per paragraph 23 of the Senate Election Regulations, the call for nominations for each election will be made after 31 January each year. The nomination deadlines, election dates, and the appointment of the Returning Officer and Deputy Returning Officer will be formally confirmed by Senate at its first meeting following this date. This meeting is scheduled to take place on 5 February 2025.
5. The election of student members of Senate is managed by the Edinburgh University Students' Association.
6. There are currently no vacancies for Elected College Professional Services Staff.
7. Ex officio members of Senate are those members appointed because they have a role or position which includes membership of Senate. If an individual leaves this role or position then they cease to be members of Senate and the next individual to hold the role or position will take up the membership, i.e., the membership is linked to a role or position held and not to a specific individual.

8. The number of elected academic staff positions open for election in 2025 is as below.

Position	Total open for election 2025	Total positions
CAHSS Academic Staff (non-professorial)	11	34
CAHSS Academic Staff (professorial)	16	34
CMVM Academic Staff (non-professorial)	13	33
CMVM Academic Staff (professorial)	22	33
CSE Academic Staff (non-professorial)	14	33
CSE Academic Staff (professorial)	17	33
Total	93	200

Discussion

2025 Senate Academic Staff Elections

9. The [Senatus Academicus \(Senate\) Election Regulations](#) govern the election of academic staff to the Senate.
10. The proposed dates for the 2025 Senate Academic Staff Elections are as follows:

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

11. Potential conflicts and mitigating factors for the proposed dates were considered within paragraph 11 of [e-Senate paper e-S 24/25 2B](#). Senate members comments associated with this paper are detailed in the consultation section below.
12. Lisa Dawson, Academic Registrar is nominated as the Returning Officer of the Senate Academic Staff Elections. Fraser Rudge, Committees and Governance Manager, is nominated as the Deputy Returning Officer. Senate is invited to approve these nominations and appoint these candidates under paragraph 25 of the [Senate Election Regulations](#).

2025 Senate Academic Staff Elections – Terms of Office

13. The 2019 Senate election procedures, which supported the implementation of the revised composition of Senate in 2020, included special provision for members to be randomly allocated to one, two or three year terms. Senate took this approach to manage a transitional period from the previous to the current model of Senate. The intent of this approach was to enable the election of one third of the elected membership per year going forward. Senate is now being asked to approve a 3-year term of office as standard.
14. The process for allocating term lengths was considered at the Senate meeting of 8 February 2023 ([paper S22/23 3C](#) refers), and Senate approved by majority vote the process set out in appendix one.

15. The transitional arrangements appear to have provided balance to the number of vacancies arising within the Academic Staff (non-professorial) membership categories. However, the Academic Staff (professorial) membership categories have a higher number of vacancies being carried over, and therefore have more vacancies to fill in 2025.

16. The table below provides an indicative breakdown of when vacancies will arise, but does not account for member resignations during a period of office.

Position	Vacancies carried over from 2024	Vacancies arising in 2025	Vacancies arising in 2026	Vacancies arising in 2027
CAHSS Academic Staff (non-professorial)	1	10	11	12
CAHSS Academic Staff (professorial)	16	0	11	7
CMVM Academic Staff (non-professorial)	1	12	9	11
CMVM Academic Staff (professorial)	20	2	5	6
CSE Academic Staff (non-professorial)	4	10	9	10
CSE Academic Staff (professorial)	7	10	10	6
Total	49	44	55	52

17. Potential benefits from adopting a three-year standardised term of office include:

- providing nominees with certainty on the term of office and a longer period to support continuity and the development of knowledge and experience;
- avoiding the perception that a nominee has received a lesser term of office;
- reducing the likelihood that an election will be required and, by extension, potentially avoiding election related resource implications; and
- bringing the University in line with sector practice.

With a standardised term, elections would only be required where the number of nominees exceeded the number of vacancies (see resource implications section below and appendix one).

18. Conversely, if every vacancy within the Academic Staff (professorial) membership categories were to be filled by members with a three-year term then this could distort the number of positions becoming available for election in later years. There is an argument that under this scenario there would be limited opportunity for academic staff to stand for election to Senate in two consecutive years, and that large changes in membership in subsequent years could lead to a deficit in continuing knowledge and experience.
19. The [Senatus Academicus \(Senate\) Election Regulations](#), paragraph 10, states that there is *“no cap on the number of terms of office for which academic staff members may stand; academic staff members will be eligible for re-election for the same term of office provided that they demit office on ceasing to hold a contract of employment with the University.”*

2025 Senate Standing Committee Elections

20. Three places on each of the three Senate Standing Committees are allocated to elected members of Senate. The three elected member positions are nominally assigned to each College.
21. Elected Senate members are nominally assigned to each College, however elected Senate members are not expected to act on behalf of the College to which they nominally represent. Each Standing Committee also has College representation with College representatives responsible for representing the needs and wishes of the Schools and Deaneries within their College and their College leadership.
22. The process for electing academic staff to the Senate standing committees is as detailed in appendix two. Senate approved these election arrangements for use in 2023/24 and 2024/25. In February 2024 (paper S 23/24 2G), it was suggested that the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group review the election arrangements. As such a review has not occurred, the previously approved arrangements will be used to conduct the 2025/26 Senate Standing Committee Elections.
23. The proposed dates for the 2025 Senate Standing Committee Elections are as follow:

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

24. To increase the number of nominations received in 2025, over those received in 2024, it is proposed that the nominations process be brought forward and be extended from two to three weeks. It is also proposed that the timescale for online voting be extended from one to two weeks.

Resource implications

25. Resource implications for managing the administrative tasks required for the elections are primarily met by Academic Quality and Standards.
26. The University's Information Services Group has outsourced the running of elections to Civica Electoral Services and the budget required for this will be met by ISG. The cost per Senate election to the University is likely to be in the range of £1500-1800. Further information is available from the [Information Services - election availability and entitlement website](#).

Risk management

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

Equality & diversity

28. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been conducted and is available on the [Equality and Diversity webpages](#). This assessment assumes a regular rotation/refreshment of members and the filling of most elected vacancies.
29. Senate Election advertising materials highlight the University's commitment to improving the diversity of key University committees, and encourage all academic staff to consider standing. The Senate elections will be advertised widely through multiple channels.

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

30. Senate and Senate Standing Committee elections will be managed by staff within Registry Services.
31. Information on the Senate Elections is available on the [Senate webpages](#), and the Senate Members Portal.
32. Following approval by Senate, the opening of nominations for candidates to stand for election to Senate will be announced through multiple channels including the Senate website, all-staff email, and social media.
33. Following approval by Senate the opening of nominations for candidates to stand for election to Senate Standing Committees will be announced via email to the elected staff members of Senate.
34. Senate members are encouraged to make themselves available if colleagues contact them wishing to discuss standing for Senate.

Consultation

35. The provisional Senate election dates for the 2025 elections were presented to the 13-27 November 2024 e-Senate meeting, and Senate members were invited to comment. Three members commented on the e-Senate paper.
36. 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. The member's comment on workload is acknowledged. The Academic Registrar and the Director HR Partnering - Professional Services are progressing a related action and will prepare a report for consideration by the Provost.

37. 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. The member's observation on nominations, and associated recommendation, have been noted. Including the provision to reopen the nominations process introduces an element of avoidable uncertainty, and is likely to increase the administrative cost of supporting the election process. As an alternative, the nominations form will be revised so that nominees can indicate that they would opt out of standing in an election were sufficient nominations to be received for their membership category.

38. One member simply communicated their approval.

Authors

Lisa Dawson, Academic Registrar
Fraser Rudge, Senate Clerk

Presenter

Lisa Dawson, Academic Registrar

January 2025

Freedom of Information – Open

Appendix one:

In the event there are more than 11 nominees in a cohort with more than 11 vacancies*, a method of Staged-WIGM is utilised to conduct the election.

An election would take place even if there are enough vacancies for everyone, to allow the terms of office to be determined.

Voter preferences determine the terms of office each candidate receives, filling all available positions and then continuing to use voter preferences to allocate longer terms among these candidates.

*The CAHSS Academic Staff (non-professorial) membership category is the only category that does not have more than 11 vacancies.

Appendix two: *Senate Standing Committee: Election arrangements*

1. Three places on each of the three Senate Standing Committees are allocated to elected members of Senate. The three elected member positions are nominally assigned to each College.
2. 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 one of the three Senate Standing Committees. Nominees cannot seek membership of more than one Committee.
3. Where the Senate term of a current member in one of these categories is due to end in July 2025, they can nominate themselves for membership of one of the Committees for 2025-26 as long as they have stood for re-election to Senate on the understanding that they would only be able to take up a place on the Committee if they secure another term on Senate commencing in August 2025.
4. In the event that the number of eligible nominees for a Committee does not exceed the three available places each nominee will be assigned to the membership of the Committee.
5. If vacancies remain following each College being assigned a position, any remaining positions will be allocated to interested nominees.
6. In the event that the number of eligible nominations for a Committee exceeds the three available places, an election will determine which nominees are assigned to the membership of the Committee.
7. Current elected academic staff members of Senate plus Senate Assessors and the Academic Staff Member of Court would be eligible to vote in this election (if an election is required).
8. If required, the election would be conducted by means of the Single Transferrable Vote, Weighted Inclusive Gregory Method (STV WIGM). For each Committee, the three candidates with the greatest share of the vote would automatically be elected to the relevant Committee. In the event of a tie, the successful candidate or candidates would

be determined by the drawing of lots. Voting would be conducted online, and the counting of votes would be conducted using an electronic counting system.

9. For members assigned to a Committee, the term of office will run from 1 August 2025 until the end of 2025-26 (31 July 2026), with scope to subsequently seek election to the relevant Committee (in line with the arrangements agreed by Senate) for up to two further sessions.
10. Should one or more of the three places on a Committee remain unfilled following the conclusion of these nomination and (if required) election processes, the vacant place(s) would be offered to member(s) who had unsuccessfully nominated themselves for a place on a different Committee for 2025-26. Were there more members than places, the place(s) would be distributed to the member(s) who had received the most votes for the Committee that they had stood for (if an election had been held) or by drawing lots (if an election had not been held).
11. Should the members cease to be members of Senate prior to or during 2025-26, their membership of the relevant Committee will cease with immediate effect.
12. Senate is asked to approve the appointment of a Returning Officer and Deputy Returning Officer for the Senate Standing Committee election. Lisa Dawson, Academic Registrar is nominated as the Returning Officer. Fraser Rudge, Committees and Governance Manager, is nominated as the Deputy Returning Officer.
13. For information, a table of the positions open for election in 2025 is provided below.

Position	Total positions
Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee	Three: Each position is nominally assigned to a College.
Senate Education Committee	Three: Each position is nominally assigned to a College.
Senate Quality Assurance Committee	Three: Each position is nominally assigned to a College.

Senate**5 February 2025****Report from the AI Adoption Task Force****Description of paper**

1. This paper responds to a request by Senate (paper S24252K refers) for the AI Adoption Task Force to provide information to Senate on the University's approach to the use of generative AI by students.

Action requested / recommendation

2. Senate is invited to discuss the information contained within this paper.

Background and context

3. At its 11 December meeting, Senate considered a member led paper (S24252K) which sought to provide Senate with greater clarity and oversight of the guidance for the use of generative AI, as well as the implications for teaching, learning, sustainability, and data security. Minute 10 of the 11 December 2024 minutes provides detail of initial consideration by Senate.

Discussion

4. Information provided in response to Senate's request is provided within appendix one.

Resource implications

5. There are no additional resource implications associated with providing the information requested by Senate. Consideration of this paper by Senate may prompt actions that would require separate consideration.

Risk management

6. There are no additional risk management implications associated with providing the information requested by Senate. Consideration of this paper by Senate may prompt actions that would require separate consideration.

Equality & diversity

7. There are no additional equality and diversity implications associated with providing the information requested by Senate. Consideration of this paper by Senate may prompt actions that would require separate consideration.

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

8. This paper does not propose any actions requiring communication, implementation and evaluation. Consideration of this paper by Senate may prompt actions that would require separate consideration.

Authors

Professor Michael Rovatsos, Convener of the AI Adoption Task Force.

Gavin McLachlan, Vice-Principal and Chief Information Officer

Professor Colm Harmon, Vice-Principal Students

January 2025

Freedom of Information – Open

Presenters

Professor Michael Rovatsos, Convener of the AI Adoption Task Force.

Appendix one

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:

1. What activities have been undertaken by the task force and by what principles they have been guided?

Since its creation in May 2024, the AI Adoption Task Force has engaged in a range of activities:

- It has initiated a number of experimental AI Adoption pilot projects on using [AI for teaching innovation](#), navigating University policies, conducting systematic literature reviews, and minuting meetings. Further pilots are being explored on using AI for providing better course selection advice, supporting admissions processes, and producing insights from estates and facilities data.
- It has convened conversations with a wider range of business units (Human Resources, Procurement, Student Experience Services, Internal Audit, Student Recruitment and Admissions, Communications and Marketing, Learning, Teaching and Web, Research Strategy Group, Estates, Sustainability and Social Responsibility, Edinburgh Innovations, Development and Alumni, Governance and Strategic Planning) as well as various Committees and individuals across the three Colleges to discuss AI adoption prospects and concerns.
- It has developed [training materials](#) that provide general introductions to AI and critically discuss the opportunities and challenges around its adoption in Higher Education, and is facilitating conversations between other units developing [training courses](#) on related topics (EDINA/Information Services Group, Institute of Academic Development, and The Bayes Centre).
- It has developed informal [AI Impact Assessment Guidance](#) that has since been trialled by several colleagues in different business units considering the introduction of AI features in software they use. This guidance does not yet constitute official policy, is not mandatory, and does not replace existing obligations for Data Protection Impact Assessments and Equality Impact Assessments.
- It has created an online communications “[AI Adoption Hub](#)” and associated Teams discussion channel to allow for wider engagement with all staff. This includes a facility for collecting the views of colleagues on AI via an online form, which is also used for gathering information about ongoing AI activities in different parts of the University and cataloguing them.
- It has contributed to updating student and staff guidance on the use of Generative AI in collaboration with the VP and CIO, VP Students, members of the Senate Feedback and Assessment Strategy Group, the Assistant Principal Education Futures, and the EUSA VP Education.
- It has been socialising its work through many presentations by convening an initial Community Event, presenting at IT Community Events and Lunchtime Seminars, the Student Experience Services Staff Town Hall, the Research Support Conference, the [IT Futures Conference](#) and the upcoming [Good Research Practice Week](#). It has also provided updates on its work to IT Committee, Knowledge Strategy Committee, and the General Council’s Business Committee.

The purpose of the Task Force is to act as a catalyst for capacity-building, debate, and experimentation around AI adoption across the University by supporting the implementation of a set of key recommendations produced by the previous Short-Life Working Group on AI and identified as a priority by the University’s Senior Leadership Team: (1) Safeguarding the integrity of assessment methods, (2) establishing governance around AI functionalities in third-party software, (3) regulating the use of University data by third-party AI tools, (4)

cataloguing existing internal AI adoption projects, (5) creating a central AI communications hub and community of practice, (6) piloting a small number of AI projects in specific areas, and (7) developing a long-term strategy for internal AI adoption.

As the list of activities above demonstrates, these have also addressed some of the other recommendations that were not prioritised by the Senior Leadership Team, typically in response to emerging demand for further support: (8) providing AI awareness training to managers, (9) establishing a risk register for AI-related risks to corporate functions, (9) appointing a Senior Responsible Officer for AI and resourcing support roles, (10) developing and implementing an AI Impact Assessment process, (11) conducting research to explore the impact of AI on University communities, (12) integrating basic AI awareness across our curriculum and professional training.

The work of the Task Force has been guided by ethical principles for algorithmic, data, and AI applications agreed by the University Executive in 2022, and it works closely with the University's AI and Data Ethics Advisory Board (AIDE).

2. How the task force was constituted and in what manner consultation has occurred across and beyond the University?

The Task Force is composed of volunteers from all three Colleges and several Professional Services Groups, includes a student representative, and its membership overlaps with that of the AI and Data Ethics Advisory Board. For continuity, most of its members were selected from the membership of the previous ad hoc Short-Life Working Group formed by the University's Senior Leadership Team in September 2023. The membership was convened by the AITF Lead and approved by the Senior Leadership Team. The group's formation and work have not involved formal consultation; as an agile and exploratory initiative that works across many different staff constituencies, it has strived to create an open forum for discussion and debate through the AI Adoption Hub community.

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?

The AITF has no formal governance role, delegated decision-making authority, or official status in the University's committee structure. It is an informal group tasked with advising and providing guidance of the implementation of the aforementioned recommendations and to convene conversations around AI adoption across the University to support capacity-building and knowledge sharing among colleagues.

It therefore has no formal relationship to other governance bodies of the University and interacts with them only when it seeks their input or is being asked to report to them. Any future formal relationship would only be appropriate if a formally constituted body responsible for AI adoption had a clear status and remit within the University's governance structure.

4. What are the main successes and challenges thus far, including on topics of academic misconduct?

The main success of the Task Force has been to bring issues around AI adoption to the attention of a wide range of staff and student constituencies, establish a lightweight mechanism for convening relevant conversations, and engage in dialogue with key stakeholders to explore challenges and opportunities in the process of developing pilot project ideas. We observe that, as a consequence of our activities, many more colleagues

are better connected to AI-related conversations at the University and can identify a conduit to pursue their own agendas around AI adoption further within the institution than a year ago.

One challenge has been that while there is a professed desire by many to discuss AI-related issues, there seems to be far less interest on exploring these issues through practical action and sustained deeper engagement. The very small number of colleagues contributing to the AI Adoption Hub is indicative of this, as is the reluctance or lack of action, so far, from many managers to take specific action. In the face of a considerable uncertainties around the potential impacts of AI adoption, we observe a mix of enthusiastic and critical attitudes among colleagues, which are often expressed even by the same individuals.

5. What future activities are expected in the coming year?

The primary focus of the work of the Task Force will be the delivery of pilot projects until the end of the 2024/25 academic year as a mechanism to develop a long-term AI Adoption Strategy based on what we learn from these experiments.

There is currently no plan (or funding) to continue the development of these pilots beyond this period, and any *actual* rollout of their outputs would proceed through established governance and resourcing processes.

Additionally, the Task Force will continue to support ongoing activity on other key recommendations, the implementation of which is owned by other business units and governance structures.

6. How AI is furthering or challenging the teaching and learning by students?

Our work to support progress toward safeguarding the integrity and assessments and the pilot project on AI in Teaching Innovation are related to this, but the Task Force has no specific remit or resources at the moment to explore this.

It is worth mentioning that the initial set of recommendations made by the Short-Life Working Group included recommendations (11) and (12) which were related to these issues, but the Task Force has not been asked to pursue these as a priority to date.

7. What sources of evidence and expertise have thus far informed decisions – including around learning processes and outcomes – and where evidence gaps are seen?

The Task Force is not a decision-making body. The only concrete actions it takes are to initiate and resource pilot projects, connect and convene stakeholders, and produce outputs that support capacity building. We have not analysed evidence or identified evidence gaps systematically (this would require the research that would have to be conducted mentioned in recommendation (11) above), but our contributions to updated AI guidance were informed by conversations with colleagues who have expertise in the field.

8. How is the Task Force managing the sustainability concerns about generative AI?

This area out of scope for the Task Force as per its current Terms of Reference. We have raised awareness of these concerns in the guidance produced, and there are wider efforts within the Information Services Group to measure the carbon footprint of our IT estate, which may inform future policy in this area. Within ELM, which is the only University-provided access to Generative AI provided (outside some GenAI components in other O365 products

we use), plans are underway to host smaller Opensource GenAI models on University hardware and in university datacentres running on green energy. In the future that have a significantly lower environmental footprint than the versions of ChatGPT currently accessed through ELM. The implementation of a greener, locally hosted Opensource Large Language Model has been funded and is now part of the published ELM roadmap.

In addition, the Sustainable IT Group (chaired by Professor John Thomson, School of Engineering) is discussing a number of programmes to advise, measure and recommend solutions for greener AI. The Sustainable IT Group is a university governance group reporting to the University IT Committee.

9. How is the Task Force managing the data privacy and security risks?

As with any new IT projects, the pilot projects initiated by the Task Force will undergo a rigorous Data Protection Impact Assessment. Members of the Task Force have provided substantial input to data privacy and security issues regarding ELM (which is not managed by the Task Force as such).

The Task Force provided input in the recently published GenAI guidance for staff. There are several sections in this guidance that provides advice on data privacy and security risks.

Senate**5 February 2025****Senate External Review Recommendation:
Standing Committee Remits Update and Options****Description of paper**

1. This paper provides Senate with an update on progress with the AdvanceHE External Effectiveness Review of Senate recommendation relating to Senate Standing Committee remits and asks Senate to discuss options for the consideration of the student experience across Senate committees.

Action requested / recommendation

2. Senate is asked to note the update on progress and to discuss the options presented for the consideration of the student experience.

Background and context

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

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.

4. A discussion paper developed to support the progress of this recommendation was presented at the Task and Finish Group meeting on 6 November 2024.
5. 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 establishing a separate committee or capturing 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. Recommendation 16 from the External Review of Senate relates to the second bullet point in paragraph 5 above:

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

7. An [interim update](#) (Paper M) on progress with recommendation 17, including a summary of the outcomes of the Task and Finish Group discussion and the discussion paper as an appendix, was provided to Senate at its meeting on 11 December 2024.

Discussion

Informal Consultation

8. Initial views on whether student experience matters should be considered by a separate Senate standing committee, captured within existing committees, or a combination were sought from:

Colleges via Heads of Academic Administration (or equivalent). The feedback can be summarised as follows:

- In principle support for a new Senate committee focused on the student experience.
- The need for clarity on what is meant by student experience in this context.
- It is critical to map how and where the student experience is currently considered across all bodies (not just Senate committees), to review this in the context of any new Senate committee focused on the student experience, and to identify the most appropriate bodies to consider the student experience (which may be within current structures).
- All remits need to be clear, avoid unnecessary duplication and overlap, and clarify links, decision-making and accountability.
- A new committee could provide a positive and transparent emphasis on how we govern and deliver student experience across all parts of the University.
- The importance of consideration being given to where PGR matters are discussed and associated governance, including the role of the Doctoral College. It was noted that all three colleges have PGR committees.

It was noted the Heads of Academic Administration (or equivalent) were unable to consult widely or formally with colleagues due to timescales. Further formal consultation with stakeholder will be needed to develop any future proposals.

The Students' Association via the Vice-President Education. The feedback can be summarised as follows:

- Support for a group with knowledge of all student experience initiatives and the University context to spearhead and sense check these initiatives over the medium term to progress tangible goals the group set out.

- Remaining committee work would focus on ensuring alignment with these goals which would include postgraduate research students.
- Support exploring the role, function and effectiveness of Senate Education Committee in relation to the student experience, including the establishment of a sub group or standalone group.

9. The initial views of the Deputy Secretary, Students were also sought. They are of the view that Senate should consider the benefits of a dedicated student experience committee and shared ideas previously reflected with the Vice-Principal Students and Deputy Vice-Principal Students (Enhancement) to consider in due course.

Mapping of current committees and groups

10. At the Task and Finish Group meeting in November 2024, it was suggested that a mapping exercise be conducted to understand what relevant committees and groups existed in relation to the consideration of the student experience, and their respective remits.

11. A high-level mapping of the current committees and groups which consider the student experience, including those beyond Senate and its committees, is included as Appendix 1. This mapping is a work in progress and will be developed further to support both progressing recommendation 17 and clarifying where the student experience is considered across all committees and groups and the links between them.

12. The mapping has been informed by a comprehensive visual of the Student Experience Portfolio structures of projects and governance provided by Deputy Secretary, Students.

Options – consideration of student experience

Option	Considerations/prompts
a) Create a new separate Senate standing committee to specifically consider the student experience ¹ .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports holistic and strategic consideration of the student experience • Makes more explicit the commitment to enhancing the student experience and emphasises the recognition of the importance of all student groups • The student experience is wide ranging – what is achievable and meaningful for the remit of a

¹ <https://registryservices.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2024-07/29%20May%202019%20-%20Agenda%20and%20Papers.pdf> (Paper C) outlines the last significant changes to Senate committees following a review

Option	Considerations/prompts
	<p>student experience committee in the University's context?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it possible to cover all student groups in one committee? • Consider in the context of the other standing committees, projects and governance structures beyond Senate and its committees. • Would adding another Senate committee require a hierarchy? • Additional resource implications
<p>b) Embed student experience within all committees.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a commitment across all groups and committees to enhancing the student experience. • Does not support holistic consideration of the student experience • Would require clarification of student experience responsibilities within remits. • Would this approach need to be supported by enhanced and defined reporting?
<p>c) Address the impact on student experience for each paper through an impact assessment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a commitment across all groups and committees to enhancing the student experience. • Does not support holistic consideration of the student experience • Important to ensure a meaningful process, not box ticking. • Would require impact assessment process and guidance to be developed and meaningfully implemented and evaluated.
<p>d) Enhance and define reporting between groups and committee on matters relating to the student experience</p>	
<p>e) A combination of the above</p>	

13. The preferred options are a combination of (b) and (d) initially.

Other proposal for changes

14. The following suggestions from the External Review of Senate are also being taken forward in connection to recommendation 17:

Suggestion	Proposed action
<p>8. We also suggest a minor tidying up point of clarifying in the largely very clear public documentation on the University's governance on whether both UG and PG students are within the remit of the QAC and APRC.</p>	<p>Clarify within updated terms of reference that they do.</p> <p>Also relates to recommendation 16 being progressed by the Vice-Principal Research and Enterprise.</p>
<p>9. We suggest that the chair of each of the 3 Committee Chairs clarifies the relevant scheme of delegation for their committee.</p>	<p>Clarify relevant aspects relating to the standing committees in updated terms of reference.</p> <p>Also relates to recommendation 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.</p> <p>See also paragraph 14 below.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>Clarify relevant aspects relating to the standing committees in updated terms of reference.</p> <p>Introduce a communication method between the standing committees and Senate to communicate how decisions are made, and any consultation that has taken place.</p> <p>Also relates to recommendation 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.</p>

15. To standardise wording within Senate committee terms of reference in relation to delegated authority. This was raised in the November 2024 Task and Finish Group which noted, "...while each standing committee remit stated that it was "responsible, on behalf of Senate, for ...", only the remit of the Academic Policy and Regulations Committee gave a specific example of it acting with delegated authority from the Senate [on matters of student conduct and discipline]." The Task and Finish Group again discussed the inconsistent terminology at the January 2025 meeting and agreed that a small group of members meet to discuss and inform the development of suitable wording.

Resource implications

16. The resource implications will depend on the option(s) implemented. Updates to Senate standing committee remits will require resource to undertake consultation, update and implement. Should any additional committees be created, this would result in additional resource requirements within Academic Standards and Quality, likely to be 0.5FTE, and time for committee members to participate. The other option(s) will also have resource implication, albeit less than for an additional committee.

Risk management

17. 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

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

Equality & diversity

19. The equality and diversity implications will depend on the option(s) implemented. It is possible that implementing a specific committee to consider student experience will enable holistic and additional consideration of equality and diversity implications for students with protected characteristics and those in marginalised groups. The same may also be true of student experience impact assessments. The equality and diversity implications of the membership of any new committee will need to be considered.

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

20. The Vice Principal Students will continue to lead work to address this recommendation, using the outcomes of the discussion to inform the development of a plan (including consultation) and associated timescales.

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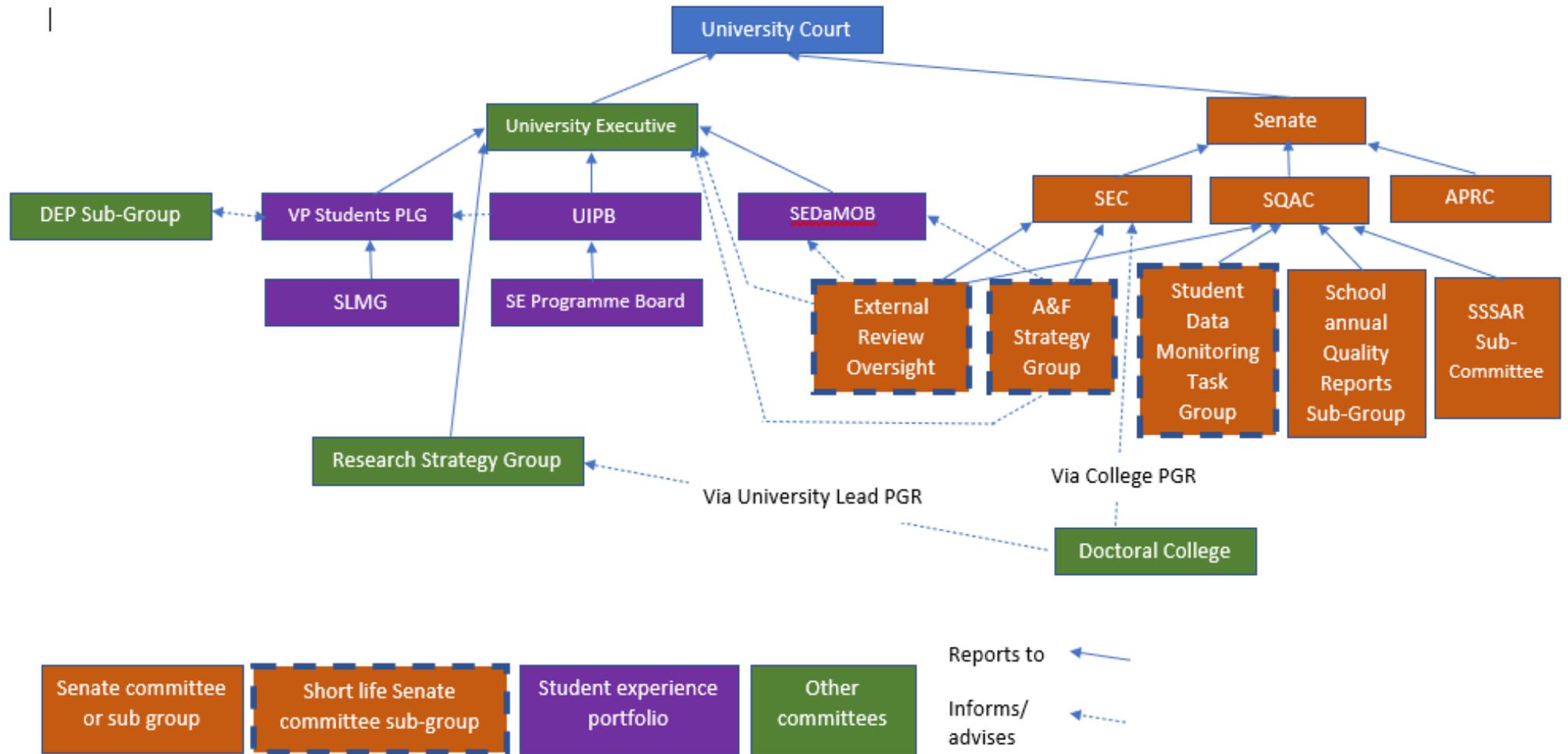
January 2025

Freedom of Information Open

Presenter

Professor Colm Harmon

Appendix 1 – Mapping of Groups and Committees



Group/committee (A-Z)	Role/Purpose/Remit (including relation to the student experience)
<p>APRC (Senate) Academic Policy and Regulations Committee</p> <p>https://registryservices.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/committees/academic-policy-regulations/terms-reference</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Policies and regulations are designed to support the University's approach to its educational activities, as set primarily by other strategic bodies, such as Senate, and Senate Education Committee. Many policies and regulations naturally have broad implications for the student experience, such as those covering the approach to assessment of students. In particular, however, APRC has responsibility for policies covering such aspects of the student experience as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student conduct and discipline, including academic misconduct; • Approval of the academic calendar (working within the University academic year model), including the duration of examination diets; • Academic timetabling; • Exceptional circumstances affecting students' studies; interruption of studies; withdrawal and exclusion from studies; • Student maternity and family leave; • Participation in elite sport.
<p>Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group</p>	<p>To provide direction, oversight and ensure local implementation of the actions being taken to progress recommendations from the Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) and the Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) in relation to assessment and feedback.</p>
<p>DEP Digital Estates Prioritisation Student Experience and Education Sub-Group</p>	<p>A sub-group of the Digital Estates Prioritisation Group which prioritises major digital estate investments.</p>

Group/committee (A-Z)	Role/Purpose/Remit (including relation to the student experience)
Doctoral College https://doctoral-college.ed.ac.uk/about/people-structure	<p>A coordinating structure for all postgraduate researchers, supervisors and relevant staff at the university, designed to enhance and support the postgraduate student experience.</p> <p>A virtual entity based on a collaboration between the College PGR Deans, College Professional Service staff supporting PGR, and IAD. It has strong and active student representation and constructive links with EUSA and many key University support services (Wellbeing, SDLSS, Reslife, Counselling, Chaplaincy, CAM, etc).</p>
External Review Oversight Group	<p>To provide direction, oversight and ensure implementation of the actions being taken to progress recommendations from the Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) and the Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR).</p>
School annual Quality Reports Sub-Group	<p>To review the reports and prepare recommendations for consideration by SQAC at its first meeting in September.</p>
Senate https://registryservices.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/committees/senate	<p>The core function of the Senate is to regulate and superintend the teaching and discipline of the University and to promote research.</p>
SEC Senate Education Committee https://registryservices.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/committees/education/terms-reference	<p>The 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.</p> <p>Promote strategically-led initiatives and university-wide changes designed to enhance the educational experience of students and learners.</p> <p>Oversee policy relating to students' academic experience and proactively engage with high-level issues and themes arising from student feedback</p> <p>Give specific consideration to instances in which the experience of one particular cohort of students or learners (undergraduate, postgraduate taught</p>

Group/committee (A-Z)	Role/Purpose/Remit (including relation to the student experience)
	or postgraduate research students, and those involved in non-standard programmes) may diverge from that of others.
SEDaMOB Student Experience Delivery and Monitoring Board	The purpose of the Student Experience Delivery and Monitoring Oversight Board is to ensure oversight of agreed actions and deliverables aligned to identified interventions designed to enhance the student experience.
SQAC Senate Quality Assurance Committee https://registryservices.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/committees/quality-assurance/terms-reference	<p>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.</p> <p>Identify areas for innovation and enhancement of the student experience and ensure that these inform Senate Education Committee's policy development.</p> <p>The quality framework supports the management of academic standards and the student experience across the University's academic provision and student services and aligns with external body requirements, including Scotland's new Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF). SQAC has oversight of the student experience of teaching and learning via the annual monitoring and reporting process (covering programme, School and College levels) and the Internal Periodic Review (IPR) process. SQAC has oversight of the student experience of welfare and support services via the Student Support Services Annual Review (SSSAR) and the periodic/cross-service Student Support Thematic Review.</p>
Student Data Monitoring Task Group	<p>To explore methodological options and make recommendations to Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) for a new systematic approach to monitoring student data at University level.</p> <p>To ensure that the new approach will also address the Enhancement Led</p>

Group/committee (A-Z)	Role/Purpose/Remit (including relation to the student experience)
	<p>Institutional Review (ELIR) 2021 and the Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) 2023 recommendations regarding equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in the student population.</p>
<p>Student Experience Programme Board</p>	<p>Approves student experience project briefs and initiation documents, UIPB endorses student experience outline and full business cases following approval at SEPB</p>
<p>SLMG Student Lifecycle Management Group [Internal only] https://uoe.sharepoint.com/sites/SLMG-Information-Hub/SitePages/SLMG-Information-Hub.aspx#group-membership-and-terms-of-reference</p>	<p>The Student Lifecycle Management Group will operate with the aim of connecting the dots between the key areas supporting the student lifecycle, ensuring we are operationally aligned to deliver effective support to our student and resolve issues if/as they arise. The Group will work in conjunction with the VP Student Portfolio Leadership Group, the Student Experience Delivery and Monitoring Board (SEDaMOB), University Initiatives Portfolio Board (UIPB) and University Executive in determining, recommending and operationalising strategic priorities, in the interests of increased efficiency and effectiveness, and in support of the University's longer-term strategic aims.</p>
<p>Student Support Services Annual Review (SSSAR) Sub-Committee</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To monitor and review the quality of the student support services, by consideration of the outcomes of the services' annual quality assurance reports (including external accreditation where appropriate). • To commend and disseminate areas of good practice arising from reports and reviews. • To make recommendations aimed at enhancing the student experience. • To ensure matters of strategic development and institutional priorities are considered, including alignment with the Service Expectation Review.

Group/committee (A-Z)	Role/Purpose/Remit (including relation to the student experience)
UIPB University Initiatives Portfolio Board https://corporate-services.ed.ac.uk/our-departments/strategic-change-service/university-initiatives-portfolio-board/terms-of-reference	<p>The University Initiatives Portfolio Board is responsible for making recommendations to University Executive which will support Executive in making decisions which progress the delivery of initiatives to enable the realisation of strategic objectives. The Board will provide collective oversight of approved programmes/projects and the pipeline of new initiatives, with a focus on prioritisation, monitoring, and evaluation of the portfolio.</p> <p>It will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make recommendations regarding the prioritisation and sequencing of University Initiative programmes/projects milestones and deliverables; • consider organisational capacity – in terms of expertise and level of resource - to engage with and embed an initiative as a critical factor of success; • provide a critical forum for two-way dialogue between the individual Programme/Project sponsor and those responsible for considering a wider University position, provide improved visibility of priorities leading to a better understanding of what we are doing and why.
University Executive https://governance-strategic-planning.ed.ac.uk/governance/university-committees/othercommitteesandgroups/university-executive	<p>The Executive's purpose is to contribute to the development of the University's strategic objectives and to oversee their implementation and delivery. Also, to act as a forum for decision-making and discussion of management and operational matters.</p>
University Court	https://governance-strategic-planning.ed.ac.uk/governance/university-court
VP Student Portfolio Leadership Group	Sets academic led projects

Senate

5 February 2025

Senate Standing Committees: Mid-Year Reflection on 2024/25 Priorities and Contribution to 2025/26 Priorities

Description of paper

1. The paper provides Senate with a mid-year reflection on progress with the 2024/25 standing committee priorities and invites contributions to develop the 2025/26 priorities.

Action requested / recommendation

2. Senate is asked to *discuss*:
 - Progress with the 2024/25 priorities; and
 - Contributions to develop the 2025/26 priorities.

Background and context

3. The committees agree their priorities in late semester 2 and they are presented to the last Senate of the academic year for noting. The process for development and agreement of committee priorities has been further enhanced this year to include a specific request for contributions from Senate. Committees are required to report annually to Senate on action taken under powers delegated by Senate.

Discussion

Progress with 2024/25 priorities

4. The mid-year update for the Senate Education Committee (SEC) is provided in Appendix 1.
5. The mid-year update for the Senate Academic Policy and Regulation Committee (APRC) is provided in Appendix 2.
6. The mid-year update for the Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) is provided in Appendix 3 (including an additional priority accepted by Senate via the amendment process in October 2024).
7. An update on additional priorities accepted by Senate via the amendment process in October 2024 is provided in Appendix 4.
8. The outputs of this discussion can aid in informing area(s) of focus within the existing 2024/25 committee priorities and/or actions to help achieve these priorities in the remainder of the academic year.

Contributions to develop the 2025/26 priorities

9. Each of the Standing Committees will receive a paper with draft proposed priorities for discussion during the February/March 2025 round of meetings. The following will be taken into consideration when proposing priorities across the Standing Committees:

- Committee remits
- Feedback from Senate and standing committees
- University strategic priorities
- External and regulatory requirements
- Outcomes of quality processes, including external review

10. The proposed priorities will be presented in the following template to aid consideration by members:

Proposed priority	
Rationale and fit with remit	
Area of focus and objectives	
Regulatory/external requirement?	

11. Standing committee member input (including from the constituencies they represent) is critical to shaping the proposed priorities and the associated areas of focus and objectives. Standing committee members will be invited to shape the draft priorities or to suggest additional priorities to reach agreement on a set of proposed priorities which are relevant to the committee remit and the University’s strategic priorities, and are achievable within resources. As such, standing committee members are asked to consider SMART criteria when discussing and agreeing the proposed priorities. Ideally, the objectives of the priorities should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.

12. **Senate members are asked to discuss contributions to develop the 2025/26 priorities.**

13. The timeline for discussion and agreement of standing committee priorities is as follows:

	Mid-year reflection update + input to priorities	Mid-year reflection + priorities discussion	Agree priorities (standing committees)	Senate notes agreed standing committee priorities
SEC	5 Feb	27 Feb	1 May	20 May
APRC	5 Feb	20 March	By electronic business (by end April)	20 May
SQAC	5 Feb	20 Feb	3 April	20 May

Resource implications

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

Risk management

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

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

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

Equality & diversity

17. This paper does not propose any actions. The equality and diversity implications of any actions which arise from the discussion would need to be outlined and considered by the relevant standing committee.

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

18. Feedback provided by Senate will be used to inform the development of 2025/26 standing committee priorities.

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Academic Quality and Standards

Presenter

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

January 2025

Freedom of Information Open

Appendix 1: Senate Education Committee priorities mid-year update 2024/25

Curriculum Transformation Programme (also a standing item)

- A verbal update was provided to the Committee in **September 2024** to highlight that the full business case for PGT received approval from UIPB and University Executive in July, commencing the two-year transitional phase for PGT from 2024/25. The outline business case for UG was also approved by UIPB and this will lead to the completion of the design of the UG curriculum framework. This completed UG framework, as well as the finalised versions of the Edinburgh Student Vision and Skills Framework will come to Senate Education Committee (SEC) and Senate later in 2024/25.
- The Committee was informed of changes made to the CTP governance structure, to reflect the shift in focus now that the business case for PGT has been approved. This includes changes to the membership of the CTP Board, which reports to UIPB and University Executive. It was noted that the Board was seeking an elected Senate representative, ideally from SEC or one of the other Senate standing committees, to join the Board moving forward. Colleagues interested in joining were requested to contact the Convener.
- A further verbal update was provided to the Committee at its **November 2024** meeting, covering developments relating to the refresh of the CTP Board and the establishment of a CTP Implementation Group to oversee the management and coordination of the different elements of CTP. Members noted that the CTP Implementation Group will meet monthly, and its initial meetings will focus on reviewing the status of CTP's six project strands, ensuring that they continue to align with other major University projects. Some members of SEC, including one of its elected Senate representatives, are also members of the CTP Board.
- At the **November 2024** meeting of SEC, the Co-Chairs of the CTP Future Skills Working Group presented the proposal to update the existing Graduate Attributes Framework with a new Skills for Success Framework. It was noted that CTP can be used as a vehicle of support to revisit the framework and more meaningfully engage with capturing skills development.
- The Committee was informed that results of market sensitivity testing and other consultation with potential applicants and current students will help prepare an updated version of the Edinburgh Student Vision for consideration by Senate at its meeting in **December 2024**.
- The CTP Lead will attend the next meeting of the Committee in **February 2025** to present a progress report on the PGT element of CTP.

Student Experience – actions taken in response to student survey results

- In **September 2024**, a paper was presented to the Committee reporting the findings from 2024 national student surveys for taught students and outlined how the University intends to respond. It was noted that improving student

experience is a core priority of the University and there will be a continued focus on significant areas of work that aim to establish enhanced, long-term fundamental changes to student experience across the University, especially focused on assessment and feedback, student voice and course organisation. Members fed in comments relating to feedback timelines; the University's Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities; student interpretation of survey questions; data infrastructure; timetabling and course enrolment; EDI issues.

- At its meeting in **November 2024**, the Committee noted the areas for enhancement of the student experience identified by SQAC, including student voice and partnership, particularly closing the student voice feedback loop.

Assessment and Feedback

- A verbal update was provided to the Committee in **September 2024**, noting that the Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group had met earlier in September. The meeting covered a discussion on exams, agreeing that a University-wide position on the use of resit examinations would be helpful, as there is a need to address students being required to travel to Edinburgh in summer to attend in-person resits and the resulting financial pressures.
- Members were informed of details relating to the ongoing audit of feedback quality. Work is being undertaken with Internal Audit colleagues in order to build on a previous model successfully delivered in the Deanery of Molecular, Genetic and Population Health Sciences. The Committee was further informed of the work being undertaken to revise the University's Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities.
- At its meeting in **November 2024**, the Committee noted that work to revise the Assessment and Feedback Priorities and Principles had been taken forward in consultation with College Deans and that the revised version was subsequently approved. The Priorities and Principles document is not currently categorised as policy; however, this will be considered when the document is next reviewed in 2025/26.
- The Committee was presented with a paper considering the approach to reassessment on courses at the University. The Committee considered potential options which may reduce the dependency on the August diet for reassessment, as demand on student time over the summer has increased and there are considerable travel and accommodation costs for students to return to Edinburgh during August. A range of alternative options were presented within the paper, with it being noted that they were not mutually exclusive and that options may be received differently across Schools. Members raised a range of comments, including consultation with Schools; accreditation arrangements; summer placements; reducing failure rates; the connection between exams and academic misconduct; AI; staff experience; links to the review of exam boards. Colleges and Schools will be provided with additional time to explore these options, prior to a refined paper returning to SEC for further discussion. This could additionally serve as a precursor to a

wider policy review during 2025/26.

- The Committee noted details of project work centring on supporting creative teaching innovation via generative AI. The project will seek to support staff skills development and capacity for engaging with AI across teaching, assessment and feedback. Members were notified of workshops held in **November 2024** relating to this work which were very well attended.

Learning and Teaching Strategy

- In **September 2024**, the Committee received a verbal update on the progress of the Learning and Teaching Strategy. Members were informed that work continued to develop the Strategy over summer 2024. Two drop-in sessions for Heads of School were held and were well-attended, attracting helpful feedback. Heads of School were broadly supportive of the Strategy and agreed that radically different new practices were not required. The Strategy will serve to align with the endpoint of the University's Strategy 2030, and act as a precursor to an ambitious new strategy post-2030, once Curriculum Transformation is fully in place.
- As part of the discussion regarding the Committee's priorities and areas of focus for 2024/25, it was noted that the physical and digital estate will be key enablers for the new Learning and Teaching Strategy, for example via timetabling.
- The Committee was presented with the proposed Learning and Teaching Strategy at its meeting in **November 2024**. Members were informed that the Strategy has been widely consulted upon, enabling it to be further refined and enhanced. Specific changes made to the Strategy since it was last shared with the Committee were noted, such as: the removal of the reference to curriculum for the 21st century; a greater focus on interdisciplinarity and encouraging students to explore beyond disciplinary boundaries; altering the wording around skills to increase focus on developing knowledge skills and mindsets; expanding and developing key enablers. The Committee noted that work would continue with relevant colleagues to build on text around career management, a new skills framework and the future need of learning and teaching spaces and how these areas could be factored into the Strategy more strategically. Feedback from members was taken into consideration, such as proposed changes to wording in specific sections; emphasising the University's current strengths within this area; the role of Schools and Colleges within the Strategy's implementation plan.
- While 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 a last round of consultation with Committee members. The Strategy was subsequently included as an item for discussion at the **December 2024** meeting of Senate.

Appendix 2: Senate Academic Policy and Regulation Committee mid-year update 2024/25

Curriculum Transformation Programme

- The Committee has had input to proposals from the Curriculum Transformation Programme regarding the PGT Framework, specifically in relation to:
 - Degree Specific Regulations contained Within the Postgraduate General Degree Regulations
 - Study periods for PGT Programmes
 - Stackable degree structure
 - Regulations for MSc Progression and Award
 - PGT course pass mark
- The Curriculum Transformation Programme team will continue to consult with, and update, the Committee on matters related to the academic regulatory framework throughout the remainder of 2024/25.
- The following frameworks and guidance are also due for review as part of the Curriculum Transformation Programme and are expected to come to APRC:
 - Models for Degree Types
 - Framework for Curricula
 - Degree Programme Specification Guidance

The timeline for the review of these documents is unclear at present, since it is dependent upon progress with the undergraduate elements of the Curriculum Transformation Programme.

Postgraduate Research students

- We are aiming to hold a meeting of the PGR sub-group early in 2025 to consider potential further amendments to regulations and policies to enhance the PGR student experience, building on the progress made in 2023/24. Informal reports from College Offices indicate that there has been some positive impact from the amendments approved by APRC in 2023/24 based on recommendations from the sub-group, in particular the amendment to regulations relating to withdrawal and reinstatement.

Scheduled review of policies

- Academic Quality and Standards, and other stakeholders and policy owners, are conducting consultations with relevant stakeholders to revise the policies and guidance as set out in the review schedule approved by the Committee in March 2023.
- The Committee has so far reviewed and approved amendments to the following policies under the remit of APRC:
 - Visiting and Non-Graduating Student Policy and Procedure

- College Progression Boards for Optional Study Abroad: Terms of Reference
- Policy on University use of email as method of contacting students
- Academic Quality and Standards are undertaking consultation regarding amendments to the following policies and regulations, which should come to the Committee for approval in 2024/25:
 - Authorised Interruption of Study Policy
 - Withdrawal and Exclusion from Studies Procedure
 - Undergraduate Degree Programme Regulations (due March 2025)
 - Postgraduate Degree Programme Regulations (due March 2025)
 - Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees (due May 2025)
 - Taught Assessment Regulations (due May 2025)
- There is also ongoing consultation regarding updates to the Support for Study policy, which is due for review this academic year 2024/25.
- Due to staffing constraints within the Academic Quality and Standards team, we anticipate that we will need to postpone the reviews of some policy documents into 2025/26, including:
 - Dual, Double, and Multiple Awards Policy
 - Associated Institution Policy

We do not anticipate that this delay will lead to any specific risks.

Students with support needs beyond the scope of the Exceptional Circumstances policy

- This additional priority was agreed by the Committee by electronic business following its meeting in March 2024.
- The Committee received an update in November 2024 on work being undertaken by Registry Services in response to the Watch that Gap report, following the initial findings presented to the Committee in March 2024. The Committee is expecting a further update on this work, including detail of how the impact will be evaluated, later in 2024-25.

Appendix 3: Senate Quality Assurance Committee mid-year update 2024/25

Responding to 2023 Quality Enhancement & Standards Review (QESR)

The recommendations of the [QESR](#) require institutional focus and progress in several areas. In response, there has been a range of activities to drive progress throughout the University against the recommendations:

- i) Assessment & Feedback (turnaround times and quality of feedback)
- ii) Implementation of the Tutors & Demonstrators training policy
- iii) Promotion of academic staff based on teaching
- iv) Learning & Teaching Strategy
- v) Attainment gap monitoring
- vi) Pace of change: make progress on recommendations from external reviews which can be evidenced in the next academic year.

Through the annual monitoring process (School quality reports were considered by SQAC in **September 2024**), Schools were asked to report on their activities to implement and align with the Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities. This included providing data to evidence their rate of return within the three-week turnaround timeframe. The Assessment & Feedback Strategy Group, which reports to both SQAC and SEC, is overseeing this priority area of work.

In their reflections on PGR provision and experience, Schools were also asked to report on their provision of training to PGR students who teach, and their mechanisms for monitoring this training. These responses were collated and shared with the University lead for T&D training.

For 23/24, the annual quality report template included reference to student outcomes and progression, and as a result there was greater focus in the responses provided by Schools. Many Schools used the available data to reflect on their students' outcomes, and some areas identified awarding gaps. This area of work is being taken forward by the Student Data Monitoring Task Group, which is a subgroup of SQAC. More detail is provided in the relevant section below.

Responding to the outcome of the Scottish Funding Council's Tertiary Quality Review

Following the introduction of the Tertiary Quality Framework, institutions are required to complete a Self Evaluation Action Plan (SEAP) which reflects on annual institutional quality assurance and enhancement activities and outcomes and details the planned institution level enhancement activities arising from the self-evaluation. This replaced the previous annual reporting process to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC).

In **December 2024**, the SEAP was shared with the Committee for information. It had been co-signed by the Principal and EUSA Vice-President Education and submitted to the SFC.

The SEAP is intended to be a live document that can be revisited and updated throughout the academic year. A key aim of the process is to demonstrate to staff and students how their contribution to the activities that impact the quality assurance and enhancement of learning, teaching and the student experience are collated and used to document and drive strategic enhancement within the institution.

In a verbal update in the **December 2024** meeting, the Committee were informed that the new external review cycle has been confirmed by the SFC and the University will be reviewed in 2027/28.

Evaluation and monitoring of the implementation and effectiveness of the new student support model (SSM)

In **September 2024**, SQAC reviewed the themes arising from student support responses provided by Schools in their annual quality reports. The reports indicated that the Student Advisor role was highly valued within Schools and these colleagues had made a significant impact in the success of the Student Support model. The responses indicated that students value reliability and consistency as key aspects of student support provision and staff appreciated the professional support that was available to students.

In relation to the Cohort Lead role, the reports highlighted demand for enhanced central guidance on how to deploy the role and design events to best engage with students. There were student support challenges reported for students on joint programmes, with Schools concerned about gaps or inconsistency in the student experience.

This School level insight, along with examples of particular good practice, were referred to the Student Support Continuous Improvement Group (SSCIG) for response to SQAC at the end of academic year 2024/25.

Student Data Monitoring

A Student Data Monitoring task group has been set up under SQAC with a remit to explore methodological options and make recommendations to SQAC for a new systematic approach to monitoring student data at University level. The group comprises of some SQAC members and some colleagues with specific expertise drawn from across the University.

Through its oversight of established quality processes, SQAC has identified areas and gaps for the group to focus on. In a verbal update at the **December 2024** meeting, the Committee were informed of the two meetings held to date and informed of the workstreams that the group is developing, with one focussed on data collection and systems and the other focussed on sector activity and approaches to closing gaps.

The Student Data Monitoring task group is due to provide an update to SQAC in its **February 2025** meeting.

Additional priority accepted by Senate via the amendment process in October 2024: Enhance Senate understanding of arrangements and effectiveness for quality assurance regarding internal systems and change processes

In **December 2024**, the Committee were presented with the Learn Ultra Evaluation report and asked to review the summary and consider how the recommendations for future change projects can be most usefully embedded. Discussion of this item addressed the importance of engagement and consultation throughout large change projects and the value of evaluation work informing the approach to other University projects. Training and local support were identified as areas that are crucial in large change projects.

Appendix 4: additional priorities for all standing committees accepted by Senate via the amendment process in October 2024

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

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

These priorities align with work underway as part of the response to recommendations and suggestions from the external review of Senate. The Task and Finish Group have received a discussion paper in November 24 and an update in January 25. Senate received an update in December 24 and will receive an options paper for discussion in February 25.

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.

At October Senate, the Vice-Principal Students 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. See also the update in Appendix 1 for SEC.

Senate

5 February 2025

Communications from the University Court

Description of paper

1. To update Senate on certain matters considered by the University Court at its meetings held on 2 December 2024.

Action requested / recommendation

2. Senate is invited to note the report.

Background and context

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

Discussion

4. Please see Appendix 1 for a report of business conducted at the 2 December meeting.

Resource implications

5. Where applicable, as covered in the report.

Risk management

6. Where applicable, as covered in the report.

Equality and diversity

7. Where applicable, as covered in the report.

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

8. Regular reports on the Court's work of interest to Senate will continue to be submitted.

Author

Daniel Wedgwood
Governance & Court Services
January 2024

Freedom of Information

Open Paper

Appendix 1:

2 December 2024

1 Principal's Report

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

- significant financial pressures on the higher education sector, with additional costs arising from the announced increase in National Insurance employer contributions;
- the commitment of the University's leadership to clear communication with staff regarding the financial situation and measures to address it;
- the development of the University's portfolio review;
- a successful programme of 15 winter graduation ceremonies, with over 8,000 people graduating;
- continued high performance in research and innovation, including record research translation figures in 2023/24.

2 Senate report

Court received a report of Senate Business conducted on 9 October 2024 and e-Senate business conducted between 11 and 25 September 2024.

3 Finance

Court considered the University's Annual Report and Accounts. It was clarified that the headline figures in the accounts for 2023-24 were affected by a number non-recurring items of restricted funding, meaning that these figures did not indicate the University's underlying financial position.

Drawing on input from Audit & Risk Committee and Policy & Resources Committee, Court approved the Annual Report and Accounts, subject to completion of the external auditor's work and some clarificatory amendments.

4 Student Recruitment and Intakes, 2024/25 Entry

Court received an update on student intakes to the current academic year, including the following key points:

- Total budgetary tuition fee income targets for this recruitment cycle had not been achieved, although fee income had grown on a year-on-year basis. This outcome would be analysed and would be used to inform forward planning.
- Most numerical recruitment targets had been met and intake numbers had increased year-on-year even in those areas where targets had not been met. However, the overall student population had fallen marginally, as an unusually large cohort of students had graduated in the previous year.
- There had been further progress in diversifying the international student population, in line with strategic aims.
- The next recruitment round was underway, with offer-making to applicants in progress.

5 Responsible Investment Policy: Analysis of Consultation Responses

Court received an independent analysis of the responses to the recent consultation exercise on the University's Responsible Investment Policy. It was noted that the policy was to be updated for submission to relevant governance bodies in due course. This would occur in parallel to the development of a new group whose establishment had been agreed by Court at its October meeting.

6 Student Experience Update

Court was updated on a range of work being undertaken in relation to the student experience. The progress outlined was welcomed, as was alignment with the Students' Association's student experience framework.

7 Annual Court Internal Effectiveness Review

Court received a summary of internal effectiveness review processes and their results. These had aligned closely with the outcomes of the external review conducted over the summer, as a result of which relevant work was already in progress.

8 Other Items

Regular reports were received from Court's committees, the Students' Association and Sports Union and the Development & Alumni Office. Court also received reports on University finances and a year-end report on the University's performance measures to support Strategy 2030. The Health and Safety Annual Report was received and the Health and Safety Policy approved. Resolutions establishing two personal Chairs were approved.

Senate**5 February 2025****Research Strategy Group Report****Description of paper**

1. This paper provides a summary of issues discussed at meetings of RSG. The Group's responsibility for research policy and strategy are directly relevant to the achievement of the following outcomes set out in Strategy 2030, which are further developed in the University's Research and Innovation Strategy 2030:¹

- i. We will see our research having a greater impact as a result of partnership, international reach and investment in emergent disciplines.
- ii. We will be a global leader in artificial intelligence and the use of data with integrity.
- iii. We will have created opportunities for partners, friends, neighbours and supporters to co-create, engage with the world and amplify our impacts.
- iv. Edinburgh will become the Data Capital of Europe. We will deliver inclusive growth, provide data skills to at least 100,000 individuals, and create new companies and solutions for global challenges

Action requested / Recommendation

2. Senate is invited to note the report.

Background and context

3. RSG monitors delivery of the University's Research and innovation Strategy and its Research Cultures Action Plan. At the time of writing, RSG had held three meetings in 2024-25 on August 20th, September 30th, and December 3rd. RSG will meet on three further occasions in 2024/25 (February 17th, May 8th and July 1st).

4. This report covers the main topics for discussion at the RSG meetings and its subgroups, which took place in August, September and December.

- REF 2029 developments
- Research culture and governance developments
- Fixed term contracts – substantive fellowships and pooled staff
- Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of R&I practice
- Update on funding, key grants and research and impact recognition

5. The RSG meeting in December had a focus on the use of AI in research, its implications for research activity and research culture, and the support provided by the Information Services Group.

¹ <https://www.ed.ac.uk/research-innovation>
<https://support-for-researchers.ed.ac.uk/research-cultures>

Discussion

REF 2029 developments

6. Edinburgh Research Office (ERO) has set up a [REF 2029 SharePoint site](#) that is open to staff and students. It contains short briefings on the key REF 2029 announcements and other material covered in this report that Senate members may find useful. The Sharepoint site is updated as UK REF publish new material.

7. The chairs of the four REF 2029 Main Panels have been appointed. The chair of Main Panel D (Arts and Humanities) is Prof Greg Walker (Literatures, Languages and Cultures). [REF 2029 main and sub-panel recruitment](#) opened on December 16th. The closing date for applications to be a member of the four main panels was February 6th and those wishing to be a sub-panel member have until April 28th to apply. UK REF stress that they are seeking applications from individuals with a wide range of expertise and experience, including those from underrepresented groups, diverse research backgrounds and practices, and individuals outside of academia who engage with research.

Assessment of People, Culture and Environment (PCE) element

8. For REF 2029 there will be a move away from a narrative document focused on research environment to a structured questionnaire covering a wider set of questions on research culture. The PCE will cover both institutional and unit level, and answers will be supported by a basket of qualitative and quantitative indicators. This is a substantial change. To that end UK REF is undertaking a multi-stage process of developing an appropriate means of assessing PCE, including a pilot assessment exercise.²

9. The pilot study is currently underway, with 40 HEIs preparing to submit PCE institutional statements as well as unit-level statements across one or more of four disciplinary groupings.³ After careful consideration, the University of Edinburgh chose not to apply to take part, instead focusing on ensuring representation on assessment panels.

10. Prof Jane Hillston (Informatics) is one of the two co-chairs of the PCE pilot assessment panel for UoA 11 Computer Science and Informatics. In addition, two other members of staff have been selected to be on the PCE pilot assessment panels:

- Prof Thomas Archibald (UEBS) UoA 17 Business and Management Studies
- Alex Peden (Head of Research Cultures) UoA 20 Social Work and Social Policy

Open Access and output diversity

11. UK REF published the Open Access Policy for REF2029⁴ on December 11th. This policy introduces several key changes from the previous regime. Eligible outputs (Journal articles and conference proceedings with ISSN) published from 1 Jan 2026 will be subject to these notable differences relating to embargo periods,

² [REF 2029 PCE development timetable](#)

³ The UoAs in the PCE pilot are: UoA 3: Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing & Pharmacy; UoA5 Biological Sciences; UoA7, Earth Systems & Environmental Sciences; UoA17, Business and Management Studies; UoA20, Social Work and Social Policy; UoA28 History; and UoA33, Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies

⁴ [REF 2029 Open Access Policy](#)

deposit requirements, licensing and exceptions. There are also changes to the tolerance allowance for non-compliant outputs and audit requirements.

12. The Scholarly Communications and REF Teams are working through these changes with the University's Research Outputs Network and will provide guidance in early January.

13. In the Initial REF decisions document UKREF stressed the importance of supporting and rewarding a diversity of output types⁵. Reflecting the need for UoA to be confident that all output types are fairly assessed UKREF has established a Research Diversity Advisory Panel, which is tasked with developing strategies to support the equitable recognition of diverse forms of research within REF 2029 development, delivery and assessment.⁶ Professor Neil Chue Hong (EPCC) is a member of the Research Diversity Advisory Panel. In addition, a University task and finish group was set up in the summer that is exploring how to encourage the submission of a more diverse range of output types.

Research Culture

Research Cultures Action Plan (RCAP) Refresh

14. The implementation of the RCAP's delivery plan is due to be completed by December 2025, and as of June 2024 ~30% of the plan was complete. This makes it a good time to begin the process of developing a new plan, scheduled to be presented to RSG in at its first meeting in 2025/26. This process is being led by Alex Peden, and will be iterative and inclusive, with multiple opportunities for staff and PGRs to engage.

15. As part of the refresh exercise, we will be identifying ongoing challenges, opportunities and gaps in improving our research culture, as well as alignment with external agreements that the University had signed up to. The [Research Cultures Action plan site](#) includes information about the refresh plans as well as progress on delivery of the current plan.

Research Culture survey

16. The third biennial Research Cultures Survey is underway. A link to the webform for the survey has been sent to: academic staff, research staff, technicians and doctoral research students; professional service staff in the Colleges and Schools; and business units that support research.

17. The survey results will continue to inform our [research cultures approach](#) and the development of our next action plan, as well as providing information which will allow refinement of the questions needed in future surveys. The 2020 survey results can be viewed via an [ERO dashboard](#) [your University login will be required], and the analysis of the 2022 survey is available in an [OSF record for the survey](#). The Institute of Academic Development will develop an updated dashboard to share the results of the 2020, 2022 and 2024 data across the University, and identify trends across the three data sets, which will be available in May 2025.

⁵ [Research Excellence Framework 2028: Initial decisions and issues for further consultation](#) (page 8)

⁶ <https://2029.ref.ac.uk/panels/research-diversity-advisory-panel/>

Research Governance, responsible research and best practice

The Research Governance, Compliance and Risk team

18. The team was established in October 2023, with the recruitment of the Head of Research Governance, Compliance and Risk. The team's remit is to work collaboratively to ensure the University meets its regulatory and legal obligations and upholds its commitments to the highest standards of research integrity. The team encompasses three strands: Research Security and Compliance, Research Integrity and Ethics, and Information Governance. Over 2024 the team has become fully staffed and in the latter part of 2024 began to scope out a number of major projects which include:

- Revising the University's research misconduct policy
- Revising the University's reporting process to comply with the UUK concordat to support research integrity once the new Concordat is published
- Ensuring that researchers are able to keep their research safe and comply with current UK, EU and USA legal and regulatory frameworks and any changes to these frameworks

Research Ethics of Arms and Defence Working Group

19. The task and finish group, which was set up to develop a more robust ethical framework for research relating to defence and security, held its last meeting on November 28th. The Group is proposing a set of recommendations which will be refined and operationalised by the Research Ethics and Integrity Group. The approach will also be brought to RSG and University Executive, with regular verbal updates and a final paper being brought to Senate.

Research Good Practice

20. The University's third [Good Practice week](#) will be held on February 3rd - 6th. The week is open to the whole research community, including PhD students, research support professional services colleagues and technicians. It is designed to celebrate the University's commitment to good research practices and a thriving research culture. The events are hosted by the three Colleges as well as departments across the University including ERO, Edinburgh Innovations and Library Research Support.

21. At the end of the week there will be an event to recognise and celebrate contributions that provide leadership and act as role models for good research practice. Staff have been asked to nominate individuals or teams that are making a significant but perhaps unheralded contribution to good research practices. The closing date for nominations was Friday 20th December and there will be recognition event on February 6th to which all nominees will be invited

Fixed Term contracts – Substantive Fellowships and pooled staff.

22. At its meeting on December 3rd, RSG discussed the findings of a data gathering exercise to understand the conditions required to offer those on substantive fellowships an open-ended contract, current mechanisms for doing so, and risks and potential pitfalls. RSG were in agreement that no single approach or set of guidelines for transitioning individuals with substantive fellowships into open-ended contracts will suit all contexts across the University. Recognising several successful models already exist for retaining researchers

with substantive fellowships, follow-on work is underway to identify opportunities to disseminate and promote these practices throughout the University.

23. At the same meeting, RSG also discussed the considerations and recommendations of the Task and Finish Group on Pooling of Career Researchers on an Open-Ended Basis. The report produced by the Group outlines key findings and strategies for advancing the pooling of career researchers from across the University, including how this might best be organised and managed. It also discusses ways to better acknowledge, incentivise and reward the contributions of career researchers more broadly. Follow-on work is underway to identify opportunities and mechanisms for advancing this initiative across the University. Further discussion of both sets of recommendations will be brought to RSG for further discussion at its meeting in February

Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of R&I practice⁷

24. The University was one of the first signatories of this Concordat⁸ that was launched in April. Having been closely involved with the Concordat's development, the University was in a good place to be an early signatory, adopter and implementer of this Concordat. In addition, the Wellcome Trust and CRUK have published policies that place mandatory requirements on researchers and institutions currently applying for their funding. Indications are that other funders may also align their policies with the Concordat. RSG set up a working group which was tasked with producing a report that was discussed at the meeting of RSG on September 30th. The report had several recommendations around communications and training, laboratory accreditation, resource sharing, and behavioural and cultural change. These are being brought forward by SRS as part of the University's Climate Strategy.

AI and developing use to carry out research

25. The meeting of RSG on 3rd December focussed on AI and how it is being used in the university to carry out research. The following topics were discussed:

- The potential for AI to be used to help researchers and how it is already being used
- The various risks of using AI to support research, such as the generation of false content, copyright infringement, environmental impact⁹
- Regulating the use of University data by third-party AI developers (in particular with respect to publications, research data, and statutory returns to other bodies)
- Governance around the introduction of AI functionality in software used at the University (some of which may not be research-specific but may impact research activity)
- The tools that the University already has and those in development so that staff and students have access to a Large Language Model that can be used in a safe environment

⁷ <https://wellcome.org/who-we-are/positions-and-statements/environmental-sustainability-concordat>

⁸ <https://www.ed.ac.uk/news/2024/university-sustainable-research-initiative>

⁹ UN environment programme: [AI has an environmental problem. Here's what the world can do about that.](#)

26. The VP Research and Enterprise will be working with Colleges and AI experts in the new year to explore how best to harness, support and encourage the responsible use of AI in research, while guarding against the various ethical and legal risks and the challenges to research integrity.

Update on funding and key grants

Research KPIs in the Year to Date (end of December 2024)

27. At the time of writing, the number of research applications for external research competitively assessed funding was on a par with the three-year average. Applications by value had increased by 39% relative to last year and by 65% compared to the three-year average. Award value for the year to date is 15% which is due mainly to the receipt of two very large awards that totalled £26M in 2023-24.

28. The diversity of funders of University research is such that it is difficult to truly do justice to the success of researchers across university. For this reason two award types have been selected.

European Research Council Consolidator grants

29. These are awarded to researchers who are showing great promise, have recently created an independent, excellent research team, and want to strengthen it. The following awards were made to the University:

£1.6 M awarded to Physics and Astronomy (Project Title: Feynman graph expansions for high precision).

£1.6 M awarded to Biological Sciences (Project Title: New Metabolic chemistry for biocompatible reaction)

UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships

30. The schools of Law and Physics and Astronomy have each been awarded a Future Leaders Fellowship.

31. These four-year fellowships intended to allow Universities, research institutes, independent research organisations and businesses to develop their most talented early career researchers and innovators or to attract new people to their organisations, including from overseas.

Recognition in the New Year Honours list

32. Professor Susan Welburn, Professor of Medical and Veterinary Molecular Epidemiology has been awarded an OBE for services to One Health research and to disease elimination

33. Professor Melissa Terras, Professor of Digital Cultural Heritage, has been awarded an MBE for services to Digital Humanities.

Resource implications

34. None. This report is for information only.

Risk Management

35. None. This report is for information only.

Responding to the Climate Emergency and Sustainable Development Goals

36. The University's research contributes to the nine UN SDGs listed which relate to the activities of Higher Education Institutions that educate and carry out research, innovation and development.

Equality and Diversity

37. This paper is for information and is not proposing new or revised policies. EDI is one of the cornerstones of the Research Cultures Action Plan, which seeks to advance inclusion and equity across all aspects of research support and research-related careers. The Research Cultures Forum, which was set up by RSG, has the specific objectives of supporting the development of policies and mechanisms to promote a positive research culture at the University of Edinburgh across all stages in an individual's research career and addressing barriers to equity related to under-represented groups.

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

38. RSG membership includes representation from Communications and Marketing. The RSG papers for discussion explicitly ask for information about communication plans. RSG works with its subgroups, the College Research Committees as well as other University committees to evaluate the impact of action agreed and to determine best approach to dissemination.

Consultation

39. The report itself has not been the subject of consultation but is composed of material that was the subject of discussion at the meetings of RSG on August 20th, September 30th and December 3rd and relevant developments.

Further information

40. Author
Dr Susan Cooper
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Date: January 8th 2025

Freedom of information

41. Open

Senate**5 February 2025****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 March and June 2025.

2 Action requested / recommendation

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

Please note that this paper is not intended for discussion during the meeting as it provides an update for information.

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 March and June 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.

Author

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Professor Tina Harrison, Convener of Senate Quality Assurance Committee
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

January 2025

Appendix 1: Senate Standing Committees: upcoming business March and June 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. SEC will continue to discuss CTP's priorities and direction of travel prior to the initial rollout of the new PGT Curriculum Framework from September 2026.
2. Graduate Outcomes Survey Annual Report	The Committee will discuss the 2024 release of the Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS) Annual Report, noting headline data and key insights.
3. Student Partnership Agreement 2025/26	The Student Partnership Agreement is presented annually to the Committee in May for approval, outlining the areas that the Students' Association wishes to work on in partnership with the wider University.
4. Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030: Reflections	The Committee will note progress on, and reflections around, the implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030.
5. Tutors and Demonstrators Update	The Committee will receive an update from the standing sub-committee of the University's Staff Experience Committee, established during 2024/25 to oversee the development of governance underpinning tutors and demonstrators.
6. Assessment and Feedback Groups	Assessment and Feedback is a SEC priority for 2024/25. 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.
7. Committee Priorities 2025/26	The Committee will consider and finalise priorities for the 2025/26 session, taking account of feedback provided by Senate.

Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC)

Upcoming business:	Brief description and context:
1. Student Support Model monitoring and evaluation	The Committee will consider the report from the project board and discuss good practice within the model and any areas for development.
2. Student Data Monitoring Task & Finish Group update	The Committee will receive a report on the activities of its Data Monitoring sub-group. The sub-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. Undergraduate Degree Outcomes	The Committee will consider and discuss the annual report on degree classification data, which is broken down by School and benchmarked against the Russell Group at subject group level.
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. Scotland's Rural College	The Committee will consider the annual report for 2023-24 of the Accreditation Committee of Scotland's Rural College (SRUC).
6. 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.
7. Committee Priorities 2025/26	The Committee will consider and finalise priorities for the 2025/26 session, taking account of feedback provided by Senate.

Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC)

Upcoming business:	Brief description and context:
1. Annual review of regulations	<p>The Committee will consider proposals for essential changes to Degree and Assessment Regulations ahead of the 2025/26 session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Undergraduate and Postgraduate Degree Regulations (March) - Taught Assessment Regulations; Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees (May)
2. Periodic review of policies	<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Withdrawal and Exclusion from Studies Procedure - Support for Study Policy
3. Amendments to the Student Appeals Regulations	<p>The Committee will consider proposals for minor amendments to the Student Appeal Regulations in order to align with updates to other policies.</p>
4. Review of examination operations	<p>At its March meeting, the Committee is expecting to receive a report with proposed amendments to the operation of examination diets following a review and consultation across Registry Services and the Colleges.</p>
5. Committee priorities for 2025/26	<p>The Committee will consider and finalise priorities for the 2025/26 session, taking account of feedback provided by Senate.</p>

Senate**5 February 2025****Update from the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group****Description of paper**

1. This paper provides Senate with an update on recent activity by the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group.

Action requested / recommendation

2. Senate is invited to *note* the paper.

Please note that this paper is not intended for discussion during the meeting. Senate members will be invited to consider the issues detailed within this paper as part of other Senate agenda items, or via online consultation.

Background and context

3. 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.
4. 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. The term of office for the group is 1 March 2024 – 31 July 2025.
5. The Senate External Review Task and Finish Group has now met five times, with its most recent meeting held on Tuesday 14 January 2025. Three further meetings are scheduled in February, April, and May 2025.
6. Senate members can access further information on the Group via the [Senate Members Portal](#).

Discussion

7. Updates on recent activity are provided below for information.

Senate standing committees

8. At its meeting of 6 November 2024, the Task and Finish Group discussed External Review Recommendation 17.

R17. 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.

To aid consideration, the Group was joined by the Conveners of Senate Education Committee, the Senate Quality Assurance Committee, and the Academic Policy and Regulations Committee. 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. Paper S 24/25 3J has been drafted to facilitate discussion at the 5 February 2025 meeting of Senate.
- The need to clarify where postgraduate research student matters were considered.

9. At its meeting of 14 January 2025, the Task and Finish Group discussed External Review Recommendation 18.

R18. 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.

Within the discussion, the need for additional input from Senate members was identified. The Task and Finish Group agreed that Senate members should be consulted on the operation and effectiveness of the Senate standing committees. Senate members are encouraged to participate in the consultation.

Separate actions were agreed for two sub-groups, one to propose clearer and more consistent wording for the Standing Committee remits and terms of reference, and another to draft a standard operating procedure that would apply to all Senate committees. Both will be considered at the Group's next meeting along with input from the consultation.

Research and the postgraduate researcher experience

10. At its meeting of 14 January 2025, the Task and Finish Group received a verbal update from the Vice-Principal Research and Enterprise on External Review Recommendation 16.

R16. We recommend that the VP Research and Enterprise undertakes a short review of how Research and especially PGRs could become more mainstreamed into Senate business.

The Vice Principal Research and Enterprise provided the Task and Finish Group with information on how research matters were considered by the University and the associated reporting structure; the types of research topics covered within the existing research governance structure; and the types of research topics that could be well suited to consideration by Senate to inform further discussion at the Group's next meeting.

The Task and Finish Group sought clarity on Senate's role regarding research, and it was agreed that a benchmarking exercise be conducted on the remits of research-related Senate committees at other higher education institutions.

Senate agenda setting

11. At its meeting of 6 November 2024, in relation to recommendation six, the Task and Finish Group considered consultation responses received from members of Senate on a proposal to form a Senate Business Committee. The Group agreed three changes to the proposal document, and agreed to recommend that Senate approve the formation of a Senate Business Committee.
12. At its meeting of 11 December 2024, Senate approved the formation of the Senate Business Committee. The Senate Business Committee will be implemented for the May 2025 Senate meeting, and will operate on a trial basis to 31 July 2026. The continuation of the Committee, as a standing committee of Senate, will be contingent on the outcome of a review to take place in early 2026.

Resource implications

13. There are no resource implications associated with providing this update.

Risk management

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

Equality & diversity

15. There are no equality and diversity implications associated with providing this update. The Senate External Review Task and Finish Group may develop proposals that would require separate consideration of equality and diversity issues.

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

16. Senate is invited to note this update at its meeting of 5 February 2025.

Authors

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Fraser Rudge, Senate Clerk
January 2025

Freedom of Information - Open