

The University of Edinburgh
Senate Education Committee

Thursday 27th February 2025, 2-5pm
Hybrid meeting: Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House
and via Microsoft Teams

1. Attendance

Present:	Position:
Professor Colm Harmon	Vice Principal, Students (Convener)
Professor Tina Harrison	Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) (Vice-Convener)
Professor Gill Aitken	Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching)
Professor Ruth Andrew	Senate Representative
Professor Sian Bayne	Assistant Principal Digital Education
Professor Laura Bradley	Representative of CAHSS (Postgraduate Research)
Professor Mary Brennan	Representative of CAHSS (Learning and Teaching)
Marianne Brown	Head of Academic Planning
Dr Shane Collins	Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions
Lucy Evans	Deputy Secretary, Students
Shelagh Green	Director for Careers and Employability
Professor Patrick Hadoke	Representative of CMVM (Postgraduate Research)
Lorna Halliday	Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching)
Professor James Hopgood	Senate Representative
Dr Lisa Kendall	Representative of CAHSS (Learning and Teaching)
Nichola Kett	Head of Academic Quality and Standards
Professor Linda Kirstein	Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching)
Alex Laidlaw	Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching)
Professor Jason Love	Head of School, CSE
Professor Velda McCune	Deputy Director, Institute for Academic Development
Callum Paterson	EUSA Academic Engagement and Policy Coordinator
Professor Jamie Pearce	Representative of CSE (Postgraduate Research)
Professor Jo Shaw	Head of School, CAHSS
Dr Tamara Trodd	Senate Representative
Patrick Jack	Committee Secretary, Academic Quality and Standards
Apologies:	
Dr Melissa Highton	Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Division of Information Services; Assistant Principal (Online and Open Learning)
Professor Mike Shipston	Head of Deanery, CMVM
Dylan Walch	Vice President (Education), Students' Association
In attendance:	
Laura Cattell	Deputy Director, UK Outreach & Widening Participation
Lauren Harrison	Senior Project Officer (Students)
Stuart Nicol	Head of eLearning Services, Educational Design and Engagement
Dr Jon Turner	Curriculum Transformation Project Lead

2. Minutes of meeting held on 7th November 2024

With regard to the Approach to Reassessment item, clarification was sought as to when College representatives on the Committee should report back on internal discussions held within Colleges and Schools on this matter. The Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) informed members that it would be helpful if feedback could be provided by the end of the 2024/25 academic year in order to maintain momentum.

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

3. Matters Arising

- **Lecture Recordings**

The Convener informed members that captions have been turned on by default on lecture recordings, following approval by Knowledge Strategy Committee and Information Technology Committee. Members noted that work led by EUSA is being undertaken to foster a more collective approach to lecture recordings across the University, with Schools being reminded of the importance of lecture recording and ensuring microphones are routinely switched on. Queries have been raised around the Lecture Recording policy's provision of an opt-out, however it was noted that approvals for opt-out should be taken into careful consideration within Schools. Discussions to help clarify this are ongoing between the University and the University and College Union (UCU).

The Committee noted concerns around students recording lectures via their own devices and uploading recordings to AI translation tools. This is an example of a wider range of issues related to AI which have arisen at pace; however, work is being undertaken in consultation with Colleges and Senate in order to enhance the University's AI guidance and to provide further clarification around what is and is not permissible. It was noted that student misconceptions around ELM tracking their use of AI ought to be addressed in the revised guidance and that student involvement in shaping enhanced AI guidance should be encouraged. College representatives on the Committee were subsequently requested to take forward this discussion via their respective College Education Committees.

Action: The Committee Secretary to add College views on this matter as an agenda item at the next meeting of SEC, as well as inviting Professor Michael Rovatsos who leads the University's AI Adoption Task Force.

- **Skills for Success Framework**

The Convener informed members that the Skills for Success Framework has been finalised and a core set of accompanying contextual slides has been produced. The next phase of work will focus on the implementation plan for the Framework. Members noted that the updated Framework can be accessed here: [Skills For Success Framework \(SFSF\)](#).

4. Substantive Items

4.1 Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030

The Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) presented the Strategy and highlighted to members that the revised Strategy incorporates changes requested by SEC at its meeting in November 2024 and reflects comments received from Senate at its meeting in December 2024. Members noted the key revisions made to the document, which include: a revised introduction; bullet points listed within the *Our Values* section that were initially referenced from the University's Strategy 2030 have been removed and rewritten; the addition of the *Flexible and Inclusive Ways to Study* section; more elaboration has been provided around the enablers that underpin the Strategy.

Members were informed that approval for the Strategy's implementation plan is not being sought at this stage. Two workshops will be held in March 2025 for members of Senate and its standing committees to further discuss the implementation plan. The Committee noted that invitations to the workshops will be circulated in due course and that outcomes from those discussions will be reported to the May 2025 meeting of Senate. The implementation plan will support with reporting of the Strategy to appropriate committees, including Senate, as well as reporting externally, such as to the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).

Members noted that work is underway with Communications and Marketing (CAM) in order to produce a high-level summary and communication plan for the Strategy, following its approval. CAM will also support work to update the diagram on page 2 of the Strategy to better reflect intersections between the individual sections displayed within the diagram, as well as associated partnership working.

Members subsequently noted the following comments:

- Would it be possible to amend the title of page 8 of the Strategy to, "Supporting Inspiring Teaching and Supervising"? This would help make the Strategy more inclusive to PhD students.
- Within the *Our Values* section (p.2-3), should the listed values of "Excellent" and "Relevant" be changed to "Excellence" and "Relevance"?
- Tenses used throughout the Strategy should be taken into consideration. While the wording of "we will" is used frequently, a lot of good practice already takes place within this context.
- The Future Teaching Spaces Group should be closely consulted during the implementation of the Strategy.
- The implementation plan should consider matters such as the allocation of time for teaching and marking within WAMs, as well as the facilitation of curriculum development via Boards of Studies.

The Committee subsequently approved the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030. The Convener expressed the Committee's thanks to the Deputy Vice Principal, Students

(Enhancement) and to the Senior Project Officer (Students) for all of the work they have contributed in securing approval for the Strategy.

4.2 Curriculum Transformation Programme: PGT Progress Report

The University's Curriculum Transformation Project (CTP) Lead provided the Committee with a verbal progress report on activity related to PGT. Members were informed that, despite delays around recruitment and pressures on staff time and capacity as a result of the current financial context, progress is being made on the identification of the key enabling requirements (regulatory, process and system) for the PGT Curriculum Framework and for gathering cases of PGT archetypes via direct engagement with Schools and Portfolio Review. An initial analysis of the alignment of current provision, covering 554 programmes, to the new PGT programme archetypes has been completed by Colleges via Portfolio Review. This analysis has enabled CTP colleagues to refine their assessment of the number of current programmes that would need to make changes to align with the new PGT Curriculum Framework, down from approximately 20% to no more than 10-15% of current provision. In the majority of cases, any required changes are likely to be minor.

Members further noted that developments arising via Portfolio Review and engagement with Schools regarding future plans and priorities to make changes, scale up provision and develop new programmes will be enabled through adoption of the PGT Curriculum Framework and programme archetypes. This includes using the increased flexibility of archetype A to enable alternatives to traditional 60-credit dissertations, as well as stackable pathways into study (archetype D). The two main areas of interest are around the stackable archetype C which enables greater flexibility in mode and period of study, and specialist pathways or programme clusters (archetype F).

In terms of next steps, members noted that the CTP team are preparing for the introduction of six flexible model programme structures (archetypes) during the 2024-26 transitional phase. Work is being undertaken with individual Schools in order to understand the end-to-end requirements to design, organise and run provision built around each of the archetypes. A major focus of current work on regulatory, process, and system enablers is to understand the relative complexity and scale of work required to fully support each of these archetypes and the time that will be needed to consult on and gain approval for the associated regulatory and policy changes. This will inform planning on which archetypes to prioritise for launch in 2026/27 and 2027/28.

The Committee subsequently discussed the progress report, with the following comments being raised:

- How do the ambitions of CTP interact with Portfolio Review, particularly in relation to stackable programmes and potential closures of part-time modes of study? This is particularly pertinent to online programmes which are typically offered part-time.
- Consideration should be taken around bridging the gap between closing part-time routes and transitioning towards more flexible modes of study, as there is danger from a reputational perspective in the University closing part-time routes. Clarity around how this is managed in the interim will be important.

- Processing changes around programme duration and approving programme closures requires considerable support and resource from professional services staff.
- In terms of approval timelines, alignment will be required between CTP targets and School and College-level approval timescales.
- There can be market value in the naming of more specific programmes at the point of entry, such as joint programmes. There could be a negative impact on the courses currently attached to programmes of this nature.
- The School of Chemistry previously reduced their programme offering from 24 down to 6 programmes. There was no impact on student numbers as a result of this activity.
- More programme specialisms require additional options in senior honours. Work should be undertaken to define a programme and identify optimality in terms of its core and optional courses.
- Further clarity around archetypes A and B will be available by the end of semester 2.

The Convener, in turn, provided some clarification in relation to points listed above. Members were notified of the ambition to provide students with greater levels of self-selection within their programme, as well as to diminish the distinction between full-time and part-time students. It was noted that part-time routes through programmes could potentially be more appropriately managed by students undertaking study at their own pace. Colleges are leading work around the market value of promoting specific degree pathways as this requires further investigation. Comments raised around part-time routes will be fed back to colleagues leading Portfolio Review. Members were informed that the University Initiatives Portfolio Board (UIPB) will consider revised business cases related to CTP, as a result of the wider financial context. Without pre-empting the discussion at UIPB, the revised business cases represent a substantial reduction in funding to CTP activity, and additional reductions may be proposed. Consideration will take place when UIPB next meets and further updates will be reported to SEC. The preference of members to receive updates via written papers, as opposed to verbal updates, was noted. The view of some SEC members that the level of expenditure on CTP, even at a reduced level, was at odds with the stated financial challenges at this time was noted.

4.3 Committee Priorities for 2025/26

The Convener introduced the Committee's proposed priorities for academic year 2025/26, noting that the finalised proposed priorities will return to SEC for approval at its meeting in May 2025. In discussing priorities, members were encouraged to be mindful of available resource, as well as the priorities of Senate. Members subsequently engaged in a wide-ranging discussion around the proposed priorities, raising the following comments and suggestions:

- SEC should be involved in simplifying and enhancing the curriculum outwith the confines of CTP. Could the CTP priority therefore be broadened out to include Portfolio Review?
- It is important for SEC to receive updates around key projects such as timetabling and curriculum management.

- There is a lack of explicit reference to PGR across the proposed priorities. Could the priority relating to the student support model incorporate PGR student support?
- The Committee should note the perspectives of members regarding how the University can mitigate the impact of the wider financial context on education and student experience.
- In terms of the assessment and feedback priority, “rubrics” risks being an overloaded term. Confusion can sometimes arise between the use of rubrics and wider marking criteria. Could there be some revised phrasing around this in relation to feedback quality?
- Work is ongoing with the Institute for Academic Development and Information Services to support the development of consistent rubrics across the University.
- Should reference to generative AI be made more explicit within the priorities? This could include the role of AI in assessments, as well as how it will change the delivery of teaching.
- Work will be required to be undertaken across the Senate Standing Committees in order to prepare for the University’s Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review in 2027/28.
- Further clarification should be provided across each of the Senate Standing Committees with regard to which committee will take ownership of certain matters.

4.4 Postgraduate Experience Surveys: 2025 Institutional Questions

The Head of Academic Planning presented the proposed institutional questions for the University’s 2025 postgraduate experience surveys. Members noted that the proposed institutional questions are asked in addition to a core set of questions. The rationale for the proposed changes to the institutional questions is to allow for more comparable data analysis that will build a picture of prioritised themes across NSS, PTES, PRES, and the Student Life Survey (SLS).

4.4.1 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)

The Committee approved the two new proposed institutional questions relating to student support and employability.

4.4.2 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)

The Committee approved the two new proposed institutional questions relating to student support and employability.

4.5 Widening Participation Strategy Update

The Deputy Director, UK Outreach & Widening Participation presented an update on progress achieved with the implementation of the Widening Participation (WP) Strategy 2030, launched in January 2024. Members were informed that internal guiding targets were identified during the launch of the Strategy in order to help drive work in this area forward and maintain momentum. Members noted a range of updates including SIMD20 and ACORN targets, progression statistics, work being undertaken to reduce the attainment gap, and an overview of the five priority areas relating to the implementation of the Strategy across the

student lifecycle. Work is being undertaken to review the extent to which actions being taken remain sufficient in achieving the targets set out in the Strategy.

Members subsequently discussed a range of points, including: the need to keep PGR student and supervisors in consideration of wider work around WP; the extent to which WP students were more adversely impacted by the 2023 Marking and Assessment Boycott; how this work aligns to that of the Student Data Monitoring Task Group and how it could be better integrated in order to prevent duplication of work; actions which are specific to the University, College and School-levels; addressing grade inflation and protecting academic standards within the context of addressing the awarding gap.

Action: The Committee Secretary to circulate the presentation slides to members.

4.6 Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) – SPS Certificate

The Head of Academic Quality and Standards presented the paper, noting that the HEAR Recommendation Panel considered the SPS Certificate proposal and recommended that the Committee should approve this proposed activity under section 6.1 of the HEAR. The Committee subsequently approved this proposal.

Members noted that, moving forward, the HEAR Recommendation Panel may no longer report to Senate Education Committee and instead report to another of the Senate Standing Committees.

5. Items for Information / Noting

5.1 Committee Priorities 2024/25: Mid-Year Reflection

Members noted the contents of the paper, further noting that an update on SEC's 2024/25 priorities was reported to Senate at its meeting in February 2025 as part of the mid-year reflection on standing committee priorities.

5.2 Learning Materials Accessibility Review

The Committee noted the contents of the paper, with members being encouraged to share the paper widely within their localised areas, particularly with Directors of Quality and the Directors of Teaching Network. Members noted that a dedicated accessibility report was produced for each School, providing breakdowns of data and highlighting areas where the School performed well and areas for improvement.

5.3 Assessment and Feedback Groups

The Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) informed the Committee that the Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group had not met since the previous meeting of SEC. The next meeting of the Group will take place on 14 March 2025 and will consult on the proposed capping of resit marks, as well as discussing updates around the moderation policy and guidance, and generative AI guidance. Members wishing to provide input regarding any of

these items prior to the meeting on 14 March were encouraged to contact the Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) directly.

6. Any Other Business

The Committee discussed the communication circulated to students regarding the University's response to financial challenges, dated 25 February. It was noted that Heads of School had not had sight of the communication prior to circulation, which has led to a number of students seeking to meet with student support staff in order to discuss the financial challenges being experienced across the sector. Members were informed that the communication had received support from Heads of College prior to its circulation, however it was noted that it was an oversight not to provide Heads of School with a preview of the communication. It was noted that there is often conflation around student definition of courses and programmes; the reference to courses within the communication may have led to some students confusing this as their degree programme and contributed to the increase in students requesting clarity from Student Advisors. While Schools are permitted to circulate localised follow-up communications, they were encouraged to run any draft communication past their College Office and Legal Services.

Members noted that a separate communication regarding the University's response to financial challenges will be circulated to PGR students on 28 February and will be co-signed by the College PGR Deans on behalf of the Doctoral College. This communication will be sent to Heads of School for preview prior to circulation.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 1st May 2025, 2-5pm. This will be a hybrid meeting, taking place in the Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House and via Microsoft Teams.