

The University of Edinburgh
Senate Education Committee

Thursday 1st May 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 Education Futures
Professor Laura Bradley	Representative of CAHSS (Postgraduate Research)
Professor Mary Brennan	Representative of CAHSS (Learning and Teaching)
Marianne Brown	Head of Academic Planning, Registry Services
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)
Dr Melissa Highton	Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Division of Information Services; Assistant Principal (Online and Open Learning)
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
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
Dylan Walch	Vice President (Education), Students' Association
Patrick Jack	Committee Secretary, Academic Quality and Standards
Apologies:	
Professor Velda McCune	Deputy Director, Institute for Academic Development
Professor Mike Shipston	Head of Deanery, CMVM
In attendance:	
Olivia Eadie	Co-Director, Institute for Academic Development
Lauren Harrison	Senior Project Officer (Students)
Professor Antony Maciocia	University Lead for Postgraduate Research, Doctoral College
Dr Elizabeth Williams	Associate Director, Library Academic Support

2. Minutes of meeting held on 27th February 2025

With regard to the verbal update on the Curriculum Transformation Programme, the request to minute the preference of members to receive updates via written papers, as opposed to verbal updates, for substantive items was noted.

The Committee otherwise approved the minutes of the meeting held on 27th February 2025.

Action: The Committee Secretary to update the previous minutes accordingly to reflect the Committee's preference of written papers over verbal updates for substantive items.

3. Matters Arising

- **Learning and Teaching Strategy Update**

The Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) notified members that workshops for members of Senate and standing committees of Senate to engage with the implementation plan for the Learning and Teaching Strategy were organised across three dates. Due to low sign-up rates, only one workshop was held. However, the session that was held garnered valuable feedback from attendees. Moving forward, the Deputy Vice Principal is holding meetings with stakeholders across the University who will be key in the Strategy's implementation. The Deputy Vice Principal accepted invitations to attend CSE's Education Committee and CMVM's Educational Forum in order to discuss this further.

- **Graduate Outcomes Survey Annual Report**

The Convener noted that this item normally comes to this meeting for discussion. However, extra work is being undertaken on this year's report due to the impact of the marking and assessment boycott (MAB) on relevant data. Members were informed that this paper will consequently be submitted to the first meeting of SEC next academic year.

- **Curriculum Transformation Programme**

The Convener updated members that the revised budget proposal for the Curriculum Transformation Programme (CTP) was formally rejected by the University Initiatives Portfolio Board (UIPB) in favour of exploring ways in which elements of CTP can be embedded into the Learning and Teaching workstream, as part of the wider work around changing the University's size, shape and ways of working. While CTP will close, it was highlighted that the ambition to complete its work with regard to PGT provision remains clear and elements of CTP's wider vision will be continued via relevant workstreams. Members were reassured that work will continue with regard to pathway-based study and stackable programme design. A paper on pathway specialisms is being taken to the next meeting of Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC), while further discussions with Schools and Colleges will be required around stackable programme design. A more substantive update on CTP will be provided at a future meeting of SEC.

4. Substantive Items

4.1 Revision of the University-level Student Guidance on the use of Generative AI

The Assistant Principal Education Futures introduced the paper, proposing a set of priorities and direction of travel for the revision of the University's student guidance on the use of generative AI. Members noted that consultation had been undertaken with College Education Committees, EUSA, the Doctoral College and the AI Adoption Task Group, all of whom were broadly supportive of the proposals. It was highlighted that a paper detailing insight into the student use of AI will be presented to Senate in May.

Members subsequently noted the following comments:

- Under section 5 within the paper, careful consideration should be taken around how restricting or disallowing generative AI use where necessary is framed. This should be considered holistically around assessment innovation.
- Under section 6, it was suggested that the wording of "*work produced by AI*" might be confusing to some students. For instance, students may produce their own work but use AI tools to carry out grammatical checks. Students require clarity and consistency in this regard, and it was noted that the work being undertaken in CAHSS around templates demonstrates good practice in terms of consistency of language across courses.
- Section 4D references the use of AI for summarising texts. CSE has suggested broadening this out as not all work across the University is written-based and can involve synthesising information from sources such as data, graphs and images.
- It was noted that discussions have been held within CAHSS around whether Course Organisers will be required to request exemptions from the University guidance, or whether this will continue to be devolved. Further clarity here would be welcome.
- College Academic Misconduct Officers (CAMOs) have indicated their preference for identifying when AI can be used to be devolved to Course Organisers.
- More detailed information for PGR elements within the guidance, such as research publications within theses, would be helpful.
- It is important to safeguard learning as well as assessment in the context of AI. Could safeguarding learning be elevated within section 6 of the guidance?
- In terms of skills, there should be a focus on how best to enable students to identify when and how they can use AI in order to best support their transition into employment post-study.
- Consideration should be taken around the potential staff use of AI tools for marking assessments, noting when its use would be appropriate and ensuring transparency to students. Efforts would be required to guard against creating double standards between staff and students, as well as demonstrating the value added for staff using AI tools.
- Could the guidance be aligned to the Skills for Success Framework? This could help manage expectations around student responsibilities and address concerns with regard to cognitive offloading.
- An explicit statement from the University around the use of translation tools, emphasising the University's expectations around being taught and assessed in the

English language, would be welcome. This would support CAMOs and SAMOs in setting parameters around what can be permitted in this context.

- Many staff who are involved in academic misconduct cases rely on Turnitin, however discussions remain ongoing around the future role of Turnitin at the University. Should staff be increasingly required to detect the use of AI, consideration is required around how to best police this.
- The University's LOUISA project is seeking to reduce the University's dependence on Turnitin via exploring tools within Learn which could replace tools currently provided by Turnitin.
- Microsoft Co-Pilot has been found to return increasingly accurate transcripts. Co-Pilot is beginning to integrate with other Microsoft Office apps and while it is currently free to use, its use may be charged in the future.
- University-level guidance can be published and updated centrally in the Learn template. Schools can also manually insert School-level guidance where required.

The Committee subsequently endorsed the guidance document. In terms of next steps, the Assistant Principal Education Futures agreed to update the guidance document, taking into account feedback from members, prior to taking the guidance to College Education Committees for further discussion. It was agreed that the finalised guidance should be submitted to Senate for approval at its October meeting¹, however a provisional version of the guidance could be in place for adoption by the commencement of the 2025/26 academic year.

4.2 Postgraduate Research Strategy 2030

The University's Lead for Postgraduate Research (PGR) introduced the paper, highlighting that the Strategy is still at a draft stage and will be abstracted into a finalised strategy document in due course. Members noted that the Strategy will be owned by Research Strategy Group (RSG), however the breadth of its content means that much of the detail is within the remit of SEC and Senate. The Strategy is being formulated to cover all aspects of PGR, including programme development and PGR student experience.

The Committee subsequently discussed the draft Strategy, with the following comments being raised:

- Enhancing PGR student experience and wellbeing should be strongly emphasised within the principles of the Strategy, as well as enhancing the support framework for PGR students.
- Under section 2, it was suggested that the wording of "*enhance the PGR experience*" be amended to "*ensure good PGR experience*".
- In terms of the key outputs of PGR degrees, should this be a graduate as opposed to a researcher? Not all PGR graduates subsequently pursue careers in research.
- Could external input such as accrediting bodies or stakeholder advisory boards, which is strong at the taught-level, be strengthened within this Strategy?
- Section 11.5 should more explicitly reference desk and study space.

¹ It was noted that the finalised guidance was raised at the May meeting of Senate and was subsequently published in June 2025.

- Within section 14, it would be helpful if further clarity could be provided around the financial viability of PGR programmes.
- Section 13.14 prescriptively refers to specific structures which may no longer accurately reflect what is in place in some areas of the University. Amending the wording to be more high-level may resolve this.
- The provision of a high-level framework that Colleges can operationalise would be helpful. Could a condensed version of the Strategy be rolled out as soon as possible, prior to the approval of the formal Strategy? This could bolster overall engagement.
- Could the Strategy's implications in terms of teaching be more clearly highlighted? The importance of research students to teaching at the University should be emphasised.

The Convener thanked members for their valuable comments. The University's Lead for PGR informed the Committee that the draft Strategy will be discussed at RSG later in May with a view to approval in the subsequent meeting of RSG during summer 2025. The Strategy will also be taken to Senate for approval in due course.

4.3 Committee Priorities 2025/26

The Head of Academic Quality and Standards introduced the paper, noting that the Committee's proposed priorities for academic year 2025/26 had been discussed at the March meeting of SEC, had been consulted on with senior colleagues, and aligns with University-level priorities.

The Committee discussed how SEC's priorities align to decisions made by UIPB and any potential consequent financial impact. It was noted that this does not fall within SEC's terms of reference, nor does SEC exercise budgetary control. However, items that UIPB consider which overlap with the remits of Senate Standing Committees will duly be discussed at these committees. The concern around reducing programme and course numbers was noted, however it was clarified that final decisions taken around closures, as well as portfolio review more widely, are taken by and implemented by Colleges as opposed to Senate Standing Committees. Rather than amending the existing priorities, the Committee agreed to the Convener's suggestion of an update on the Learning and Teaching workstream being provided at 2025/26 meetings of SEC.

Members further discussed the priority relating to supporting the ongoing implementation of the Student Support model, noting that the proposed wording suggests that PGR students will not be included within the model. The Committee subsequently agreed to amend the wording in this section from, "*not included*" to, "*not currently included*". It was noted that further work will be required around enhancing student support for PGR students, as the existing Student Support model may not be the optimal model for the PGR cohort.

4.4 Student Partnership Agreement 2025/26

The EUSA Vice President (Education) introduced the paper to the Committee, presenting an updated Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) format which seeks to better clarify the relationship between the University of Edinburgh and the Students' Association, highlights

key partnership activity across the University, and aligns more to best-practice examples from other higher education institutions across the UK. The Deputy Secretary, Students highlighted strong support for the proposed SPA, noting that it should be embedded in other relevant strategic developments across the University.

In discussing the proposed SPA, it was noted that “excellent learning experience” on page two of the agreement should be amended to “excellent academic experience”, in order to be more inclusive to PGR students. It was suggested that the SMART objectives within the SPA be amended to SMARTIE objectives to better incorporate equity and inclusion.

The Committee endorsed the SPA and approved the agreement for 2025-26. It was noted that, moving forward, SEC will no longer be required to approve the SPA on an annual basis, with future SPAs being agreed and signed by EUSA and University senior leadership.

4.5 Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy (Microphones Amendment)

The Committee noted the contents of the paper and the proposal to make minor changes to the Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy (AILP) with regard to its statement on use of radio microphones.

In discussing the proposed amendment, members raised the following points:

- The amendment proposes that microphones shall be worn during lectures, however greater clarity should be provided around their use during seminars.
- Some students find that the use of microphones in small teaching rooms can be challenging due to sensitivities to sound.
- The use of microphones can help with the hearing loop, as well as for recording purposes.
- It is important to note that while lapel microphones are best at capturing the speaker’s voice, they also capture other voices within teaching spaces.
- Capturing students’ voices, for instance when they ask questions, without their consent must be taken into consideration. The distinctions between lecture capture and seminar capture ought to be taken into account.
- It is important that the University’s guidance around generative AI is not contradicted by the AILP.
- The AILP and the University’s Lecture Recording policy must align with one another.

The Committee did not approve the proposed amendment to the AILP. It was suggested that feedback from the Committee be taken into consideration and that a revised amendment return to the next meeting of SEC in September 2025 for approval.

4.6 Review of Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities

The Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) introduced the paper, outlining the initial plans for a substantial review of the Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities scheduled for 2025/26, and outlining the proposal to develop an Assessment and Feedback Policy. In terms of timelines, it was highlighted to members that the aim is to expedite the

review, as well as the development and approval of the potential new policy, with this work being completed by the end of semester one in 2025/26, if possible.

The Committee raised a number of comments in relation to this review, including: avoiding duplication of effort with regard to the Taught Assessment Regulations; the development of assessment dashboards and calendars; aligning with student and staff AI guidance; considerations around the diversity of assessment and assessment load.

It was agreed that, while SEC has a key role in providing input into the review and development of policy, ownership of this should be held more substantively by APRC. In terms of next steps, the paper will be taken to Schools and Colleges for further discussion.

5. Items for Update

5.1 Student Voice Update

The Committee noted the contents of the paper and its outline of planned activity to improve how student voices are listened to and acted upon across the University. Members noted that a Student Voice Framework will be developed to provide clarity and consistency across core student voice practices, from data collection to communication to students. It was suggested that Student Experience Services may wish to consider amending “*student voice*” to “*student voices*” when developing the Framework.

5.2 Assessment and Feedback Groups

The Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) informed the Committee that the Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group, at its meeting April 2025, reviewed the first draft of proposed internal moderation guidance for the University. Following discussion, it was proposed that further discussions be held with colleagues in Colleges and Schools around definitions and standards setting. This should be clarified in the guidance but should not have an impact on the current regulations.

6. Items for Update

6.1 Membership and Terms of Reference 2025/26

Members noted the contents of the paper and provided no further comments.

6.2 Senate Standing Committees Annual Internal Effectiveness Review

The Committee noted the plans for the annual internal review of Senate and its standing committees’ effectiveness.

7. Any Other Business

Members who are stepping down from SEC at the end of the 2024/25 academic year were thanked for their valuable input. Ambiguity around Head of School membership on SEC, namely

how long they are expected to sit on the Committee following nomination by their Head of College, was noted.

Action: Academic Quality and Standards to discuss consistent checks on nominated members across Senate Standing Committees.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 25th September 2025, 2-5pm. This will be a hybrid meeting, taking place in the Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House and via Microsoft Teams.

Members will be notified of the dates of all 2025/26 SEC meetings once they are confirmed.

Action: Committee Secretary to confirm 2025/26 meeting dates and issue invites to members.