

The University of Edinburgh

Senate Education Committee

Thursday 27th November 2025 2-5pm

Hybrid meeting: Torridon Room, Charles Stewart House and via Microsoft Teams

A G E N D A

* Standing item + Committee priority

1.	Welcome and Apologies	
2.	Minutes of the previous meeting To approve • 25th September 2025	SEC 25/26 2A
3.	Matters Arising • Convener's Communications • Student Surveys Update	
4.	SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS	
4.1	Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation For approval	SEC 25/26 2B
4.2	Agentic AI in learning and teaching: University response For discussion	SEC 25/26 2C
4.3	Governance of Generative AI in Teaching and Learning: Coordinating Practice For discussion	SEC 25/26 2D
4.4	Challenge Courses Update For endorsement	SEC 25/26 2E
4.5	Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) – EFI Community Volunteer For approval	SEC 25/26 2F
5.	ITEMS FOR UPDATE	
5.1	Assessment and Feedback Policy Update For noting	SEC 25/26 2G
5.2	Learning and Teaching Workstream Update * For noting	Verbal update
5.3	Assessment and Feedback Groups*+ For noting	Verbal update

6.	Any Other Business	
7.	Date of next meeting Thursday 5 th March 2026, 2-5pm Hybrid meeting: Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House & Microsoft Teams	

The University of Edinburgh
Senate Education Committee

Thursday 25th September 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)
Katya Amott	Vice President (Education), Students' Association
Professor Ruth Andrew	Representative of CMVM (Postgraduate Research)
Professor Sian Bayne	Assistant Principal Education Futures
Professor Lisa Boden	Head of School, CMVM
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
Dr Sam Coombes	Senate Representative
Professor Antonis Giannopoulos	Senate Representative
Shelagh Green	Director for Careers and Employability
Lorna Halliday	Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching)
Professor Willem Hollmann	Head of School, CAHSS
Heather Innes	EUSA Academic Engagement and Policy Coordinator
Dr Lisa Kendall	Representative of CAHSS (Learning and Teaching)
Nichola Kett	Head of Academic Quality and Standards
Alex Laidlaw	Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching)
Professor Jason Love	Head of School, CSE
Professor Velda McCune	Deputy Director, Institute for Academic Development
Professor Jamie Pearce	Representative of CSE (Postgraduate Research)
Professor Patrick Walsh	Senate Representative
Patrick Jack	Committee Secretary, Academic Quality and Standards
Apologies:	
Lucy Evans	Deputy Secretary, Students
Dr Melissa Highton	Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Services; Assistant Principal Online and Open Learning
Professor Linda Kirstein	Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching)
In attendance:	
Meg Batty	Academic Quality and Standards
Charlie Bevan	Program Director, Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program
Dr Michael Newton	SWAY Review Chair, ECA
Stuart Nicol	eLearning Services Head, Educational Design & Engagement

Kirsten Roche	Careers and Employability Lead, Careers Service
Dr Elizabeth Williams	Associate Director, Library Academic Support

2. Minutes of meeting held on 1st May 2025

With regard to the University-level Student Guidance on the use of Generative AI item (4.1), the minutes state that it was agreed that the finalised guidance should be submitted to Senate for approval at its October meeting. Members noted that that the finalised guidance was instead raised at the May meeting of Senate and was subsequently published in June 2025.

The Committee otherwise approved the minutes of the meeting held on 1st May 2025.

3. Matters Arising

- **Convener's Communications**

The Convener informed members that this meeting was his last as Convener. Future convening arrangements for Senate Education Committee (SEC) will be communicated to members in due course.

4. Substantive Items

4.1 Student Surveys Update: 2025 Student Surveys (NSS, PTES & PRES) - Results and Responses

The Convener introduced the paper, noting the results for the University across the National Student Survey (NSS), Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES). The Committee noted that almost every theme across all three surveys had seen satisfaction rate improvements, most notably in areas whereby a high volume of enhancement-led effort has been undertaken, such as timeliness of feedback. Members further noted the identified areas of focus moving forward.

Members subsequently noted the following comments:

- Free-text comments within PRES highlighted the distinction in satisfaction between research culture at localised and institutional levels. Enhancing awareness across Schools and research centres could be supported by reinstituting the weekly Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities (IASH) roundup.
- Undertaking sector benchmarking around sense of belonging for PGR students could be helpful in better understanding ongoing dissatisfaction around space.
- It would be beneficial for staff if paragraph 77, bullet point 4 could be elaborated. Clarity around whether this applies to assessment deadlines, the virtual learning environment or general communications with students would be helpful. The Teaching Timetabling and Course Selection Project is looking into student feedback around timetabling communications.

- In terms of paragraph 77 more generally, consideration should be taken around the capacity of individual staff members to go above and beyond their current activity in these areas.
- The wording of paragraph 78 could be revised to more clearly reference the ongoing evaluation of the student support model and its case management system. It was noted that an evaluation report of the model will be going to Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) later in the semester.
- Small mechanistic approaches for making improvements within the NSS should be considered, such as identifying local areas scoring strong satisfaction rates in comparison to the rest of the University, and subsequently sharing good practice.
- Issues raised in paragraphs 56 and 58 relate more to expectation management of students. This could be addressed by more consistent feedback and clearer communication to students with regard to grade descriptors and rubrics. The Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) noted that discussions regarding the more consistent use of rubrics across the University are ongoing and are being channelled through the Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group.

Action: The Head of Academic Planning and the Committee Secretary to relay comments from members to the Deputy Secretary, Students and discuss potential related items to bring back to SEC for further discussion.

4.2 Graduate Outcomes Survey Annual Report

The Committee was presented with an annual update on the UK-wide Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Graduate Outcomes Survey of graduate destinations. The University is obliged to undertake this survey and graduates are contacted by HESA 15 months after completion of their programme, thus data gathered and processed in 2025 reflected the destinations of 2023 UG graduates and 2022 PGT graduates.

Members were informed that, as the Graduate Outcomes Survey does not generate real-time data, the University has introduced a 'What's Next' survey question which asks students during their graduation registration process to select from 15 options regarding what they are planning to move on to following graduation. The What's Next survey received a 95% response rate in 2025, with data indicating that the labour market for UG graduates was not as positive this year in comparison with recent years.

Moving forward, the University will begin to combine data from both the Graduate Outcomes Survey and the What's Next survey in order to identify relevant correlations between the datasets. The University will be able to fully combine these datasets from 2026/27 onward. Members noted that it would be helpful to better identify graduate destinations of PGR students, international students, disabled students and Widening Participation (WP) students in order to help measure whether gaps in graduates transitioning to highly skilled employment are closing.

4.3 Students' Association Sabbatical Officer Priorities 2025/26

The Edinburgh University Students' Association (EUSA) VP Education presented the paper, detailing the VP Education's and the Sabbatical Officer team's priorities for 2025/26. The priority of enhancing support for WP students and addressing the attainment gap was noted, with the Careers Service highlighting that they wish to work with EUSA to help overcome structural barriers within the labour market. Similarly, CAHSS noted their enthusiasm to work with EUSA around WP students and the attainment gap, particularly as this aligns with thematic work being undertaken across CAHSS committees regarding the progression of WP and care-experienced students.

In terms of the priority regarding alternative forms of assessment, it was clarified that the ambition in this context is to promote forms of assessment which are alternative to in-person exams, and to better prepare students for their future careers. This could include forms of assessment such as: research projects; writing policy briefs; publishing blog posts.

4.4 Sector Surveys' Institutional Questions

The Head of Academic Planning introduced the paper to members, outlining the proposed changes to the way in which the sector surveys' optional institutional questions are agreed within the University. This relates to wider thematic work around student voice to allow better oversights across student voice mechanisms and outcomes.

In considering the proposal, members raised the following comments:

- For the PRES survey's optional questions, it was requested that the Doctoral College and College PGR Deans are consulted as opposed to College Deans of Quality Assurance.
- The membership of the Student Survey Management Group should have academic representation and input.
- The Student Survey Management Group should provide feedback to SEC and the Student Lifecycle Management Group (SLMG) on decisions made regarding approved optional questions.
- The proposal notes that SEC will be informed of agreed questions, thus SEC will still retain some oversight of governance while ensuring that timescales are adhered to.
- In terms of timing, SEC reviews the results of student survey data on an annual basis. SEC could therefore have a role in raising themes and areas of focus which inform Student Survey Management Group considerations, prior to the point of approval of optional survey questions.

The Convener subsequently noted the Committee's approval for this proposal, taking into account the points minuted above by members.

4.5 Learning Analytics Policy Review

The Committee was presented with an update of the University's *Learning Analytics Principles and Policy* document and its proposed revisions for approval. Members noted the proposal to combine and revise the 2017 *Learning Analytics Principles and Purposes* with

the 2018 *Policy and procedures for developing and managing Learning Analytics activities* in order to create a clear link between student records and learning data.

In discussing the proposal, members noted the following comments:

- In terms of the reference to research activities on pages 12-13 and their relevant requirements / approvals, should this not be required for all provision? If so, why is this specifically badged as research activity?
- With regard to the Project Manager role, who is expected to take up these roles and what support and training will they receive? It was noted that a Project Manager office is in place at the University which follows embedded guidelines. Project Managers receive appropriate support and the number of these posts will be dependent on funding.
- It was questioned whether current routine work being undertaken in other committees involving the use of data, such as SQAC's use of student progression data to help address the attainment gap, risks falling foul of the policy. Does the use of this data require approval via the proposed governance channels?
- Discomfort was noted between the policy and standard working approaches across the University. The policy unnecessarily restrains effective day-to-day work around quality assurance and student support.
- The policy appears abstract and narrow in the context of using student analytics to support the student journey.
- The policy may have been reflective of the landscape when it was created, however this is no longer fully the case and therefore a revision of terminology should be taken into consideration.
- In terms of the reference to the use of personal data from more than one School requiring approval, it was noted that the majority of students are engaging with more than one School.
- It was suggested that data ethics and governance should be reviewed more widely prior to agreeing revisions to the updated policy.

Taking into account members' discussion, the Convener highlighted that the Committee did not issue approval for the proposal and requested a more substantive pause on the development of this policy.

5. Items for Update

5.1 SWAY Review Recommendations

The Committee received a verbal update on the 2025 review of the Study and Work Away Service (SWAY) from the review's Project Lead. Members noted that the format of the review partially mirrored the process for internal periodic reviews, with stakeholders being consulted during a 'review week', which culminated in a review report containing commendations and recommendations. Members noted the commendations and recommendations of the review, as well as some reflections of the review process. Members further noted that colleagues within SWAY have commented on the draft report and, once the report is finalised, recommendations will be actioned by designated lead staff member(s) within the University.

The Committee subsequently discussed a wide range of elements relating to the review including: the University's strategic objectives for international students and mobility; alignment to professional services reviews; mobility for specific student cohorts post-Erasmus; internationalisation at home; alignment with Edinburgh Global's *Global Action Plan*; financial support packages for student exchange.

The Convener duly thanked members for their input and noted that this item should return to a future meeting of SEC for further discussion once the final review report is published and it has been linked to the University's Global Action Plan and Learning & Teaching Strategy 2030.

Action: Review Group to liaise with Committee Secretary to discuss including the SWAY Review on SEC's forward agenda for further discussion at a future meeting.

5.2 Mastercard Foundation Scholars Programme Phase 2 (2023-2030)

The Program Director of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Programme updated the Committee on the Program's achievements to date, particularly the experience of its Online Distance Learning (ODL) students. Members noted that the Program, currently in its second phase, is building on the learnings of the first phase and considering how it can better connect with colleagues across the University to enhance the experience of ODL students. The Convener noted the Program Director's leadership in this area within the University and further noted the excellent calibre of Mastercard Foundation students.

Members subsequently discussed a range of items in relation to the paper, such as: the University's position on ODL and the impact on future funding; the consideration of ODL within wider portfolio review; the potential to enhance internationalisation at home; the online PhD programme and supporting the sense of community amongst its students; the key lessons learned from phases one and two. The Program Director highlighted that they and their team are keen to share their learnings for the benefit of similar cohorts across the University. Moving forward, members were encouraged to contact the Program Director directly in order to discuss this further and to strengthen connections across the institution.

5.3 Learning and Teaching Workstream Update

The Convener informed members that a substantive update on the Learning and Teaching Workstream will be provided at the November meeting of SEC, following further meetings of the University Initiatives Portfolio Board (UIPB).

5.4 Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation

The Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) verbally updated members on the progress of the Learning and Teaching Strategy's implementation. Discussions are being held with colleagues in Academic Quality and Standards around the development of an oversight group to help co-ordinate strategy implementation. A small number of measurable, concrete actions will be required to demonstrate traction of strategy implementation. A further requirement will involve the gathering of information regarding existing activity within

Schools and Colleges which aligns to the Strategy, in order to showcase good practice. This will be demonstrated internally, as well as externally during the University's forthcoming Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review in 2027/28.

5.4 Assessment and Feedback Groups

The Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) notified the Committee that the Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group met earlier in September 2025 and agreed two short-term priorities moving forward: the development of a consolidated Assessment and Feedback Policy to formally set out all mandatory elements of the existing *Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities* document; the development of moderation guidance. Members were informed that colleagues within Academic Quality and Standards are supporting the progress of both priorities.

6. Items for Information / Noting

6.1 Barcelona Declaration on Open Research Information

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

6.2 Generative AI Guidelines for Postgraduate Research Students

Members noted the contents of the paper and were informed that this guidance has now been published online.

6.3 Membership and Terms of Reference 2025/26

Members noted the updated membership and the minor additions to SEC's Terms of Reference following the standing down of the Knowledge Strategy Committee on 1 August 2025. No further comments were raised.

7. Any Other Business

No items of any other business were raised.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 27th November 2025, 2-5pm. This will be a hybrid meeting, taking place in the Torridon Room, Charles Stewart House and via Microsoft Teams.

Senate Education Committee

27th November 2025

Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation

Description of paper

1. The paper proposes governance and leadership arrangements to support the effective implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030, specifically the establishment of a Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Group and a Curriculum Development and Innovation Group.

Fit with remit

Education Committee	Y/N
Promote strategically-led initiatives and university-wide changes designed to enhance the educational experience of students and learners.	Y
Promote innovations in learning, teaching and assessment, embrace new teaching methods and consider cross-cutting themes such as research-led and technology-enhanced learning, digital and information literacy, education for employability, internationalisation and lifelong learning. Consider and promote local developments or initiatives with substantial implications for University learning and teaching strategy, policy, services or operations.	Y
Oversee policy relating to students' academic experience and proactively engage with high-level issues and themes arising from student feedback.	Y
Anticipate and prepare for new opportunities and likely future developments in learning and teaching for all cohorts of students and learners.	Y

Action requested / recommendation

2. SEC are asked to discuss and approve the proposed groups and their terms of reference.

Background and context

3. The University's Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030 (LTS 2030), sets an ambitious vision for delivering an outstanding, future-focused educational experience and achieve the learning and teaching focused purpose of Strategy 2030, specifically that: **our teaching will match the excellence of our research. We will improve and sustain student satisfaction and wellbeing.**
4. The purpose of the Learning and Teaching Strategy is to stimulate developments to our educational offer ensuring it remains fit to equip our students for the futures they will be entering, to promote and support inspiring teaching, and engage and empower our learners. These three core purposes of our Learning and Teaching Strategy are shaped by our institutional values set out in Strategy 2030 and underpinned by a set of enablers that support our learning and teaching

processes, our students' wellbeing and academic development, and the development of our teaching staff.

5. The development of the Learning and Teaching Strategy responds to the QAA QESR 2023 recommendation that: *"the University should expedite the final drafting, approval and implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy to help staff and students understand how major strategic projects work together and provide clarity on the strategic approach to enhancing learning and teaching"*

Discussion

6. To support the effective implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy, this paper proposes the establishment of a *Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Group* as a working group of SEC. The group will provide strategic leadership, coordination, and oversight for the development and delivery of the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Plan. Its purpose is to ensure that activity across Schools, Colleges, and professional services is aligned to institutional priorities, that progress is monitored effectively, and that risks and opportunities are identified and managed proactively.
7. The paper also proposes the creation of a *Curriculum Development and Innovation Group* to lead, coordinate, and oversee University-wide curriculum enhancement and innovation activities that advance the priorities of LTS 2030. This group will provide strategic direction for University-wide initiatives including, but not limited to, Challenge Courses, Experiential Learning, the Skills for Success Framework, and the use of AI in teaching and curriculum innovation. The new group will replace the Oversight Group for Curriculum Innovation established under the Curriculum Transformation Programme (CTP) which previously reported to the CTP Board, ensuring that this important area of work is embedded within the long-term governance and implementation structures for learning and teaching.
8. Together, these two groups will provide the governance and leadership required to move from strategic ambition to sustained, coordinated delivery of LTS 2030 across the University.

Resource implications

9. The main purpose of the Learning and Teaching Strategy is to guide and focus the utilisation of existing resource. Resource implications associated with major developments to the curriculum are currently resourced via the Learning and Teaching Workstream Board.

Risk management

10. There is a risk to learning and teaching and the student experience in not implementing the Learning and Teaching Strategy effectively. Without effective oversight of the Strategy, we may fail to achieve our ambition set out in Strategy 2030. A lack of effective implementation may also result in ineffective resource allocation. There is a further risk that without effective implementation we fail to meet the recommendations from the QESR leading to consequences in our next external review.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

11. The Learning and Teaching Strategy contributes to following SDGs:



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



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

Equality & diversity

12. Equity, diversity and inclusion are core considerations of the Learning and Teaching Strategy. EDI is a core value underpinning Strategy 2030 and the Learning and Teaching Strategy. An EqIA has been created:
https://www.docs.csg.ed.ac.uk/EqualityDiversity/EIA/Academic_Registrars_Office-Learning_and_Teaching_Strategy_2025.pdf

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

13. Further details to be developed through the proposed Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Group

Author

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 19th November 2025*

Presenter

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Freedom of Information: Open

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Appendix A:

Terms of Reference

Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Group

1. Purpose

The Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Group (LTSIG) is as a working group of Senate Education Committee, to lead, coordinate, and oversee the development and implementation of the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Plan. LTSIG will ensure that the strategic priorities, objectives, and actions identified in the Strategy are translated into an actionable, measurable implementation plan; that progress is monitored and reported; and that impact is achieved across all areas of the University.

2. Remit

- I. **Strategy Implementation and Planning**
 - a. Develop and maintain the Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Plan, setting out actions, timelines, responsibilities, and resource implications.
 - b. Develop and recommend a suite of key performance indicators (KPIs) and success measures aligned with the Strategy's priorities.
- II. **Oversight and Coordination**
 - a. Oversee and support the implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy across the University, ensuring alignment between University, College, and School-level initiatives.
 - b. Ensure local implementation plans and activities are aligned with the Learning and Teaching Strategy.
- III. **Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting**
 - a. Monitor progress against the implementation plan and KPIs.
 - b. Receive regular updates from project leads thematic groups, including the Curriculum Development and Innovation Group¹, and Schools.
 - c. Produce progress and assurance reports for the Learning and Teaching Committee, including recommendations for enhancement or adjustment.
- IV. **Promotion, Engagement, and Dissemination**
 - a. Act as champions of the Learning and Teaching Strategy within their Colleges, Schools and professional areas, promoting awareness, understanding and engagement with the Strategy.
- V. **Risk and Assurance**
 - a. Identify and monitor risks associated with implementation and recommend appropriate mitigation actions.

¹ The Oversight Group for Curriculum Innovation, set up under CTP to oversee the development of Challenge Courses, Experiential Learning and Skills for Success is being reshaped into a Curriculum Development and Oversight Group aligned with the Learning and Teaching Strategy which will report into the Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Group.

- b. Provide assurance to the Learning and Teaching Committee that the implementation plan is being delivered effectively and with measurable impact.

3. Meetings

- The group will meet four times per academic year.
- Additional meetings may be convened as necessary.

4. Reporting

- The LTSIG will report to the Senate Education Committee.
- Additionally, the group will provide updates to the Learning and Teaching Workstream Board, ensuring ongoing alignment.
- Progress reports will include updates on delivery of the implementation plan, KPI performance, risks, and recommendations.

5. Review

- The Terms of Reference and membership will be reviewed annually to ensure continued relevance, effectiveness, and alignment with the University's strategic priorities.

6. Membership

- Membership will ensure cross-University representation and shared ownership of the Strategy's implementation.

Role	Representation/Positions
Chair	Tina Harrison
Members	3 x College Deans for Education Staff member and Student Representative from Students' Association 2x Representatives from Academic Quality and Standards Representative from Digital Education Chair of the Curriculum Development and Innovation Group Representative from IAD (with focus on academic development) 3 x Head of School (1 from each College) Representative from Careers Service

Appendix B:

Curriculum Development and Innovation Group (CDIG)

Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

The Curriculum Development and Innovation Group (CDIG) is a sub-group of the Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Group. It provides strategic direction, coordination, and oversight of University-wide curriculum development and innovation activities that advance the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy, including, but not limited to: Challenge Courses, Experiential Learning, the Skills for Success Framework, AI in teaching innovation.

2. Remit

To guide the design, development, approval, implementation, and evaluation of new and distinctive University-wide elements of the curriculum, ensuring alignment with institutional priorities for learning, teaching, and student experience. The Group will:

- **Provide strategic direction and oversight** for the design, development, approval, and evaluation of pilot Challenge Courses, ensuring that learning aims, delivery models, and assessment approaches align with institutional ambitions.
- **Support Communities of Practice** for colleagues engaged in curriculum design and innovation, fostering knowledge exchange, peer learning, and professional development across Schools and Colleges.
- **Support the embedding of the Skills for Success Framework**, ensuring its integration into programme and course design.
- **Receive reports and insight from the AI in Teaching Innovation Project**, using these to identify best practice and share learning.
- **Foster innovation in programme and course design**, encouraging approaches that enhance interdisciplinarity, experiential learning, and the development of student skills and attributes that align with the Skills for Success Framework.
- **Collaborate with relevant groups and units**, including Academic Quality and Standards, Registry, Information Services to ensure joined up working.
- **Advise on stakeholder engagement and communications** to promote understanding, participation, and visibility of curriculum innovation across the University community.
- **Monitor and evaluate progress and outcomes of curriculum innovation activity**, reporting regularly to the Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Group and Senate Education Committee.
- **Make recommendations to the Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Group and/or Senate Education Committee** as appropriate on:
 - Approval criteria and models for University-wide innovative curriculum components.
 - Governance arrangements for sustainable delivery.

- Resource implications and priorities for implementation.
- Alignment with broader institutional initiatives.

2. Operation

The Group reports to the Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Group, with formal updates and recommendations submitted to Senate Education Committee.

3. Meetings

The Group will meet twice per semester, with additional meetings scheduled as required to support specific developments or approval timelines.

4. Membership

Membership will include academic and professional services staff with responsibility for or expertise in curriculum design, approval, quality enhancement, and educational innovation. Additional members may be co-opted for specific projects or areas of work.

Current membership below for information – to be updated to meet changed TOR

Name	Title	School/Deanery/College Professional Services
Tina Harrison Chair	Personal Chair and Deputy Vice Principal Students (Enhancement)	Business School (CAHSS)
Rhona McMorland	Senior Project Manager	Strategic Change Service
Mary Brennan	Personal Chair of Food Marketing and Society and Dean of Education (CAHSS)	Business School (CAHSS)
Hannah Chalmers	Personal Chair of Sustainable Energy Systems	School of Engineering (CSE)
Marie Craft	Head of Teaching and Student Administration	School of Social and Political Sciences (CAHSS)
Andy Cross	Deputy Director	Edinburgh Climate Change Institute (CSE) School of Geosciences (CSE)
Patrick Hadoke	Personal Chair of Arterial Modelling	Centre for Cardiovascular Science (CMVM)
Sarah Harvey	EFI Head of Education	Edinburgh Futures Institute (CAHSS)

Name	Title	School/Deanery/College Professional Services
	Development and Delivery	
Linda Kirstein	Personal Chair of Earth Dynamics	School of Geosciences (CSE)
Lesley McAra	Personal Chair of Penology	School of Law (CAHSS)
Paul Norris	Senior Lecturer Social Policy	School of Social and Political Sciences (CAHSS)
Sabine Rolle	Personal Chair of Student Learning (Interdisciplinary Education) and Challenge Course lead	Department of European Languages and Cultures (CAHSS)
Tim Stratford	Personal Chair of Civil Engineering Design	School of Engineering (CSE)

Senate Education Committee

27 November 2025

Agentic AI in learning and teaching: University response

Description of paper

1. The paper flags the emergence of AI agents, explains how they work and sets out their implications for teaching, learning and assessment within the university.

It aims to support discussion in order to reach a university position on the issues raised.

It connects with the Strategy 2030 outcomes relating to Teaching and Learning and Social and Civic Responsibility.

Fit with remit

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

Action requested / recommendation

2. The Committee is asked to discuss the issues raised, and endorse the proposed ways forward.

Background and context

Overview of AI agents:

3. Browser-based AI agents are a further development of generative AI that enable AI to automate task completion in any web-based system – including within Learning Management Systems (LMSs) like Learn – with minimal human input. Now becoming widely available, browser-based agents are emerging as the latest big tech ‘disruptor’ of education. Using these agents, students no longer need to copy and paste responses from an LMS into an AI tool to get a response. They just need to create a basic prompt such as:

Open my online course at [URL]. Login with the username [username] and use the password [pword] to log in. Complete any discussion tasks required for this week and look for any assignments due. If there is one, complete and submit it.

4. An AI agent does the rest, working across the course LMS instance to complete the tasks identified in the prompt. Because the student is logging in with their own username and password, this activity will look like ‘normal’ student engagement – there is currently no way for the course organiser to identify that this is agent activity.
5. This clearly has implications for the ways in which we use our online learning environments. AI agents pose a threat not just to assessment practices (completing online quizzes, writing and submitting essays) but also to forms of online community-building that are used in many of our courses – discussion forums in particular (agents can actively post to these on behalf of students, or indeed staff).
6. Browser-based agents currently available include Perplexity’s Comet, Anthropic’s Claude, ChatGPT Agent and others. These are being developed for use in multiple professional contexts, but obviously carry distinctive problems for the education sector. There is evidence of significant marketing by providers directly to students at the moment via social media, particularly from Perplexity which is currently explicitly pushing content praising the ability of Comet to support ‘cheating’ (see [Open Letter to Perplexity AI](#)).
7. While there is evidence that agents are being used within the Library catalogue, we do not currently have data on the extent of usage of agents in our LMS – it is probably low currently, but as with ChatGPT in 2023-24 we are heading for a rapid surge in general usage and will need to have an institutional response to this relevant to the challenges it poses for teaching and learning.

DiscussionSummary of current debate in higher education:

8. At present there is almost no reliable published research on agent use in higher education teaching, but there is a lot of well-informed commentary. This can be summarised as follows.

Alarm:

9. A growing number of academics and administrators have tested AI agents in their own courses and publicly discussed how potentially catastrophic these could be for teaching and learning. Videos showing the automated completion of tasks in LMSs are circulating – these include ‘test runs’ within [Moodle](#), [Canvas](#) and others. They show agents moving through the LMS to find assignments, complete tasks and submit them. In some cases agents have been found capable of impersonating teachers, marking and grading work and posting feedback (see [Colleges And Schools Must Block And Ban Agentic AI Browsers Now](#)).
10. Academics and commentators generally emphasise the risk of inaction on the part of universities – If we do not act, we risk being caught in a cycle of automated assessment creation, completion, marking and feedback in which ‘nobody learns and nobody gains’ (see [The Dangers of Using AI to Grade](#)).

Calls for action:

11. There are multiple calls for action circulating, including the American Modern Language Association’s [Statement of Educational Technologies and AI Agents](#), which ‘unequivocally’ advocates for full ‘faculty involvement’ in selection, procurement and responsible implementation of systems and software incorporating AI. It calls upon policymakers, and LMS/AI companies to cooperate with universities to prevent misuse.
12. Academic, administrative and learning technologist commentary online consistently calls for the development of tools to detect and block agentic AI use in LMSs.

LMS service provider response:

13. There is no sign that LMS providers are currently accepting responsibility for the impact of agents on teaching and learning, or have the will to create technical solutions to enable detection and blocking. The exception here is the (open source) Moodle community through which [some potential technical fixes](#) are currently being explored.
14. Instead LMS vendors and companies are calling for universities to – once more – adapt teaching and assessment to ‘be responsive’ to the emergence of agents,

via policy change, assessment re-design and investment in 'AI literacy'. These calls tend to be based in the argument that students will need to use these systems in their working lives so we should be helping them develop the skills to do so.

15. For example, Anthology – the company behind Blackboard Learn – [released a statement](#) last month claiming that it is currently not possible for platform companies like their own to 'reliably detect an AI Agent, much less block one' and that 'higher ed should focus on preparing learners for a world where human and artificial intelligence are constantly applied in combination' by adapting their policy and practice.
16. In our view, this is an argument which is now wearing extremely thin. Universities have a vital public role and unique responsibilities – it is widely felt that platforms should be actively responding to our needs, not just recycling the imperative to 'adapt'.

Summary of the key issues:

17. Assessment integrity is challenged by agentive AI, and online modes of academic community formation and communication online are compromised.
18. LMSs can no longer be seen as 'walled gardens' within which learning and teaching activity is secure and protected.
19. Responses to this seem likely to include another surge in requests for in-person exams, calls for the implementation of new surveillance technologies, and a move away from online engagement and online courses – all of which will have negative effects on our learning, teaching and assessment.
20. The cost and feasibility of agent detection and blocking ability within our LMS is currently unclear and there is currently no evidence that LMS providers are prioritising this as an issue.
21. Staff or students providing login credentials to an AI Agent may represent a wider security risk. Our Identity and Access Management infrastructure and data architecture is sector-leading but does not currently account for AI agents.
22. Agents do have potential as assistive technologies so student accessibility issues need to be kept in mind.
23. A review of the broader ethical issues surrounding agentive AI in our university is needed – it is unclear where responsibility for this currently lies.

Possible ways forward:

24. Refine student and staff guidance on the use of AI to account for the emergence of agents, including a strict imperative against their use in LMSs.
25. Update and further publicise all training materials. Update all templates for student declarations of their own work/AI usage in submitted assignments.
26. Develop formal policy on the use of AI agents in teaching and learning, perhaps as part of the Assessment and Feedback policy development process.
27. Rapidly establish the technical feasibility of blocking and/or detection of AI agents within Learn and Canvas.
28. Provide support for a few academic teams who may wish to pilot responsible and ethical agent use within their teaching (similar to the [AI for Teaching Innovation](#) model).
29. Collaborate with the Russell Group, UCISA and others to put pressure on platform providers and AI companies to address the concerns of the sector.
30. As a leader in this area, release a statement on the University of Edinburgh position to help catalyse discussion in the UK (most commentary is currently coming from the US).

Resource implications

31. Institutional adaptation to new tech roll-outs always carries an extensive resource commitment (consider the number of human hours that have so far been committed to generative AI adaptation). However, beyond this there are no additional or immediate resource implications at present regarding agentive AI. Actions to implement SEC's agreed way forward will however require resource, particularly for the development of essential training.

Risk management

32. Potential associated risks are significant, including erosion of public trust in the academic integrity of the university and – longer term – profound implications for the nature and value of academic knowledge and practice at a fundamental level.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

33.



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

Equality & diversity

34. As with generative AI, agentic AI carries risks of bias and exclusion which need to be addressed. All AI use has implications for climate, resource use, copyright/intellectual property infringement and poor labour practices.

35. Agents may have positive use as assistive technologies.

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

36. SEC will need to discuss which units or groups within the University should take forward any actions agreed.

Author

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Assistant Principal Education Futures

Presenter

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Assistant Principal Education Futures

With input from Stuart King,
Melissa Highton, Gavin McLachlan and
the AI and Data Ethics Advisory Board

19 November 2025

Freedom of Information: Open paper

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Senate Education Committee

27 November 2025

Governance of Generative AI in Teaching and Learning: Coordinating Practice**Description of paper**

1. This paper complements the previous paper on AI agents, discussing the governance challenges presented by Generative AI and agentic AI within Teaching and Learning (T&L) contexts. It argues that practical responses to these issues currently fall awkwardly across multiple committees with no clear, single point of ownership. This creates gaps in spotting, signalling, and resolving academic concerns, and generally with coordinating action. The paper proposes a lightweight approach to this, outlining how College-level representation might be formalised as a way to improve horizon scanning, policy translation, and cross-institutional sharing, while preserving the momentum of ongoing ventures such as ELM. The aim is to enable a more proactive, coordinated adaptation of T&L practice to the realities of generative AI without slowing innovation or imposing unnecessary administrative burden.

It aims to support the discussion needed to fill this 'gap' in delivery of the overall articulated position of the University on generative AI. In outline this is that we need to equip students with suitable skills and adapt teaching and assessment practices. Extra coordination is therefore particularly relevant in this transitional period as those adaptations occur meaningfully within Schools.

It connects with the Strategy 2030 outcomes relating to Teaching and Learning and Social and Civic Responsibility.

Fit with remit

Education Committee	Y/N
Promote strategically-led initiatives and university-wide changes designed to enhance the educational experience of students and learners.	Y
Promote innovations in learning, teaching and assessment, embrace new teaching methods and consider cross-cutting themes such as research-led and technology-enhanced learning, digital and information literacy, education for employability, internationalisation and lifelong learning. Consider and promote local developments or initiatives with substantial implications for University learning and teaching strategy, policy, services or operations.	Y
Oversee policy relating to students' academic experience and proactively engage with high-level issues and themes arising from student feedback.	Y
Give specific consideration to instances in which the experience of one particular cohort of students or learners (undergraduate, postgraduate taught or postgraduate	Y

research students, and those involved in non-standard programmes) may diverge from that of others.	
Anticipate and prepare for new opportunities and likely future developments in learning and teaching for all cohorts of students and learners.	Y
Consider the implications of the Committee's work and its decisions in the context of external initiatives and compliance and legal frameworks, particularly in relation to equality and diversity.	Y

Action requested / recommendation

2. The Committee is asked to discuss the governance gaps outlined and endorse the proposed course of action.

Background and context

3. The rise of Generative AI and agentic AI (AI that can autonomously complete tasks in teaching and assessment contexts) is creating new opportunities for learning innovation while also presenting risks to academic integrity, assessment validity, and the student learning experience.
4. The previous paper examining agentic AI in learning environments highlighted how these tools can operate within Learning Management Systems (LMSs), potentially masquerading as normal student activity and disrupting traditional approaches to teaching, forums, and assessment.
5. To assist with issues around the transition to using AI within the University a Short-Term AI Task Force was set up and ran in various forms for around two years with a number of key outputs. Amongst the outputs were the AI for Teaching Innovation project and discussions of iterations of the staff and student AI guidance. Various questions were raised however in the final report of that task force around resourcing. Despite acknowledgment of the complexity of resourcing within existing governance on this topic, ultimately the report ended in a challenge as to whether the University saw itself as wishing to lead on AI, and a recognition that if this is the desire, it requires resource to accomplish. A particular point raised is that future student and staff guidance documents are currently left to ad hoc arrangements for updates.

Current governance gaps

6. Responsibility fragmentation: Issues created by AI developments affecting teaching administration, teaching practice, and assessment cross multiple committees and reporting structures with no dedicated academic oversight to spot and escalate concerns.
7. Resource constraints: There is a general lack of targeted resourcing for AI-specific T&L issues, leaving course organisers potentially under-supported and schools with limited support for policy development on this issue at the School level.
8. Coordination void: Without College and University-level leadership roles in this area, there is limited opportunity for consistent development across Schools, timely horizon-scanning, or cross-institution learning on best practices and risk mitigation.

9. Tension with business-as-usual (BAU): Whilst it could be argued these issues belong in existing BAU committees, those structures are generally busy (with little time to add additional levels of discussion at CECs for instance); a more explicit governance approach could reduce ad hoc responses and enhance coordination without creating heavy new bureaucracy or new committees, particularly in the near term during the transition period of adapting teaching activities to generative AI.
10. Positive counterpoint: The Edinburgh Language Model(s) (ELM) demonstrates how a well-designed initiative can expand equitable access to generative AI while enabling innovative learning and teaching. The aim is not to slow or hamper such progress but to ensure broader academic coordination, so adoption occurs with coherence across courses and programmes.
11. This paper envisions building on the success of ELM by embedding more formal College-level leadership that can complement and inform Senate Education Committee, the ELM Steering Board and other existing governance structures, ensuring that academic perspectives guide policy, guidance, and implementation wherever generative AI touches teaching and assessment.

Discussion

12. Proposed way forward:

- Establish College-level Generative AI leads (one per College – following the model in CSE) to act as primary academic representatives on AI governance in teaching and learning. A senior colleague from SEC would work with College leads to help with cross-university coordination and SEC representation for this work.
- College leads would have responsibility to:
 - Coordinate adaptation activity within schools at the course/programme level and enable inter/cross-college sharing of practice.
 - Contribute to cross-institution guidance for students and staff.
 - Serve as horizon scanners for AI developments affecting T&L.
 - Provide academic consultation for the ELM steering board.
- Integrate these College leads with existing structures (SEC, ELM Steering Board, CEC, etc) to ensure coherence and avoid duplication.
- Maintain lightweight governance by leveraging existing forums, papers, and structures.

Resource implications

13. College AI leads would need to have workload allocation to fulfil these roles.

Risk management

14. The rapidity of AI developments creates known risk for the university. It is now evident that this risk horizon is going to continue to change rapidly, year on year. The university needs to be agile and connected-up in responding to this. This requires clear routes both to horizon scanning and decision-making.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

15.



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

Equality & diversity

16. AI carries known risks for diversity, bias, exclusion and copyright/intellectual property infringement. A clear approach to horizon scanning and decision-making will help mitigate these.

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

17. SEC will need to define approach to implementation if the proposal for College leads on AI is agreed.

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November 2025

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Freedom of Information: Open paper

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Senate Education Committee

27 November 2025

Challenge Courses Update

Description of paper

1. This paper provides Senate Education Committee (SEC) with an update on the suite of pilot Challenge Courses that have been developed as part of the Curriculum Transformation Programme (CTP) since 2023, and seeks endorsement from SEC for the proposed approach to move Challenge Courses from pilot to Business as Usual (BAU), making them an ongoing part of our regular course portfolio. Continuing to offer Challenge Courses will contribute to meeting the aims of our Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030, particularly the core purpose of developing a future ready curriculum that offers students the opportunity to engage in research-led and challenge-based, reflective learning across disciplines.

Fit with remit

Education Committee	Y/N
Promote strategically-led initiatives and university-wide changes designed to enhance the educational experience of students and learners.	Y
Promote innovations in learning, teaching and assessment, embrace new teaching methods and consider cross-cutting themes such as research-led and technology-enhanced learning, digital and information literacy, education for employability, internationalisation and lifelong learning. Consider and promote local developments or initiatives with substantial implications for University learning and teaching strategy, policy, services or operations.	Y
Anticipate and prepare for new opportunities and likely future developments in learning and teaching for all cohorts of students and learners.	Y

Action requested / recommendation

2. SEC is asked to endorse:
 - a. our recommendation to move Challenge Courses from pilot stage to steady state of Business as Usual (BAU), making them a permanent part of our UG course portfolio and using a given definition and set of criteria as baseline for curating and shaping the overall suite of Challenge Courses
 - b. our plans for developing a framework to approve, deliver and oversee Challenge Courses in future
 - c. our proposals for development, delivery and oversight of the suite of Challenge Courses during the transition period, until the future steady state has been established (i.e., until and including at least 2026/2027)

Background and context**Pilot Challenge Courses: definition, purpose, operation**

3. A suite of pilot Challenge Courses (CCs) was developed as part of the Curriculum Transformation Programme in 2023/24 and 2024/25. CCs are institution-wide interdisciplinary courses dealing with issues that are unbounded, complex and resisting straightforward definition. Drawing on our institutional strengths in research and scholarship as set out in the university's research priorities and institutional mission, they provide an opportunity for students to explore and build understanding of globally significant themes and topics from multiple disciplinary perspectives.
4. As part of our wider course portfolio, Challenge Courses play an important role in helping us meet some of the key objectives of the Edinburgh Student Vision and the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030. Specifically, Challenge Courses:
 - provide opportunity for cross- and interdisciplinary learning that enable students to collaborate and understand diverse perspectives in engagement with complex concepts
 - help build our students' understanding of and engagement with global challenges, providing them with opportunity to explore and address some of society's most pressing issues
 - expose students to current research in areas linked to our research priorities and institutional mission

Studying a Challenge Course will contribute to the development of important skills such as collaboration, problem solving and reflection, aligning with our Skills for Success Framework and developing students in their university career as well as preparing them for the multi-faceted challenges of the future.

5. Challenge Courses are currently offered at SCQF level 7/8 (available to first- and second-year undergraduate students), with the potential to develop level 9/10 courses (open to third- and fourth-year undergraduate students) in the future. Each course is worth 20 credits.
6. Available as outside electives, they are open to all students who have space in their degree programme at the relevant level. They are designed to be deliverable at scale (200+ students) in order to give students a fair chance of getting a place. There are no specific entry requirements, and course teams design the courses in such a way that students from different disciplines and academic backgrounds can participate and complete them without any prior knowledge. That includes assessment design; CCs promote learning through assessment and focus on process as well as on outcome. Models of delivery and assessment can vary, and the courses can be offered with pass/fail assessment (pre-honours courses only).
7. Challenge Courses are taught by academics from a mix of disciplines who have designed the course together and bring their specific areas of expertise to the topic. Students are encouraged to think creatively as they use knowledge, insights and ideas that are likely to be new to them to discuss potential ways to tackle the complex problem at the heart of their chosen Challenge Course.

8. Students are currently able to select from a range of Challenge Courses across different categories linked to our research priorities and institutional mission:

- Data, Digital and AI
- Climate and the Environment
- Future Health and Care
- (In)Equalities, Peace and Justice

A Challenge Courses collection box showing all available courses has been added to currently around 150 Degree Programme Tables where those offer space for outside electives. Students are signed up for Challenge Courses in the usual way by their Student Adviser or other authorised staff from their home School.

Pilot Challenge Courses: the current portfolio

9. Eight Challenges Courses are currently being offered in academic year 2025/26 totalling more than 1000 spaces (2024/25: 541 spaces) and attracting students from across 19 Schools as well as CAHSS Visiting Students. Five courses were approved as pilot Challenge Courses (CC) by the Oversight Group for Curriculum Innovation (OGCI) for delivery in the academic year 2024/25 and a further three courses were approved in 2025.

Course name	Course code	Home School	Course enrolment 24/25	Course enrolment 25/26 (24/9/2025)	Across how many Schools (24-25/25-26)
Understanding Gender in the Contemporary World	SSPS08012 (semester 1)	Social and Political Sciences	279 (185)	285 (285)	16 / 16
Our Changing World	BIME08006 (semester 1)	Biomedical Sciences	60 (108)	112 (116)	9 / 17
Healthy Eating for People and Planet	VETS08016 (semester 2)	Veterinary Medicine	40 (40)	100 (100)	10 / 14
Sustainability and Social Responsibility	EDUA08116 (semester 2)	Education and Sports	58 (60)	42 (42)	11 / 12
Sustainable Development Goals: History, Progress and Beyond 2030	EFIE08008 (semester 2)	Edinburgh Futures Institute	47 (48)	105 (105)	13 / 16
Living in the Anthropocene	GESC08004 (semester 1)	Geosciences	n/a	154 (200)	n/a / 15
Understanding Decolonisation in a Globalised World	EDUA08127 (semester 2)	Education and Sports	n/a	97 (100)	n/a / 14
Wicked Problems:	EDUA08126 (semester 2)	Education and Sports	n/a	77 (100?)	n/a / 13

Reason and Rhetoric					
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Table 1: Pilot Challenge Courses running in 2025/26.

Evaluation of the pilot phase of Challenge Courses

10. The pilot years of developing and delivering Challenge Courses as part of the Curriculum Transformation Programme have provided us with opportunity to establish proof of concept and evaluate our aims for such courses. A full evaluation of the first pilot year is available in appendix 1. Some key points include:
- Student feedback has been extremely positive. Students particularly like working in diverse groups drawn from different disciplines/programmes of study, as this helps them widening their horizons, gain new perspectives and develop a more nuanced understanding of the complex topics that are at the heart of Challenge Courses.
 - Students appreciate the dynamic, interactive and collaborative activities as well as the variety of assessment formats offered on Challenge Courses, as those provide them with autonomy over their learning and help them develop skills that they see as important such as team working and problem solving.
 - Staff highlighted that they found teaching on Challenge Courses demanding but also rewarding, as students are engaged and submit excellent work.
 - Concerns raised by staff focused on issues such as visibility of Challenge Courses, suitability of teaching spaces (e.g., lecture theatres don't easily facilitate interactive teaching and learning), the need for support with learning and assessment design, and support that may be needed by both students and teaching staff exposed to complex, difficult problems.
 - A key issue regularly raised by staff is lack of understanding around resource allocation for courses that are co-taught by colleagues from various Schools.
11. Based on the evaluation of the first pilot year, we made some changes for the second pilot year of delivery. The main ones include:
- increasing the visibility of Challenge Courses for students by adding a separate Challenge Courses Collection to more than 150 DPTs
 - the introduction of a separate 'early notification' form that staff can use to notify the OGCI of any intentions for the development of new Challenge Courses, allowing for a more active curation of the portfolio
 - the establishment of a Community of Practice for Experiential Learning (EL) and Challenge-Based Learning, offering a dedicated space for sharing and supporting all aspects of teaching and learning on EL and Challenge Courses

We have also developed a framework for articulating teaching commitment linked to the HESA teaching load data that is currently used to attribute tuition fee income between Schools; see Appendix 3. This model could be implemented for Challenge Courses in future, removing common barriers around fee attribution and income flow.

Discussion

12. From the data gathered during the pilot stage so far, it is evident that students appreciate the opportunity to take Challenge Courses to complement their core courses and electives as part of a rounded student experience aligned with our Edinburgh Student Vision.
13. Similarly, many Schools see them as opportunity to showcase their (interdisciplinary) research to undergraduate students as well as opportunity to actively shape their course offering as part of the current portfolio review: a series of 'sandpit' workshops run in spring and summer 2025 was attended by more than 50 colleagues from across 20 Schools and central university services interested in developing new Challenge Courses. This led to early notification proposals for a further nine Challenge Courses to potentially be developed and delivered in 2026/27 and beyond, including conversion of existing courses into Challenge Courses. Of those proposals, around three to five will likely be taken forward to approval stage, meaning that we are within sight of reaching our aim for a curated suite of about 12-15 Challenge Courses, ranging all across the research missions and institutional priorities.
14. The two pilot years have thus provided us with proof of concept that Challenge Courses can be designed and delivered in line with our aims and objectives, and that both students and Schools see a suite of Challenge Courses as desirable addition to our existing portfolio of outside electives at undergraduate level.
15. Therefore, we are seeking SEC's agreement to the following next steps:
 - a. We seek SEC endorsement for our recommendation to start a process to move Challenge Courses from pilot to steady state, making them a permanent part of our UG course portfolio, by using the definition and criteria outlined in appendix 2 as baseline for shaping and curating the suite of courses.
 - b. If this endorsement is given, we will use the remaining time in this academic year to develop a framework for approval processes, delivery and oversight of Challenge Courses as Business as Usual (steady state) in future. This framework will be presented to SEC, and other relevant committees as necessary, in a future meeting (possibly May 2026) for endorsement.
 - c. Whilst this framework for future development, delivery and oversight of the suite of Challenge Courses is being developed, and until it is ready to be fully implemented, we seek SEC endorsement for the processes to approve and operate Challenge Courses as set out in appendix 2. Those are based on the processes developed and used during the pilot years.

Resource implications

16. Resource required for the development of the framework for future delivery of Challenge Courses (as outlined in point 15b) is covered by the part-time secondment approved by UIPB for further development of Challenge Courses during 2025/26 and associated Strategic Change support. Resource required to manage the interim arrangements to approve Challenge Courses until the new framework has been implemented (outlined in 15c) is mainly covered by the Oversight Group for Curriculum Innovation (OGCI) who will scrutinize and

discuss any proposals for new Challenge Courses forthcoming during the interim period; this includes the administrative support needed to run the OGCI.

Risk management

17. The development and delivery of pilot Challenge Courses was one of the successful outcomes from CTP. The collection of pilot Challenge Courses has been added to about 150 undergraduate DPTs and students are aware of them, selecting them as part of their outside electives. Not continuing to offer Challenge Courses (which would require us to take down the course collection from DPTs) is likely to result in some reputational damage. It would also slow down our progress towards meeting the objectives from the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030 – Developing a Future-ready Curriculum that are most closely aligned with CCs.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

18. The continued offering of Challenge Courses responds to the SDGs

- 4 (Quality Education),
- with some of them specifically responding to
- 3 (Good Health and Well-being)
- 13 (Climate Action)
- 15 (Life on Land)
- 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions)

including by aiming to equip students for taking action and working towards positive change in these areas.

Equality & diversity

19. Equality and diversity are core to the purpose and ethos of Challenge Courses, both in terms of access to Challenge Courses (open to all) and in the topics that are explored that specifically address and align with our institutional mission (In)Equalities, Peace and Justice.

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

20. If SEC approves the direction of travel, a further paper will come to SEC proposing more detailed arrangements for the future oversight and management of Challenge Courses. These proposals will be developed and discussed by the OGCI, with input from the Deans for Education, and will also be discussed with the Community of Practice and with colleagues involved in pilot Challenge Courses.

Author

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CTP Challenge Courses Lead
November 2025*

Presenter

Professor Sabine Rolle

Freedom of Information

This paper is open.

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**Appendix 1: Evaluation Report on Challenge Courses pilot year 2024-25
Presented to Curriculum Transformation Programme Board June 2025****Curriculum Transformation Programme
Report on Challenge Courses – Spring 2025**

The following is an initial report and evaluation of the first Challenge Course pilot year, **for information**. It includes a reflection on the success of Challenge Courses in achieving their aims, and recommendations for next steps. We acknowledge the challenges and risks faced by the University in the current climate of uncertainty around funding but would like to take the opportunity to highlight some of the fundamental benefits of this important work stream of the Curriculum Transformation Programme in the area of teaching innovation.

Context: What are Challenge Courses?

- 1) Challenge Courses will enable students to explore issues/problems that are unbounded, complex and resist straightforward definition. Drawing on our institutional strengths in research and scholarship, they provide an opportunity for students to explore and build understanding of globally significant themes and topics across academic subject areas beyond their home discipline. Accessible and inclusive in their design, they enable students to work and communicate with others from a mix of Schools, backgrounds and cultures.
- 2) Students are able to select from a range of Challenge Courses across different categories linked to our research priorities and institutional mission. They will be taught by academics from a mix of disciplines who have designed the course together and bring their specific areas of expertise to the topic. Students will be encouraged to think creatively as they use knowledge, insights and ideas that are likely to be new to them to discuss potential ways to tackle the complex problem at the heart of their chosen Challenge Course. They will develop important life skills that will help them in their university career and beyond. As such, Challenge Courses play a key role in helping us implement the Edinburgh Student Vision, particularly achieving the aims of students being able to thrive in a changing world, able to collaborate with people across a range of contexts, and who have built an understanding of and engagement with global challenges.
- 3) Available as outside electives, an initial set of Challenge Courses was developed and piloted at SCQF level 7/8 (1st/2nd year UG) in 2024-25, with the potential to develop further courses, including at SCQF level 9/10 (3rd/4th year UG), in the future. Each course is worth 20 credits and open to all students. There are no specific entry requirements, and course teams will design the courses in such a way that students from different disciplines and academic backgrounds can follow them. That includes assessment design, with focus on process as well as on outcome.

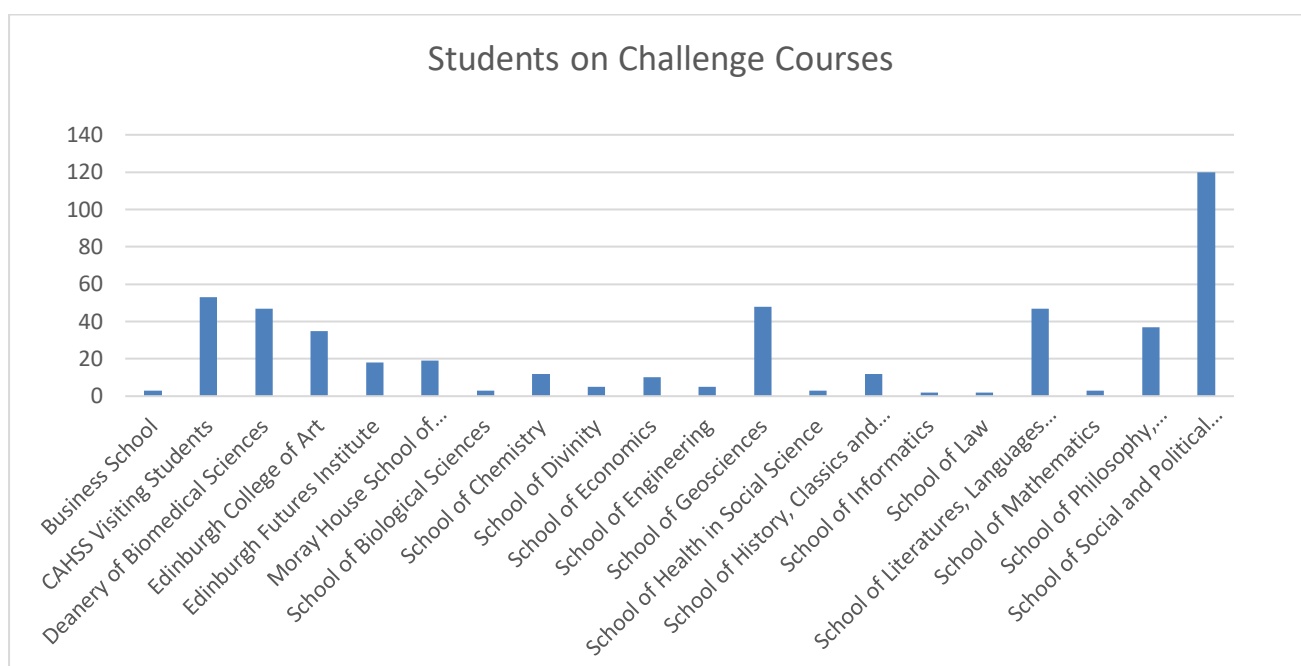
The Challenge Course pilots in the academic year 2024-25

- 4) **Five courses were approved as pilot Challenge Courses (CC)** by the Oversight Group for Curriculum Innovation (OGCI) for delivery in the academic year 2024-25. Two of those ran in semester 1: Our Changing World (BIME08006) and Understanding Gender in the Contemporary World (SSPS08012). The other three were delivered in semester 2: Sustainability and Social Responsibility (EDUA08116), Healthy Eating for People and Planet (VETS08016) and Sustainable Development Goals: History, Progress and Beyond 2030 (EFIE08008):

Challenge Course Overview					AY 24/25 Student Enrolment			
Course Name	Course Code	School	SEM 1/2 Delivery	Course Cap	Enrolment as at 3/2/25	From home School	From other Schools	*Across how many Schools
Understanding Gender in the Contemporary World	SSPS08012	School of Social and Political Science	SEM 1	285	279	104	175	16
Our Changing World	BIME08006	Deanery of Biomedical Sciences	SEM 1	108	60	45	15	9
Healthy Eating for People and Planet	VETS08016	Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Medicine	SEM 2	40	40	0	40	10
Sustainability and Social Responsibility	EDUA08116	Education	SEM 2	60	58	4	54	11
Sustainable Development Goals: History, Progress and Beyond 2030	EFIE08008	Edinburgh Futures Institute	SEM 2	48	47	11	36	13
				541	484			

*Please refer to Appendix 1 for the School breakdown across each Challenge Course

- 5) **A total of 541 places were available** across all five courses. Between them, the courses **attracted students from 19 Schools/Deaneries**, in addition to Visiting Students from CAHSS:



Appendix 1 provides a visual representation of the School spread across each individual Challenge Course.

- 6) All five pilot courses were existing courses that in some cases had been adapted slightly to align with the definition and criteria for CC as published on the Curriculum Transformation Hub (see <https://uoe.sharepoint.com/sites/CurriculumTransformation/SitePages/Challenge-Course-update-Nov-24.aspx>; the site provides further detail about the **approval process** followed in 2024/25).
- 7) **In the run-up to approval for tagging as pilot CC, course teams were supported** by the work stream lead in one-to-one meetings, and they were also invited to join a newly established Community of Practice for CC that includes colleagues from the IAD and Information Services. The Community of Practice has a dedicated Teams channel and has met a few times during the academic year; these fora provide space for discussion and mutual support around questions and issues that arise in the design and delivery of challenge-led interdisciplinary courses focused on complex ('wicked') problems.
- 8) The **pilot Challenge Courses were advertised** to students in the usual way via the DRPS. Student Advisors were briefed on the offering in July 2024, to enable them to inform their students about the opportunity to take these interdisciplinary CC. In addition, students were made aware of the courses via a Facebook post at the start of semester 1 (August 2024); the semester 2 courses were highlighted again in a Student Newsletter issued in November. Independently of these efforts, the Students Association VP Education released an Instagram video in summer 2024, alerting students to the availability of this new suite of courses.

Further pilots for 2025-26

- 9) In addition to the five Challenge Courses that ran in 2024-25, **three further courses have now been approved as CC** in principle and will hopefully be delivered for the first time in 2025-26:
 - Living in the Anthropocene (GES08004), a course co-designed by staff from all Schools in the College of Science and Engineering and with the Challenge Courses definition and criteria firmly embedded into the course design from the start.
 - Understanding Decolonisation in a Globalised World (EDUA08127): One of the deliverables from Omolabake Fakunle's secondment to the Curriculum Transformation Programme. Conceived and designed as Challenge Course from the start, this course will be delivered by staff from across all three Colleges as well as Central University Services (e.g., Information Services – Heritage Collections).
 - Wicked Problems: Reason and Rhetoric (EDUA08126) will mainly be delivered by staff from MHSES, but there will be contributions from SPS as well.
- 10) The courses to be delivered in Academic Year 2025/26 map against the university's research themes and missions as follows:

Challenge Course	Shaping the future of health and care	Harnessing data, digital and AI	Tackling climate and environment crisis	Inequalities, peace and justice
Sustainability & Social Responsibility			Y	
Our Changing World	Y	Y	Y	
Understanding Gender in a Contemporary World	Y	Y	Y	Y
Living in the Anthropocene			Y	

Challenge Course	Shaping the future of health and care	Harnessing data, digital and AI	Tackling climate and environment crisis	Inequalities, peace and justice
Healthy Eating for People and Planet	Y	Y	Y	
Sustainable Development Goals	Y	Y	Y	
Understanding Decolonisation in a Globalised World	Y			Y
Wicked Problems: Reason and Rhetoric	Y	Y	Y	Y

- 11) Some of the existing courses have been amended slightly to allow for scale-up. Across all eight CC, approximately 1,100 spaces will thus be available to students in 2025-26. They will be advertised to students again via newsletters and digital screens; Student Advisors will also be briefed again on the now extended suite of courses.
- 12) In addition, we worked with Student Systems and DPT editors in Schools to add a separate collection of Challenge Courses to the EUCLID degree programme tables of programmes that have space for outside electives. This will **substantially increase the visibility of CC for students on more than 150 programmes, reaching close to 6,000 undergraduate students.**

Evaluation of the 2024-25 pilot courses

The student perspective

- 13) The Community of Practice, in agreement with the Oversight Group for Curriculum Innovations, decided to work with existing course evaluation structures to gather feedback on the pilot Challenge Courses rather than to introduce a separate process with its own questionnaires. This was mainly in acknowledgement of the fact that response rates for feedback questionnaires is rather low, not least due to 'survey fatigue' among students. However, we gathered some additional feedback from students in the context of end-of-semester celebratory events; at the end of semester 1, the Course Organisers for Understanding Gender in the Contemporary World kindly invited us to their event, and at the end of semester 2, we organised an event for students on all Challenge Courses. Even though turnout was quite low, we were able, across these routes, to gain some very valuable information on how the courses are perceived by students. The following is a summary of some of the points made:
 - Students like that people from different disciplines (and year groups) can engage with the topics
 - Diverse groups provide beneficial variation in viewpoints and opinions, helping students gain new perspectives and increase comprehension
 - Work beyond the students' own disciplines helped widening horizons, contributing to a wider education and deeper, more nuanced understanding of complex topics
 - Students enjoy the dynamic, interactive and collaborative activities that foster rational dialogue, assertive communication and ways to reaching consensus
 - Appreciation of discussion and collaboration as way to develop an ability to critically reflect on information and form evidence-based opinions
 - Variety of assessment formats, pass/fail assessment (on some courses) and larger autonomy over learning through option to choose topics tailored to their own interests and experiences are seen as beneficial

- Students like the idea of developing skills such as teamwork, critical thinking and problem solving through their work on Challenge Courses (and that the development of these skills is surfaced)
- Challenge Courses seen as giving students an ‘Edinburgh Student “edge”’

And here are some quotations from students, highlighting specific benefits and skills:

- “I particularly appreciated the diversity within my group. The students came from varying backgrounds, academic levels and nationalities, which brought a unique dimension to our exchanges. It was fascinating to share experiences and gain insights into how different cultural, ethical, religious, political, and even geographical factors shaped perceptions during debates.”
- “Each seminar was dynamic, with interactive and collaborative activities that fostered teamwork, assertive communication, rational dialogue, and consensus among participants.”
- “I now recognise collaborations are really beneficial because they can help to spark new ideas especially if working with colleagues with different areas of expertise.”
- “Working with others and engaging in discussions has helped build my confidence and develop my communication skills.”
- “I learnt to always keep an open mind, be respectful of others and analyse evidence in an objective manner.”

It is very satisfying to see that the aims for CC are supported and indeed highly appreciated by students. This also aligns with the market sensitivity research undertaken in academic year 23/24, where prospective students highlighted challenge courses as a key positive element in relation to the proposed curriculum structure. Many appreciated the idea of working with others across disciplines and linked this to the Edinburgh Student Vision. For example, one research participant said “it allows you to collaborate and challenge others. It sounds very appealing”. The comments from the courses on our pilot courses show that this expectation is reflected in the practice.

The staff perspective

- 14) Feedback from course teams has been collected mainly informally, through email exchanges and conversations at Community of Practice meetings as well as during a recent OGCI meeting where some teams presented proposed changes to course and assessment design. Overall, course teams are positive about the aims and opportunities for innovative education offered by CC, believing in the benefits they can deliver. Staff specifically commented that
- Teaching and running these courses is demanding but also rewarding
 - Students on the courses are interested, engaged and very insightful
 - Assignments submitted are often excellent

All teams are planning to continue their courses in the coming academic year, in many cases planning to scale up the number of places available to students.

- 15) A number of issues were raised that, if resolved, would enable smoother running of the courses. Staff concerns mainly focus on the following areas:
- **Teaching estate:** CC routinely incorporate interactive sessions and have group work built into their design. This type of learning and teaching requires teaching rooms that facilitate interaction, including within potentially large cohorts. Most of our teaching rooms – both lecture theatres and seminar rooms with tightly packed rows of desks – do not work very

well. The number of teaching studios that are best placed to enable group work is limited. This limits plans for scaling up of courses.

- **Teaching staff:** Many of the pilot CC use PhD students to deliver tutorials. The number of PhD students who are qualified and confident to lead sessions on a broad range of complex issues which require interdisciplinary approaches is limited. Many of the issues discussed on the courses are also difficult to deal with, potentially leading to additional needs for support (for staff as well as students, in fact). Regardless of whether course delivery depends on PhD tutors or mainly rests with fully salaried staff, additional training and support is likely required.
 - **Student sign-up and mix of disciplines:** By definition, CC should be open to students from across the university; the mixing of students from different disciplines, with their diverse backgrounds and ways of thinking, plays an important part in the student experience. In practice, a broad mix of disciplines/programmes can be difficult to achieve where, for example, Schools steer their students to a specific course (leading to large numbers of places being taken by students from specific programmes), or where courses are not equally visible to students from all programmes. Furthermore, the real demand for specific courses is difficult to gauge as we don't routinely operate waiting lists – we do not know how many more students would have been interested to enrol on a course beyond the existing cap (this is, of course, true for all courses, not just CC).
 - **Resourcing of cross-School course delivery:** In our current model of budget allocation, academic teaching staff contributions are used as a proxy for resource allocation for interdisciplinary or cross-School courses: information on academic staff teaching contributions and student enrolments for individual courses from the current year are included in the teaching load assessment data that feed into School funding allocations for the following year made through the Planning Round. Schools are understandably concerned about the resource that is required to deliver a course beyond the time of fully salaried academic staff, including for administration, learning technology and also GH tutor support. For courses that are fully run by a single School, this can be factored in more easily, but courses that are delivered by a mix of academic staff from across several Schools, the unit that provides the additional resource may not receive sufficient funds to cover their costs.
- 16) There are also **ongoing questions around course and particularly assessment design**; for example, what is the best way of designing assessment that works at scale and facilitates the kind of learning associated with CC, including opportunity for students to work together in small interdisciplinary groups. The issues raised in this context – including staff availability to turn around marking on large courses within three weeks, or alternatives to group assignments for students with Learning Adjustments or ECs – are not exclusive to CC, and the Community of Practice, including the IAD members on the group, will continue to develop and share good practice in response to such questions.

Curating a growing portfolio of Challenge Courses

Step 1: Generating ideas

- 17) **The overall aim for the portfolio** (as outlined on the CTP Hub) is to offer a small(ish) suite of Challenge Courses aligned with the university research priorities and institutional mission. The courses can be pegged at level 7/8 or 9/10 but should be open to students from across all Schools and programmes without any pre-requisites. If we want to meet our aim of offering all undergraduate students an opportunity to take at least one Challenge Course (i.e., to create

around 7,000 spaces across the portfolio of Challenge Courses, aligned with our annual UG intake of approximately 7,000 students), we will need to create further courses beyond the eight envisaged to run in 2025-26. A total of around 15-20 courses, each with space for several hundred students, should meet the above aim and also provide some flexibility in case not all of the courses will run each year.

- 18) **There is clear support and even enthusiasm for Challenge Courses** and their aims across the university, both among individual staff members and Schools. A small series of ‘sandpit’ workshops in March, advertised to all colleagues who might be interested in developing courses, attracted close to 90 registrations, with more than 50 colleagues from across 20 Schools and Central University services ultimately attending. In addition, several colleagues who weren’t available on the days of the workshops got in touch separately to propose ideas for potential Challenge Courses. Together this resulted in a list of more than 15 ideas for interdisciplinary, cross-School courses where colleagues felt they had a solid, workable baseline in terms of topic, approach and core staff team and could move to the development stage straight away. Those include (title only; further information is available in the report from the sandpits as sent by Bellrock in March):

- The Mind Virus
- Shelter: the affordable & safe housing revolution
- Life in Plastic
- The Antibiotic Apocalypse
- Climate Change and Health
- The Future of Sex, Birth and Death
- Communicating for Diverse Futures
- Animal Plant Mineral
- Simulation and Reality
- Identity: Past, Present, Future
- University Survival Course
- Systems Thinking for Wicked Problems
- Work in a Changing World
- Improving the health of people in Scotland
- Data, Sport and Society
- Ecological Belonging: Personal, Social and Global Wellbeing
- Values in Public Life

About 20 or so further ideas were generated and shared during the sandpit events but not discussed or written up in more detail due to lack of time.

- 19) In addition to those university-level activities to support the creation of cross-School teams for the development of Challenge Courses, **some Schools have created their own process** to benefit from the opportunities that CC offer for the development of their undergraduate course portfolio. The School of Social and Political Sciences, for example, has run its own version of the sandpits, bringing together staff from within the School to propose ideas for courses. A slightly different approach is taken by Edinburgh College of Art, for example, which has identified some key areas of research expertise, with staff working in these fields happy to be involved in cross-School Challenge Course development and delivery.

Step 2: Curating the portfolio based on the ideas

- 20) It is unlikely that all of the ideas generated by colleagues can be developed into Challenge Courses and approved for delivery as part of the growing portfolio in 2026-27 and beyond. So, going forward, **we are proposing a two-stage process** overseen – for the time being – by the Oversight Group for Curriculum Innovation (longer term, this may come to rest with a different body) as central unit that has oversight of the developing portfolio as a whole and can offer course teams some steer on their initial ideas.

At stage 1, course teams would submit an **early notification** form to the OGCI, providing some information and reflections on a small set of key issues:

- **Alignment with Challenge Course definition and criteria:** Which complex, ‘wicked’ problem is addressed? Which research theme(s) does the course link to? How likely is it that the course as envisaged at this stage can be open to students from across all programmes without prerequisites? What is the potential for scaling? Etc.
- **Availability of core team drawn from several disciplines/Schools:** in order to ensure the long-term viability of a course as Challenge Course, we need to avoid single points of failure. That means that, from the moment of inception, course teams need to be confident that there is a sufficiently large number of colleagues available to contribute to the design and delivery of the course. As far as possible, teams should list specific colleagues with specific areas of expertise and reflect on why this expertise is necessary in the context of the chosen complex problem. Are there any gaps in expertise that need to be filled by drawing on wider research staff networks?
- **Fit with portfolio of Challenge Courses:** whilst there may be some overlap in the topics and problems covered by several Challenge Courses, we want to avoid creating courses that are too similar as that may lead to student confusion and/or internal competition. Where the idea for a new course seems too closely aligned with an existing Challenge Course and/or another new proposal, course teams may instead be encouraged to ‘merge’ with each other and increase the capacity of the course.
- **Confirmation by Heads of School** (and, potentially, immediate line manager) that the colleagues earmarked for the development – and later delivery – of the course are available, i.e that they can be released from other duties to make time for the work on the Challenge Course. This will also give Schools the opportunity to ensure that the proposed idea aligns with their research interests and/or aims for strategic development of their course portfolio.

Based on this information, the OGCI will decide whether or not the pitched idea can move to the next stage and be developed as future Challenge Course.

- 21) **A new Stage 1 ‘early notification form’ has been developed.** This will complement the existing form used for the approval for tagging as Challenge Course. We may take a ‘gathered field’ approach for the first stage, inviting early notifications at one or two specific times of year – potentially once in February/March and once in June/July – to allow Schools factor in the time needed for course development as part of their resource planning.
- 22) The new stage 1 approval will trigger access of course teams to the Community of Practice and other resources (as available), such as support by IAD and Information Services (e.g., access to ELDeR workshops). It will be expected that course teams engage with these resources during the development stage to ensure close alignment with the Challenge Courses aims and portfolio. This will make it more likely that the proposed course will be approved for tagging as CC at the **new stage 2, which will remain more or less the same** as the approval by the OGCI

that was in place this year. It is still possible that stage 2 approval won't be given if the final proposal doesn't meet the expectations for Challenge Courses.

Further reflections and conclusions – looking ahead

- 23) Overall, we are really pleased with how this first pilot year has gone. We have successfully launched a small suite of Challenge Courses that were positively received by students. We have designed an effective process for the approval of courses as Challenge Courses and have established a Community of Practice to support existing as well as future course teams. The extended suite of Challenge Courses offered in 2025-26 will benefit from the increased visibility afforded by the creation of a Challenge Courses Collection on EUCLID that was inserted on more than 150 DPTs.
- 24) The first pilot year has also provided us with a number of 'lessons learned' that will need to inform our work going forward. Some of this will require close collaboration with the new workstreams around teaching & learning, staff and estate. For example,
- We should develop ways to reliably gauge student interest for specific courses in the absence of waiting list, in order to increase student satisfaction and allow for better resource planning
 - We will need to continue shaping our (physical) estate to support the kind of teaching and learning that aligns with the Edinburgh Student Vision and the new Learning and Teaching Strategy, both of which emphasise the importance of student collaboration
 - Conversations around scaling of courses are often conducted on the basis of current/traditional models of teaching with lectures and tutorials that are routinely delivered by PhD tutors. We should be open to different models of delivery (including assessment methods) that make best use of appropriately trained staff in the most efficient way.
 - Our current model of resource allocation to Schools based on academic staff contributions and student enrolments from the previous academic year fails to reflect the cost of teaching office and other professional services support. Efficient and sustainable cross-School delivery of courses may depend on the development of alternative or additional processes for budget allocation.
- 25) If we want to continue to reap the benefits that we've achieved for students in the first pilot year and protect the reputation of the University, some elements of support currently provided through the CT Programme would need to be retained. Firstly, continued central oversight of the portfolio is needed to ensure consistency of student experience as well as strategic development of the portfolio, both in itself and to guide the potential for courses to become part of enrichment pathways. Secondly, central leadership and commitment to Challenge Courses, including to the Community of Practice, is important as ongoing source of support to colleagues developing and delivering CC; this is key also for avoiding duplication of work across Schools. The final elements of support provided by CTP cover the administrative support for the approval and tagging process and the university-wide promotion of the portfolio – both crucial in making Challenge Courses available and visible to students. We need to get this right if we want to make the courses a success as part of, in our students' words, the 'Edinburgh Edge'.

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May 2025

Appendix 2: Challenge Courses – Definition and Criteria

What are Challenge Courses? (Definition)

Challenge Courses are a type of institution-wide interdisciplinary course dealing with issues that are unbounded, complex and resisting straightforward definition. Drawing on our strengths in research and scholarship as set out in the University's research priorities and institutional mission, they provide an opportunity for students to explore and build understanding of globally significant themes and topics from multiple disciplinary perspectives, without the need for prior knowledge.

Why are we offering Challenge Courses? (Purpose)

As part of our wider course portfolio, Challenge Courses play an important role in helping us meet some of the key objectives of the Edinburgh Student Vision and the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030. Specifically, Challenge Courses

- provide opportunity for cross- and interdisciplinary learning that enable students to collaborate and understand diverse perspectives in engagement with complex concepts
- help build our students' understanding of and engagement with global challenges, providing them with opportunity to explore and address some of society's most pressing issues
- expose students to current research in areas linked to our research priorities and institutional mission

Studying a Challenge Course will contribute to the development of important skills such as collaboration, problem solving and reflection, aligning with our Skills for Success Framework and developing students in their university career as well as preparing them for the multi-faceted challenges of the future.

How do Challenge Courses operate?

Challenge Courses are currently offered at SCQF level 7/8 (available to first- and second-year undergraduate students), with the potential to develop level 9/10 courses (open to third- and fourth-year undergraduate students) in the future. Each course is worth 20 credits.

Available as outside electives, they are open to all students who have space in their degree programme at the relevant level. They are designed to be deliverable at scale (200+ students) in order to give students a fair chance of getting a place. There are no specific entry requirements, and course teams design the courses in such a way that students from different disciplines and academic backgrounds can participate and complete them without any prior knowledge. That includes assessment design: Challenge Courses promote learning through assessment and focus on process as well as on outcome. Models of delivery and assessment can vary, and the courses can be offered with pass/fail assessment (pre-honours courses only).

Challenge Courses are taught by academics from a mix of disciplines who have designed the course together and bring their specific areas of expertise to the topic. Students are encouraged to think creatively as they use knowledge, insights and ideas that are likely to be new to them to discuss potential ways to tackle the complex problem at the heart of their chosen Challenge Course.

Students are able to select from a range of Challenge Courses across different categories linked to our research priorities and institutional mission:

- Data, Digital and AI
- Climate and the Environment
- Future Health and Care
- (In)Equalities, Peace and Justice

A Challenge Courses collection box showing all available courses has been added to currently around 150 Degree Programme Tables where those offer space for outside electives. Students can be signed up for Challenge Courses in the usual way, by their Student Adviser or other authorised staff from their home School.

Challenge Courses design criteria

There is a set of **essential criteria that need to be met** in the course design if a course is to be tagged as Challenge Course. In line with the definition and operational information given above, Challenge Courses will:

- Enable students to analyse, explore and reflect on potential responses to the challenges faced in a complex, dynamic and uncertain world; it must be clear from the course description which complex challenge(s) are covered by the course
- Integrate expertise across multiple disciplines in an inter- rather than multidisciplinary approach to course design
- Be open to all students without pre-requisites,
- Be designed at an introductory level that does not assume students have prior knowledge of each discipline contributing to the course
- Encourage and support students to make connections between ideas and concepts across different disciplines and/or cultures
- Provide space for students to work together in multi-disciplinary teams
- Be accessible and inclusive in their design, delivery and assessment
- Encourage students to be bold by using teaching and assessment methods that foster an environment where students are intrinsically motivated, learn to trust themselves and be creative, and where they are supported to experiment and learn from 'failure'
- Build confidence and competencies to empower students to become active agents of change in and outside of the classroom

Challenge Courses Learning Outcomes

Courses need to incorporate specific **Learning Outcomes** in order to be considered for 'tagging' as Challenge Courses. However, rather than producing a set of generic Learning Outcomes that all Challenge Courses need to use, we have produced a template for

colleagues to adapt, reflecting the definition and essential criteria for Challenge Courses as outlined above. This will give course teams flexibility in writing Learning Outcomes that work for their specific context whilst ensuring that key elements are met by all Challenge Courses. The following elements should be reflected in the Learning Outcomes of Challenge Courses:

- **Concepts, Challenges and Context:** Which concepts/theories are being applied to which complex challenge(s) in which contexts?
- **Boundary-Crossing:** How is inter-/multi-/cross-disciplinarity, including the connection between and integration of ideas and concepts across different cultures, fostered on the course?
- **Critical Reflection/Values:** What are the opportunities and prompts for critical reflection on personal actions/worldviews/values and links between the personal and its wider context (local/regional/national/global; home discipline/other disciplines)? What are the opportunities for students to experiment with new ideas and/or practices, and to reflect on and learn from difficulties and errors?
- **Edinburgh Student Vision:** How will the course take forward the Edinburgh Student Vision, in relation to the specific parameters of challenge courses? Elements of the Edinburgh Student Vision that relate closely to the challenge course definition and criteria include:
 - **cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural learning**, with students able to work well with others, understand and use different perspectives, and develop strong communication and collaboration skills,
 - **understanding and engagement with global challenges** to develop skills in solution design and delivery, explain and grasp the relative importance of different actions, work constructively across different contexts and be empowered to take action

Community of Practice for Experiential and Challenge-based Learning

We have established a Community of Practice (CoP) for Experiential Learning and Challenge-based Learning (CoP for EL and CBL), which is for colleagues developing and running Challenge Courses, among others. This CoP provides opportunities to share practice and contribute to future enhancements to the University's infrastructure with respect to space, learning technologies, approaches to assessment, teaching, student support, regulations, processes and systems. Anyone interested in designing and running Challenge Courses is strongly encouraged to become member of this CoP.

Approval and ownership of Challenge Courses

There are three steps for approval as a Challenge Course (also see flowchart below):

- 1) The first step for course teams who are thinking about designing and delivering a Challenge Course is to fill in an early notification form. A key requirement at this stage is for all members of the course team to receive confirmation from their Head of School and/or line manager that they can use their time to contribute to the design and delivery of the course as planned. The early notification form is scrutinised by the Oversight Group for Curriculum Innovation (OGCI) who makes a decision on whether the course fits into the overall Challenge Courses portfolio and thus can be developed further.

- 2) Step two is for Challenge Courses to be considered and approved as a course by an existing Board of Studies. Only one Board of Studies needs to approve a Challenge Course, even where academic staff from different Schools are contributing to the teaching. The School supporting the delivery of a Challenge Course (i.e. providing teaching administration, learning technologist support, quality assurance processes etc.) will normally be responsible for Board of Studies approval.
- 3) Once formal approval for the course has been obtained from a Board of Studies, the third step is approval for inclusion in the University Challenge Course portfolio. This again happens at the OGCI. Course Organisers are required to complete a form answering a range of questions about course design, pedagogy and delivery. The form must be signed off by Heads of School before it is submitted to the OGCI. The Course Organiser is invited to meet with the OGCI to present and discuss the course in more detail in order to ensure that the definition and criteria for Challenge Courses have been met. If approval is given, the course will be 'tagged' as a Challenge Course meaning that it is included in the collection of Challenge Courses on Degree Programme Tables to support visibility for students.

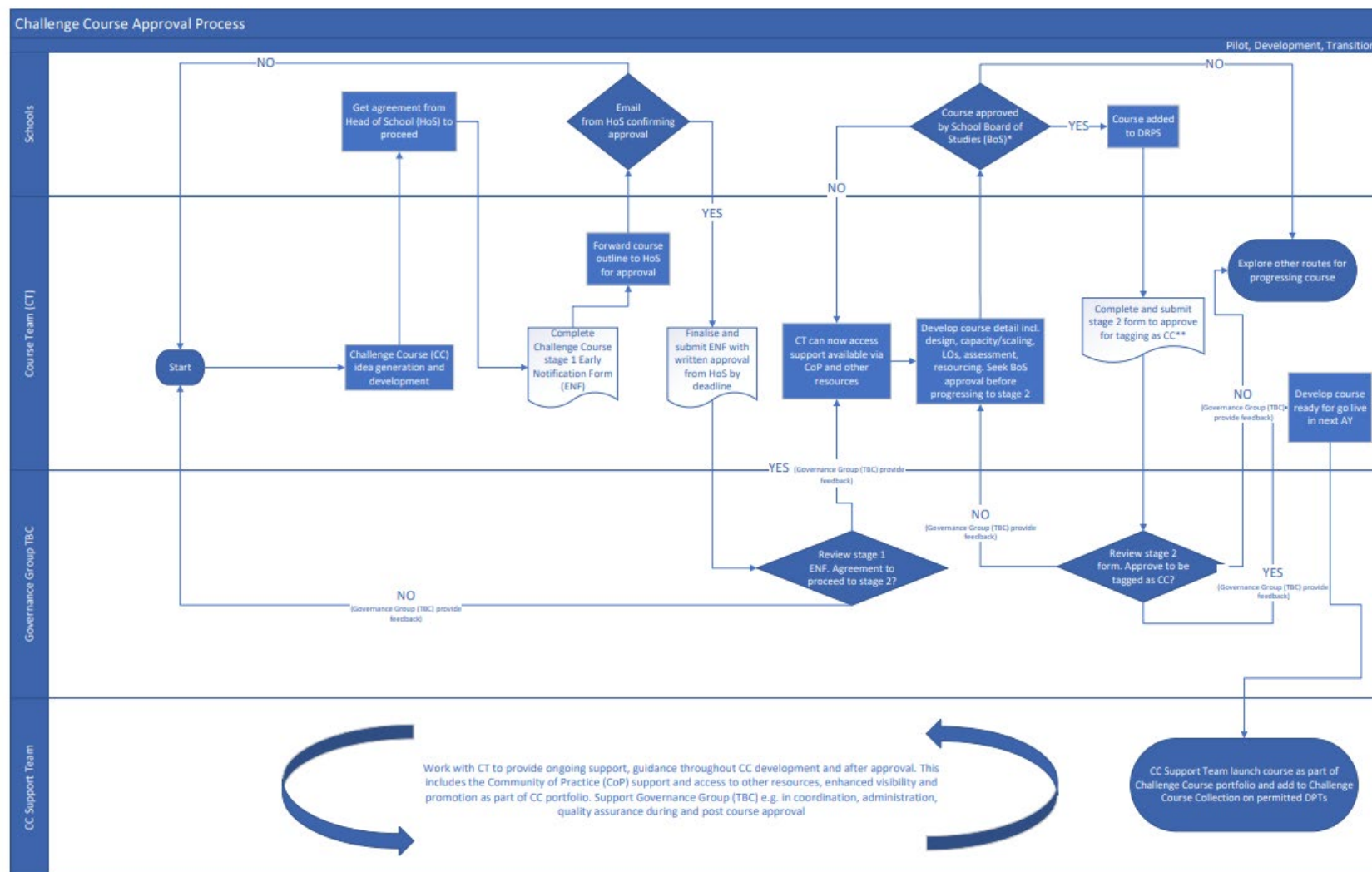
Resource allocation and sustainable delivery

Challenge Course enrolments and teaching feed into School resource and funding allocations in the same way as all other teaching.

The expectation is that Challenge Courses are delivered every year, as long as they fit the overall Challenge Courses portfolio (which itself may change over time in line with changes to the university's research mission and/or other strategic priorities). It will be the responsibility of the Course Organiser, with support from the wider course team, where appropriate, to organise replacement teaching for any academic staff member who is unable to deliver their allocated slot(s). This 'backfill' may come from the same School or from a different one, depending on the best academic fit.

Courses should be designed in such a way that single points of failure are avoided, and planning for each year of delivery needs to happen far enough in advance to ensure that all Schools contributing to the teaching of the course have the necessary resource in place.

Challenge Courses approval process - flowchart



Appendix 3: Income Attribution Framework for Challenge Courses – Proposal

Purpose

This paper sets out a case for adopting a simple and standardised approach to calculating income attribution and articulating teaching commitment for Challenge Courses, informed by existing practices within the Edinburgh Futures Institute and the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, and built on the **HESA teaching load framework** currently used to attribute tuition fee income between Schools.

The aim is twofold: first, to highlight the need for a shared institutional model to support interdisciplinary teaching across Schools; and second, to propose an initial worked example of how such a model might operate in practice. This model is not intended to replace the different workload allocation approaches used by Schools and Colleges, but rather to ensure that income attribution is applied consistently and in line with HESA reporting requirements. By building on a process already embedded in University financial and reporting systems, we can remove common barriers around fee attribution and income flow. This, in turn, allows academic and pedagogical discussions to stay focused on educational collaboration, rather than administrative constraints—supporting both cross-disciplinary innovation and financial clarity.

Background

Interdisciplinarity is fundamental to our Challenge Courses and we have already agreed that a successful course must normally involve a single, integrated teaching team drawing on expertise from multiple Schools and Colleges. However, there is currently no agreed framework to guide Schools in calculating income attribution and distributing teaching commitments where colleagues from more than one School contribute to a single course.

In the absence of a standardised approach, Schools are left to negotiate on a case-by-case basis—a process that can be time-consuming and act as a disincentive to collaborative teaching. Establishing a simple, institutionally agreed model would provide clarity and consistency, making it easier to engage in cross-School course development.

Benefits of an institutional approach

- Supports transparent distribution of teaching commitment
- Builds on existing fee attribution processes linked to teaching commitments
- Encourages and simplifies cross-School collaboration
- Provides Schools with a clear framework to support course development conversations
- Facilitates expansion of Challenge Course portfolio

Establishing a clear, standardised approach—and using approximate teaching commitment as the basis for income attribution—will reduce administrative complexity and enable Schools to focus on course design and delivery, rather than on negotiating financial arrangements.

What This Model Covers (and What It Doesn't)

On Workload Allocation Models

This proposal is not intended to replicate or replace Workload Allocation Models (WAM) used by individual Schools or Colleges. WAMs are designed to capture a broad range of academic activities and are often tailored to local contexts, making direct comparison across units challenging. The teaching commitment model outlined here is narrower in scope and focused solely on activities that are part of the HESA teaching load process, which underpins fee income attribution.

On Teaching Administration

Teaching administration is also outside the scope of this model. Like WAM, it is difficult to measure consistently across the University and there are currently no institution-wide metrics for this work. For this reason, teaching administration should be addressed at School level as part of normal resource planning—both people and budget—when approving a course through a Board of Studies or including it in a teaching plan. Where a School uses a WAM, the agreed teaching commitment percentage from this model can be fed into that process locally, alongside other teaching, research, and service commitments. This ensures that resource requirements, including people time such as teaching office support, are identified and met within each School's own structures and capacity.

While teaching office support is outside the scope of this model, it is important to note that it should be located within a single School to avoid confusion for students and to ensure consistency in administration and communications. In practice, this will often be the School delivering the majority of the teaching activity. Academic responsibilities for course organisation may still be shared between Schools, with the teaching commitment calculation reflecting the split.

While the model focuses on teaching commitment, decisions about who provides course administration and tutor/demonstrator (T&D) support should be agreed between the contributing Schools as part of broader resource planning and as a separate process. Where T&D/ guaranteed hours/hourly paid staff are delivering teaching, that activity is captured in the teaching commitment calculation in the same way as if it were delivered by core salaried academic staff.

On Preparation Time

This model deliberately excludes preparation time from the calculation. Its purpose is to establish a consistent measure of teaching commitment for attributing income, not to capture total staff time. Preparation requirements vary widely between disciplines, course activities, and teaching teams, making it difficult to apply a single fair metric across all Schools. Where a School uses a WAM, it remains the appropriate mechanism for accounting for preparation time, alongside other teaching and research commitments.

Enrolment

Enrolment is often considered a factor in distributing teaching activity, and previous papers modelled three broad bands. After feedback from the committee, this paper models two ranges: over 200 students and fewer than 100 students.

However, when modelled (see worked example later in this paper), the percentage split changes very little across these ranges. On this basis, and given that Challenge Courses are designed to operate at scale (typically 200–400 students), we recommend adopting 200+ students as the

standard planning baseline. This keeps the model simple, avoids false precision in early planning, and still allows for adjustments in exceptional cases where enrolment is significantly lower.

In short, we recommend adopting 200+ students as the standard baseline, with flexibility only for unusually small courses.

Calculating Teaching Commitment for Challenge Courses

An earlier draft set out two potential models for calculating teaching commitment for income attribution in the context of a jointly delivered course. After discussion, the group agreed to adopt a flat-weighted model, in which all student contact events—regardless of format—are treated equally for the purposes of calculating teaching commitment.

This approach was preferred for its simplicity, transparency, and ease of application across a range of interdisciplinary courses. Preparation and administrative time remains deliberately excluded, ensuring consistency and avoiding subjective variation. The model focuses on a clear set of key activities—teaching, assessment, moderation, and course organisation—and produces a straightforward percentage split in teaching contribution that can be used directly for income attribution.

This approach provides the agreed framework for estimating teaching contributions and attributing income—clear, practical, and without unnecessary complexity. The aim is to provide a straightforward, institutionally workable method for determining percentage splits in teaching contribution. These can then be used to support a fair and proportionate allocation of income between contributing Schools.

- Student Contact Time (all timetabled teaching, including lectures, seminars, tutorials, workshops, and labs)
- Assessment for a 20-credit course
- Summative moderation
- Course organisation including Moderation

Activity Type	Weighting
Lecture/Seminars / Tutorials / Workshops / Labs	Counted as timetabled (1:1)
20-Credit Course Assessment	2 hours per student (in total and not per assessment)
Course Organisation (inc. Moderation)	≤ 100 students → 50 hours 101–200 students → 75 hours >200 students → 100 hours

Note: For planning, the course organisation allowance offers three bands. However, the teaching contribution model as a whole is based on a 200+ student baseline.

Finally, to support clarity, simplicity, and consistent reporting, we propose rounding the final percentage splits to the nearest 10% (or 5%, depending on context). Where the majority of teaching activity clearly sits within one School, rounding up in that School’s favour could be advised. This approach avoids unnecessary negotiation over marginal differences and ensures compatibility with

external reporting requirements, such as HESA, which recognises contributions only from a minimum of 5%.

Worked Example:

Below is an example using fictional numbers for a 20-credit course which will be jointly delivered by two Schools (School A and School B).

- **Lectures:** The course will be delivered via 20 one-hour lectures. *School A* will deliver 60% (12 hours) of the lectures and *School B* will deliver 40% (8 hours)
- **Tutorials:** There will be 5 weeks of 1-hour tutorials with 12 students in each group (5 groups in total for an initial cohort of 60 students). To be covered 100% by *School A*
- **Workshop/labs:** There will be 5 weeks of labs of 2 hours duration – 25 students per lab and covered 100% by *School A*
- **Assessment:** 20 Credit Course assessment - 2 hours per student – All marking will be undertaken by *School A*
- **Course organisation (Inc. Moderation)** – The schools have also agreed to a 60/40 split on course organising. This allowance now also incorporates moderation activity, recognising that course organisers may reasonably wish to share this responsibility.
- **Initial Anticipated enrolment:** 100 students rising to 200
- **Administration** – undertaken by *School A*

Mapped example as a table

	≤ 100 enrolments		200 enrolments	
Activity	School A	School B	School A	School B
Lectures	12	8	12	8
Tutorials	25	–	80	–
Labs	20	–	40	–
Assessment	200	–	400	–
Course Org. (inc. Moderation)	30	20	60	40
Total	287	28	592	48
% Split	91%	9%	92.50%	7.50%
Rounded	90%	10%	90%	10%

Observation:

The percentage split between Schools changes very little as enrolment varies (91/9 at ~100 students vs. 92.5/7.5 at 200 students, both rounding to 90/10). This suggests that, for the purposes of calculating teaching commitment, using a single default enrolment assumption (e.g. ≥200) would provide the same practical outcome while keeping the model simple.

This reflects the aspiration for Challenge courses to operate at scale and ensures the model remains proportionate to the kinds of delivery and resourcing these courses require. Using a single enrolment baseline:

- Keeps the modelling simple and repeatable across courses
- Aligns with the pedagogical and financial ambition of Challenge courses
- Avoids false precision in early-stage planning where enrolments fluctuate
- Makes it easier for Schools to anticipate contributions and plan accordingly

Final thoughts

Adopting this straightforward, default-based approach will provide a stable, transparent foundation for income attribution in Challenge Courses, reducing administrative friction and enabling Schools to focus on the quality and ambition of course design. The model is intentionally simple, adaptable to different disciplines, and aligned with existing University processes, making it easy to implement without creating additional burdens.

We recommend applying the model to existing and upcoming Challenge Courses to test its practicality and impact, with a view to sharing the outcomes more widely. If successful, the approach could form the basis of a broader institutional standard for interdisciplinary income attribution, supporting both collaboration and innovation.

Taking this forward will require agreement between contributing Schools on its use and, if adopted, periodic review to ensure it remains proportionate, transparent, and supportive of both academic collaboration and the University's financial processes.

Senate Education Committee

27 November 2025

Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) – Edinburgh Futures Institute
Community Volunteer**Description of paper**

1. This paper proposes adding a new ‘additional recognised activity’ to the HEAR:
Edinburgh Futures Institute Community Volunteer.

Fit with remit

Education Committee	Y/N
Promote strategically-led initiatives and university-wide changes designed to enhance the educational experience of students and learners.	Y

Action requested / recommendation

2. Senate Education Committee (SEC) is asked to reject the proposal that the new activity is added to the HEAR.
3. SEC is asked to approve the Panel’s recommendation for the Edinburgh Futures Institute (EFI) to consider adopting the Community Champions model, once it has been rolled out more widely across the University.

Background and context

4. Section 6.1 of the HEAR records students’ wider achievements whilst matriculated students. It records:

- Additional awards (in Edinburgh’s case, ‘The Edinburgh Award’)
- Additional recognised activities
- University, Students’ Association and Sports Union prizes and awards

A list of the additional recognised activities that are currently recognised on the HEAR can be found at <https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-administration/order-documents/transcripts/hear>.

5. Proposals for new, additional recognised activities are initially considered by the HEAR Recommendation Panel. SEC is then asked to consider and, where appropriate, approve the recommendation made by the Recommendation Panel.
6. The Recommendation Panel comprised the following members of SEC: Deputy Vice-Principal Students (Enhancement); Students’ Association Vice President Education; Director for Careers and Employability; Head of Academic Quality and Standards; and a learning and teaching representative from each College.

Discussion

7. The proposal form for the *EFI Community Volunteer* role is attached.

8. The Recommendation Panel considered the proposal and did not agree that it should be recognised under section 6.1 of the HEAR. **Senate Education Committee is asked to reject this proposed activity and to approve the Panel's recommendation for EFI to consider adopting the Community Champions model once it has been rolled out more widely across the University.**
9. The Panel provided the following feedback when considering the proposal:
 - The proposal lacks detail, particularly with regard to the level of commitment required from students in order to gain the proposed achievement. Similarly, there is a lack of clarity and detail around the expected hours of student engagement.
 - The proposed activity lacks reflection or reporting on the part of the individual students.
 - It is noted that additional recognised activity should be equitable. Students will be required to dedicate time to gaining this proposed achievement without recompense. The proposal fails to consider that this may preclude some students in participating and how it risks potentially creating a tiered system.
 - Concern with regard to the inequality this could potentially create should this activity be approved within EFI but not in other Schools.
 - Community Champions within Moray House are already an approved HEAR Additional Recognised Activity. Removing the reference to Moray House and adopting this as a University-wide role, taking into account similar pilot activity within other Schools, should be taken forward as a priority.
 - Taking forward a University-wide Community Champion role would enable further review of a common role descriptor and enhance clarity on the required expectations for students to achieve this additional recognised activity.
 - The mechanisms already in place at the University for recognising high levels of student engagement and contribution of effort, such as vouchers, should be highlighted to EFI colleagues.

Resource implications

10. There will be some workload implications for relevant staff to review the Community Champion role before adopting it as University-wide recognised activity.
11. Some development work by Student Systems will be required to amend the Community Champions activity to the HEAR, should it be agreed to remove the specific reference to Moray House.

Risk management

12. N/A

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

13. N/A

Equality & diversity

14. As outlined in paragraph 9, concern was noted around the required allocation of time to achieve this activity without recompense. This places potential restriction on participation and does not align with the requirement of HEAR activity to be equitable to all students.

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

15. Feedback from both SEC and the HEAR Recommendation Panel regarding this specific proposal will be communicated to EFI by Academic Quality and Standards.

Author

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Presenter

Professor Tina Harrison
Deputy Vice-Principal Students
(Enhancement)

November 2025

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HEAR: Proposal for Adding Categories of Achievement to Section 6.1 (or Amending Existing Categories)

Section 6.1 of the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) covers achievements by students that are not directly related to their degree result. These achievements must be verified by the University of Edinburgh.

This form should be completed if you wish to propose a new achievement or activity for inclusion in Section 6.1 (or to amend an existing achievement). The proposal will be considered by Senate Education Committee (SEC), which will ensure that the category adheres to the following principles:

All activity recognised in Section 6.1 of the HEAR should be undertaken **whilst a matriculated student**, and should fit under 1 of 3 headings:

1. **Additional Awards** – in Edinburgh's case, the '[Edinburgh Award](#)' is the only 'Additional Award' recognised.
2. **Additional Recognised Activities** – including volunteering, leadership and representative roles, and other significant, verifiable roles. (See page 2 for details of the additional activities that are currently recognised.)
3. **University, Students' Association and Sports Union Prizes and Awards** – both academic and non-academic.

In addition, all activity should be:

- **Substantial** – the activity has impact, encourages reflection, and provides opportunities for learning development and 'stretch'. It is likely to involve a substantial time commitment.
- **Verifiable** – the activity can be verified and is endorsed by the University.
- **Equitable** – the activity is available on an equal basis to a clearly defined group of students, and should be available to students on an ongoing basis eg. in successive years.
- **Factual** – information included is factual and non-evaluative.
- **Additional** – the activity is not required as part of the academic, credit-bearing curriculum.



HEAR: Proposal for Adding Categories of Achievement to Section 6.1 (or Amending Existing Categories)

The following '**Additional Recognised Activities**' (heading 2 above) are currently approved by the University of Edinburgh:

Students' Association Roles • Edinburgh University Students' Association Activities Position • Edinburgh University Students' Association Elected Office Bearer • Peer Support – PALS Student Leader and Peer Support Leader • Student Representative • Edinburgh University Students' Association Community Volunteering	Sports Union Roles • Edinburgh University Sports Union Representative or Office Bearer • Edinburgh University Sports Union Sports Club – Official Position
University / College / School Roles University • Student member of University Internal Review team (Internal Periodic Review and Thematic Review) • Student Representative • Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program Climate Leadership Award School • History, Classics and Archaeology (HCA) Student Research Room Volunteer • Moray House School of Education and Sport (MHSES) Community Champion	Roles Within Other University-Affiliated Bodies • International Student Centre Committee Member • Edinburgh Nightline Committee Member • Edinburgh Students' Charities Appeal Executive Committee Member

Further information on the University of Edinburgh's approach to the HEAR is available here:
<http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-administration/other-info/hear>



HEAR: Proposal for Adding Categories of Achievement to Section 6.1 (or Amending Existing Categories)

1. What is the name of the proposed category of achievement?*

EFI Community Volunteer

2. Please give a brief description of the category of achievement*

The EFI Community Volunteers will assist the EFI Student Experience Team in planning and implementing community-building events and workshops. As these events can either be undergraduate-specific, postgraduate-specific, or open to all years, each event is unique in its goal of building community. These student volunteers will take student-led ideas forward and bring them to the Student Experience Team where they can assist us in the planning and implementation of events and workshops.

3. Which students are eligible for this achievement?*

(For example, is it open to all undergraduate and taught postgraduate students, or restricted to a specific group?)

Open to all undergraduate and taught postgraduate students in EFI



HEAR: Proposal for Adding Categories of Achievement to Section 6.1 (or Amending Existing Categories)

4. What does the student need to do to gain this achievement?*

(For example, if the achievement involves representation, is there a minimum number of meetings that must be attended or hours completed?)

We plan to hold at least one organization and planning meeting for events of the month and one event/workshop each month. If by the end of the academic year, the student volunteer has assisted and attended at least five events, and attended at least five planning sessions throughout the academic year, they will receive this recognition.

5. Verification*

(Please describe **in detail** how the achievement will be verified.)

Meeting minutes are kept for each planning and organization meeting including attendance of student volunteers. Professional staff will record student volunteer attendance at each workshop or event and behind the scenes we will keep a documented spreadsheet of all the planning meetings and events student volunteers are eligible to attend. By the end of the year, we will double check all meeting minutes to the spreadsheet and ensure that we have documented attendance accordingly.

6. When will the verification be complete each academic year?*

Verifications will be completed in June/July for undergraduates each year and in October for postgraduates each year.



HEAR: Proposal for Adding Categories of Achievement to Section 6.1 (or Amending Existing Categories)

7. Is there any other information you wish to supply in support of your application?

CONTACT INFORMATION

8. Name of proposer*

Sara Carter + Emma Craigen

9. Email address of proposer*

sara.carter@ed.ac.uk + emma.craigen@ed.ac.uk

10. Proposing School / Department*

Edinburgh Futures Institute

11. Date*

October 10, 2025

Please return this form to the Secretary to Senate Education Committee:

academic.quality@ed.ac.uk



HEAR: Proposal for Adding Categories of Achievement to Section 6.1 (or Amending Existing Categories)

Once received, the form will be passed to Student Systems who will ensure that the proposing School or Department holds appropriate, robust data in a suitable format for uploading to the Student Record.

Following vetting by Student Systems, the form will be passed to a Recommendation Panel for initial consideration and subsequently to Senate Education Committee for final approval.

The HEAR Recommendation Panel meets annually in late October / early November, and proposals are signed off by Senate Education Committee at its November meeting. (This schedule allows Student Systems sufficient time to make required Systems changes and to ensure that any new or changed categories can be included in the HEARs of students graduating the following summer.)

ALL PROPOSAL FORMS SHOULD THEREFORE BE SUBMITTED TO THE SECRETARY TO SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE BY 15 OCTOBER EACH YEAR.

For Student Systems use only:

I confirm that the data that will be provided for this category of achievement is relevant, robust and available in a suitable format for upload to the Student Record.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Role: _____

Senate Education Committee

27 November 2025

Update on Assessment and Feedback Policy

Description of paper

1. This paper provides an update on the development of a new Assessment and Feedback Policy, as agreed at the Senate Education Committee meeting in May 2025.

Fit with remit

Education Committee	Y/N
Promote strategically-led initiatives and university-wide changes designed to enhance the educational experience of students and learners.	Y
Promote innovations in learning, teaching and assessment, embrace new teaching methods and consider cross-cutting themes such as research-led and technology-enhanced learning, digital and information literacy, education for employability, internationalisation and lifelong learning. Consider and promote local developments or initiatives with substantial implications for University learning and teaching strategy, policy, services or operations.	Y
Oversee policy relating to students' academic experience and proactively engage with high-level issues and themes arising from student feedback.	Y
Anticipate and prepare for new opportunities and likely future developments in learning and teaching for all cohorts of students and learners.	Y
Consider the implications of the Committee's work and its decisions in the context of external initiatives and compliance and legal frameworks, particularly in relation to equality and diversity.	Y

Action requested / recommendation

2. The Committee is invited to note the paper.

Background and context

3. The Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities were due for a scheduled review this academic year 2025/26. Given the substantial activity that has taken place since the Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities were first developed, this provides an opportunity to conduct a more comprehensive review, and to clarify the current and future institutional expectations for assessment and feedback.
4. At its meeting on 1 May 2025 (SEC 24/25 4G), Senate Education Committee approved plans for the development of a new Assessment and Feedback Policy to be approved and ready for implementation at the start of the 2026/27 academic year.

Discussion

5. The existing Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities document makes it difficult to identify which elements are mandatory. Furthermore, there

remains confusion across the institution as to whether these principles constitute formal policy, despite some elements being explicitly required.

6. To address this, SEC approved the development of a clear and consolidated **Assessment and Feedback Policy**. This policy would formally set out all mandatory elements/minimum expectations which are part of the current Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities, accompanied by **guidance** to support effective implementation in practice.
7. Following the approval by SEC to develop the new Policy, the Deputy VP Students outlined in a paper to Colleges the plans for the new Policy and provided an early opportunity to feed into the policy development.
8. In addition to this, the Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group agreed that the policy should also incorporate a position on assessment and feedback in relation to the following three aspects, based on developments within the University and across the Higher Education sector:
 - Implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy
 - Generative AI (both in the context of its use in assessment, and in providing feedback)
 - Recommendations / outputs of the Bristol Case Working Group
9. A workshop involving members of APRC, SEC and the Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group will be held in December 2025 to consider an early draft of the policy before the forthcoming winter vacation. A revised draft of the policy will then be brought for comment at APRC in January 2026. Where significant new expectations for Schools are proposed as part of the development of the policy, these will be consulted upon with colleagues in Schools and Colleges, EUSA, and any other relevant stakeholders. The intention is to submit a final draft of the policy for approval at the March 2026 meeting of SEC.

Resource implications

10. Support for the review will be provided by Academic Quality and Standards. This support will be prioritised by the department as assessment and feedback is an institutional priority.
11. The planned mandatory elements of the Assessment and Feedback Policy predominantly reflect existing expectations, which are currently articulated in the Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities. Where any proposed additions or amendments to these expectations are proposed for the Policy, an assessment of any resource implications of these for Schools will be carried out.

Risk management

12. Failure to address student concerns around assessment and feedback is a risk to the student experience. This would mean we have not met our strategic ambitions as set out in Strategy 2030, nor fulfilled the related QAA recommendations in the recent ELIR and QESR reviews. It carries reputational risk and continues to affect the University's standing in national league tables. The development of a new Assessment and Feedback Policy, which clarifies

mandatory elements of the current Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities, is a significant mitigating activity to respond to this risk.

13. It is vital to ensure that our approaches to assessment and feedback are responsive to any recommendations arising from the Bristol Case Working Group, in order to continue to meet our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

14. We must also ensure our approach to assessment and feedback is cognisant of the rapid evolution of Generative AI, in order to maintain confidence that our assessments are secure and robust.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

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

Equality & diversity

16. Where the Assessment and Feedback Policy introduces any new mandatory expectations, an Equality Impact Assessment of these measures will be carried out. As noted above, responding to the recommendations of the Bristol Case Working Group is vital to ensuring that we continue to meet our responsibilities towards students with disabilities in particular.

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

17. The next steps for the development of the Policy are outlined in section 9, above.

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