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. The Committee requested that a more substantive, holistic review of how this policy aligns with the University's wider approach to data ethics governance and its implications on the effectiveness of key operations across the University, such as student support and quality enhancement, should be undertaken prior to the revised policy returning to the Committee for approval.

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 Programme's achievements to date, particularly the experience of its Online Distance Learning (ODL) students. Members noted that the Programme, 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. With regard to the Programme's PTES scores being presented as sector-leading, a member noted that its scores are similar to the institutional average, with less well-resourced programmes across the University obtaining similar results.

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 more 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.