The University of Edinburgh

Senate Education Committee
Thursday 5th March 2026 2-5pm
Hybrid meeting: Cuillin 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 • 27th November 2025	SEC 25/26 3A
3.	**Matters Arising** • Convener's Communications	
4.	**SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS**	
4.1	**Assessment and Feedback Policy +** For discussion	SEC 25/26 3B
4.2	**School-Level Pastoral Support for Postgraduate Research Students** For approval	SEC 25/26 3C
4.3	**Regenerative Sustainability Strategy** For discussion	SEC 25/26 3D
4.4	**Open Educational Resources Policy** For approval	SEC 25/26 3E
4.5	**Erasmus+ Re-association: Next Steps** For discussion	SEC 25/26 3F
5.	**ITEMS FOR UPDATE**	
5.1	**Bristol Case Working Group Action Plan** For noting	SEC 25/26 3G
5.2	**Learning and Teaching Workstream Update *** For noting	SEC 25/26 3H
5.3	**Academic Development Update** For noting	Verbal update

5.4	**Learning Materials Accessibility Review** For noting	SEC 25/26 3I
5.5	**Committee Priorities 2025/26: Mid-Year Reflection** For noting	SEC 25/26 3J
5.6	**Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation – Terms of Reference +** For noting	SEC 25/26 3K
5.7	**Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression** For noting	SEC 25/26 3L
6.	**Any Other Business**	
7.	**Date of next meeting** Thursday 7th May 2026, 2-5pm Hybrid meeting: Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House & Microsoft Teams	

The University of Edinburgh
Senate Education Committee

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

1. Attendance

Present:	**Position:**
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 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
Lucy Evans	Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary, Students
Professor Antonis Giannopoulos	Senate Representative
Shelagh Green	Director for Careers and Employability
Lorna Halliday	Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching)
Dr Melissa Highton	Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Services; Assistant Principal Online and Open Learning
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
Professor Linda Kirstein	Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching)
Alex Laidlaw	Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching)
Patience Mulungi	Postgraduate Research Student Representative
Professor Jamie Pearce	Representative of CSE (Postgraduate Research)
Professor Patrick Walsh	Senate Representative
Patrick Jack	Committee Secretary, Academic Quality and Standards
Apologies:	
Professor Lisa Boden	Head of School, CMVM
Professor Colm Harmon	Vice Principal, Students (Convener)
Professor Willem Hollmann	Head of School, CAHSS
Professor Jason Love	Head of School, CSE
Professor Velda McCune	Deputy Director, Institute for Academic Development
In attendance:	
Lauren Harrison	Academic Quality and Standards
Professor Sabine Rolle	Challenge Courses Lead, Edinburgh Futures Institute
Dr Elizabeth Williams	Associate Director, Library Academic Support

The Vice-Convener welcomed the Committee's new Postgraduate Research Student Representative to their first Senate Education Committee (SEC) meeting. The proposal to add Lauren Harrison from Academic Quality and Standards (AQS) as an observing member to SEC for the remainder of 2025/26 due to her involvement within the implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy was supported by the Committee.

Guidance for observing members was shared verbally by the Vice-Convener, who outlined that they are invited at the discretion of the Convener and are subject to change. It was highlighted that, while there is no formal written guidance for observing members, they are welcome to contribute to discussion during meetings of the Committee. However, in instances where there is a high volume of committee business, input from full members will be prioritised. It was further highlighted that observing members have no voting rights on SEC.

2. Minutes of meeting held on 25th September 2025

The Committee noted proposed amendments to the Learning Analytics Policy Review item (4.5) and to the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Programme Phase 2 item (5.2).

The Committee otherwise approved the minutes of the meeting held on 25th September 2025.

Action: The Committee Secretary to liaise with the relevant members and to draft amended minutes where appropriate, prior to the minutes being finalised and published.

3. Matters Arising

- **NSS and PTES Optional Questions**

The Vice-Convener noted that members of SEC were consulted in late October 2025 with regard to the banks of optional questions to be used within NSS and PTES surveys over the next three years. During the consultation, members were asked to indicate their preferences by year. The Committee was informed that the Student Lifecycle Management Group (SLMG) has since approved the institution's optional questions, with the following questions selected:

2026: Workload; Students' Association
2027: Course Content and Structure; Learning Community
2028: Employability and Skills; Welfare Resources and Facilities

- **QAA Institutional Liaison Meeting**

Members noted that annual meetings with both the QAA and the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) are now a requirement following the introduction of the Scotland's Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF).

The Vice-Convener informed members that an institutional liaison meeting was held with the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in August 2025. This meeting focussed on the University's progress against the recommendations from its 2023 Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR). Feedback from the QAA noted that out of the seven recommendations and

actions from the QESR report, four have been marked as complete, two as progressed and one as ongoing. The University will next meet with the SFC in the first quarter of 2026, where discussions will focus on the University's recently submitted Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP).

Action: The Committee Secretary to circulate the University's SEAP to members.

- **Student Surveys Update**

The Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary, Students noted the comments raised by members in relation to the Student Surveys Update item (4.1) from the September meeting of SEC. Positivity around the direction of travel across the results was noted within the wider context of improvements witnessed across the sector. Members were informed that the University's Student Life Survey returned similar results. It was further noted that that it is hoped that the implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy will help support further enhancements in student experience. Members are welcome to contact the Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary, Students directly with any related queries.

4. Substantive Items

4.1 Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation

The Vice-Convener introduced the paper, noting that the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030 was formally launched in June 2025 and that governance arrangements are now required to be established in order to support the effective implementation of the Strategy. As part of these arrangements, members noted the proposals to establish the *Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Group (LTSIG)*, as well as the creation of *the Curriculum Development and Innovation Group (CDIG)*. Members further noted the proposed terms of reference for each group and were informed that suggestions to refresh and expand the proposed membership of each group would be welcome.

In considering the proposals, members raised the following comments:

- Reference to membership from the Institute for Academic Development (IAD) will need amended, in light of structural changes to the IAD.
- The membership of LTSIG appears to be more strongly weighted to professional services staff and a suggestion was noted to seek a stronger balance of representation between academic and professional services colleagues.
- It was noted that there could be stronger representation from digital education. It was subsequently suggested that the Assistant Principal Education Futures could lead on this.
- The requirement for two groups was queried, particularly as innovative practice and the wider Strategy are intrinsically linked and that there is a subsequent risk of duplication.
- How will the groups feed into relevant University-level committees and sub-groups?
- There is some cross-over with the College Dean of Quality and Dean of Students roles. The groups will be required to co-ordinate with these role holders, as well as education committees at the College and School-level.

- Could there be representation from senior professional services colleagues within Colleges?
- A member suggested, for consideration, the possible inclusion of a representative from the Library and University Collections on LTSIG.
- The work relating to LTSIG's remit points 2.I and 2.II will be intensive and should be prioritised early in semester two.
- Comments were noted around Senate's input into the Groups, both in terms of membership and approval.
- It was suggested that there should be student representation on CDIG, particularly to enhance transparency around curriculum development.
- CMVM representation on CDIG requires reconsideration.
- Reference to Learning and Teaching Committee should be removed and replaced with Senate Education Committee.
- Is Head of School representation on LTSIG required when there is equivalent representation on SEC? Could this be replaced by Director of Teaching representation on LTSIG?
- A commitment to regularly report to Senate on the Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Plan is in place. It was noted that Senate is supportive of the Implementation Plan's development.

The Vice-Convener thanked members for their valuable feedback. In responding to points raised, the Vice-Convener noted their initial preference to establish two groups given the intensive workloads of each group in their early stages. It was further noted that the requirement for two separate groups could be subject to review and reconsidered during the 2026/27 academic year. It was highlighted that the remit of CDIG will change once the Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Plan has been formally introduced.

It was highlighted that, given that LTSIG is a sub-group of SEC, it is for SEC to decide on its membership. However, membership could be amended during future review activity relating to LTSIG and CDIG. The Vice-Convener further noted that they would welcome enhanced representation from students, CMVM and Senate across LTSIG and CDIG, and requested that relevant members get in contact directly with suggested nominations.

The Committee subsequently endorsed the proposal to establish LTSIG and CDIG, subject to their remits and memberships being finalised in reflection of the Committee's discussion of this item.

Action: Relevant members to contact the Vice-Convener with suggested nominations for LTSIG and CDIG.

Action: Deputy Vice Principal Students (Enhancement) to finalise the terms of reference for LTSIG and CDIG, and circulate to SEC members.

4.2 Agentic AI in Learning and Teaching: University Response

The paper was introduced to the Committee by the Assistant Principal Education Futures, who highlighted the risks posed by the emergence of AI agents on matters such as learning and teaching, student community and assessment. It was noted that Learning Management Systems (LMSs) are not currently prioritising the blocking of AI agents, which runs counter to the core needs of the University. Members were informed that the University is required to consider how it responds to this risk in the immediate term, for example via the updating of the University's AI guidance and potential policy adjustment with regard to academic misconduct. The Committee was further informed that the University, as a leader in this area, could also release a statement on the University's position on this matter to help catalyse discussion in the UK, and to increase pressure on platform providers and AI companies in order to help address the concerns of the higher education sector.

In discussing the paper and its proposed ways forward, members noted the following comments:

- The risk is not specific to VLEs and Learn, as AI agents can be utilised in browsers and they can therefore use a variety of platforms such as email, SharePoint and Microsoft Teams.
- The University should consider why students would use agentic AI tools and the ethical implications of doing so. There is perhaps a balance between blocking and experimenting with these tools.
- Teaching staff may wish to use AI agents in instances of large group teaching.
- There is a potential future risk associated with this technology regarding the management of the volume of applications. Considerations relating to admissions should be factored into any potential statement issued by the University regarding this matter.
- It is important to consider resource implications around developing authentic assessments with strong pedagogies that may use these AI innovations.
- Blocking AI agents may only have a short-term benefit given the wider context of rapidly evolving technologies.
- While it is important to consider the potential benefits around accessible learning that agentic AI may create for students, there will be a requirement to make students aware of the risks and implications surrounding data sensitivities and associated security risks.
- The University should consult with student bodies including the National Union of Students in order to ensure that clear expectations are set in partnership with students regarding how the University adapts to manage use of these tools. This approach should be embedded within relevant policy such as the Assessment and Feedback policy, as well aligning with the Skills for Success Framework.
- Concern was noted around how AI agents could impact student engagement and monitoring, particularly around how the University records engagement points and assures UKVI compliance.
- Staff require training in order to feel better supported and equipped to manage these advancements in AI.

The Vice-Convener noted general support from members with regard to the proposed ways forward as outlined within the paper.

4.3 Governance of Generative AI in Teaching and Learning: Coordinating Practice

The Assistant Principal Education Futures introduced the paper, highlighting to members that practical responses to AI issues currently fall across multiple committees with no clear, single point of ownership. This creates gaps in spotting, signalling, and resolving academic concerns, and coordinating action within the learning and teaching space, such as developing training provision. In order to help address this, members noted the proposal to establish College-level Generative AI leads to act as primary academic representatives on AI governance in learning and teaching. College leads would be integrated into relevant committees such as SEC, the ELM Steering Board and the AI Data Ethics Group.

Members subsequently raised a range of points in discussion of the proposed way forward, including: the resource demand on staff with existing high workload; resourcing being provided within CSE to establish dedicated focus on AI; the benefits of the AI Whispers Group within CSE, offering a platform for Schools to report challenges and good practice relating to AI to a dedicated College-level AI Lead; the need to capture PGR expertise, as well as to provide enhanced guidance to PGR Directors and to align with the Doctoral College structures; the use of ELM usage data and take-up of associated training provision to better support relevant College-level discussions; potential implications around professional standards and fitness to practice requirements in specific disciplines; the need for College Deans of Education to be well-briefed in relevant issues.

The Vice-Convener noted the Committee's support for the proposed way forward, particularly the requirement for additional expertise and support to be provided at the College-level with regard to generative AI, in close alignment with College Deans of Education. The Vice-Convener noted that in addition to the College-level roles, a University-level lead should be established and it was suggested that the Assistant Principal Education Futures be appointed to this role. It was additionally suggested that the University-level lead could chair a working group of SEC around generative AI which would act in an advisory capacity.

The Committee endorsed the proposed approach and the Vice-Convener noted that discussions with the Heads of College should be arranged in order to explore how the College-level leads could be resourced across all three Colleges. Work will be undertaken collectively with the Colleges to ensure a connected approach is taken moving forward.

Action: Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) and the Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary, Students to plan organising discussions with the Heads of College.

4.4 Challenge Courses Update

The Challenge Courses Lead introduced members to the paper, providing an update on the suite of pilot Challenge Courses developed as part of the Curriculum Transformation Programme (CTP) since 2023. With the CTP Board no longer operational, the Committee was asked to consider the status of Challenge Courses moving forward. Members noted the

proposal to initiate a process to transition Challenge Courses from pilot status to a steady-state Business as Usual (BAU) on a permanent basis within the undergraduate course portfolio.

Members further noted the proposal to use the remainder of 2025/26 and 2026/27 to define what BAU will look like in practice, and that current processes will remain in place until a new BAU framework is fully embedded within the University, subject to future SEC approval. The Vice-Convener highlighted associated time pressure around this work, notably that the Challenge Courses Lead is currently leading this work on a secondment basis until the end of 2025/26 and that support provided by Strategic Change with regard to Challenge Courses is currently secured until the end of 2025/26.

Members subsequently discussed the proposals, with the following points being raised:

- The number of students undertaking Challenge Courses was discussed, with a particular focus on students from CMVM. Students within Biomedical Sciences have been encouraged to undertake Challenge Courses as there is space within their curriculum to select outside elective courses.
- Have Challenge Courses had an impact on Schools with models of service teaching?
- Has there been instances where student numbers are reducing on courses which Schools offer as outside electives as a result of the emergence of Challenge Courses?
- The primary concern in the early stages of the pilot was the visibility of Challenge Courses as they sit outwith programmes. This was addressed between year one and year two of the pilot phase, with the success in raising visibility reflected in the increase in the number of students taking Challenge Courses.
- An evaluation of courses available as outside elective courses has not been undertaken; this would require a longitudinal study to monitor longer-term trends.
- There is a need to consider approaches to teaching and assessment on Challenge Courses moving forward and how this is resourced, particularly with regard to PhD students and the support available to them. It was suggested that a more rigorous selection process to recruit PhD students involved in the delivery of Challenge Courses could be introduced. There is a need to ensure that tutors are fully supported to tutor challenging topics.
- In terms of the approval process, could College Curriculum Approval Boards receive notification of Challenge Course proposals? This would assist with wider portfolio review activity.
- Should Challenge Courses continue to successfully grow, considerations should be given around the resources required to deliver assessment on courses with high student numbers, as well managing student expectations should waiting lists be required on Challenge Courses.
- A community of practice has been established to enable colleagues to discuss the design and delivery of Challenge Courses and how they are assessed.

The Vice-Convener thanked members for their valuable feedback and highlighted that it aligned with prior discussions held at the Oversight Group for Curriculum Innovation (OGCI). The Committee subsequently endorsed the proposal for the Challenge Course Lead and the

relevant oversight group to continue work on defining what BAU will look like in practice, prior to returning to SEC with a formal proposal for approval.

4.5 Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) – EFI Community Volunteer

The Vice-Convener informed members that the HEAR Recommendation Panel had reviewed the proposal and recommended that SEC reject this proposed activity. The Panel requested that SEC approve their recommendation for EFI to consider adopting the Community Champions model, once it has transitioned beyond pilot stage and been rolled out more widely across the University.

The Committee subsequently approved the Recommendation Panel's proposals.

Action: Committee Secretary to relay HEAR Recommendation Panel and SEC feedback to EFI colleagues.

5. Items for Update

5.1 Assessment and Feedback Policy Update

The Committee received an update from the Vice-Convener on the development of the new Assessment and Feedback Policy. Members were informed that the Assessment and Feedback and Strategy Group met in October 2025, where an initial policy draft was reviewed. The Strategy Group agreed that the policy should seek to incorporate a position on assessment across a number of thematic areas based on developments within the University and across the Higher Education sector. These themes include: implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy; generative AI; recommendations from the Bristol Case Working Group.

Members were informed of a workshop involving members of APRC, SEC and the Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group to be held in December 2025 to further consider the draft policy. Members were encouraged to attend and it was highlighted that substitute members would be permitted to attend should members be unavailable on the date of the workshop.

5.2 Learning and Teaching Workstream Update

The Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary, Students provided the Committee with a verbal update on the Learning and Teaching workstream, with members being directed to the workstream's SharePoint hub which provides further details around specific projects taking place as part of the wider workstream.

While it was noted that many members of SEC are members of the workstream and its projects, an overview of the projects was provided by the Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary, Students for the benefit of members who are not members of the workstream. It was suggested that more substantive updates on specific L&T workstream projects could be brought to future meetings of SEC, while remaining cognisant of SEC's remit.

5.3 Assessment and Feedback Groups

The Vice-Convener informed members of details of a workshop held around assessment and feedback and the LOUISA Project, which was co-hosted by the Vice-Convener and the Assistant Principal Online and Open Learning. The workshop, supported by Strategic Change, focussed on alignment between the LOUISA Project and assessment and feedback priorities.

6. Any Other Business

Members noted that a paper proposing future Convenorship arrangements for SEC would be going to the next meeting of Senate in December 2025 for approval.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 5th March 2026, 2-5pm. This will be a hybrid meeting, taking place in the Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House and via Microsoft Teams.

Senate Education Committee

5 March 2026

Assessment and Feedback Policy

Description of paper

1. This paper presents the latest iteration of the draft Assessment and Feedback Policy, the development of which was agreed at the Senate Education Committee (SEC) 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 asked to **discuss** the proposed policy and to **endorse** its direction of travel.

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), SEC 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. 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.

5. The Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group, which reports in to both SEC and Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC), was tasked with steering the initial development of the Assessment and Feedback Policy.

6. At its meeting on 27 November 2025 (SEC 25/26 2G), Senate Education Committee was informed that the Assessment and Feedback and Strategy Group met in October 2025, where an initial policy draft was reviewed. The Strategy Group agreed that the policy should seek to incorporate a position on assessment across a number of thematic areas based on developments within the University and across the Higher Education sector.

7. A workshop involving members of Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC), SEC and the Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group was held in December 2025 to further consider the draft policy. The workshop considered the following thematic areas: implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy; generative AI; recommendations from the Bristol Case Working Group.

8. The Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group subsequently met in February 2026 to review and finalise a revised draft of the Assessment and Feedback Policy.

Discussion

9. 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.

10. To address this, SEC approved the development of a clear and consolidated **Assessment and Feedback Policy**. This policy will formally set out all mandatory elements/minimum expectations which are part of the current Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities. The intention is to bring the finalised policy to SEC for approval at its May 2026 meeting.

11. The Policy will be supplemented by **guidance** following approval of the policy, to support effective implementation in practice. Once finalised, the supplementary guidance will be presented to SEC for noting.

Resource implications

12. 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.

13. The proposed 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 discussed.

Risk management

14. 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.

15. 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. It is also key to ensure that ensure that our approaches to assessment and feedback are responsive to the recommendations arising from the report of the Targeted Peer Review of the University of Glasgow under the Scottish Quality Concerns Scheme (SQCS).

16. 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

17. 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

18. 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

19. The next steps for the development of the Policy are outlined in sections 10 and 11, above.

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February 2026

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Appendix A: Draft Assessment and Feedback Policy

Summary

This policy underpins a holistic and strategic approach to the design, management and practice of assessment and feedback across all taught provision within both taught and research programmes. It sets out the mandatory baseline requirements for quality in assessment and feedback, providing assurance of consistent, fair and transparent practice across Schools.

Scope: Mandatory Policy and Supporting Guidance

This policy is University-wide and applies to the assessment and feedback of all taught provision across taught and research programmes.

Contact	Academic Quality and Standards	academicpolicy@ed.ac.uk

Document control

Dates	**Version approved**:	**Effective date:** 01.08.26	**Equality impact assessment:**	**Last Reviewed:** N/A	**Next Review:** 202-/202-
Approving authority	Senate Education Committee				
Related policies	N/A				
Alternative format	If you require this document in an alternative format please email academicpolicy@ed.ac.uk				
Keywords	Assessment, feedback, course assessment, programme assessment, marking, moderation, assessment criteria, marking criteria, learning outcomes				

1. Assessment Purpose

1.1 Assessment may have multiple purposes. While assessment must support the assurance of academic standards and the evaluation of student achievement, it must also be designed to support student learning and progression, contribute to the development of knowledge, skills and attributes (in line with the University's Skills for Success Framework: Skills for Success Framework), and provide opportunities for feedback, reflection and improvement.

1.2 Assessment should be as authentic as possible. Assessment is authentic when it:

- assesses students' abilities to apply their knowledge and skills to complex tasks and challenges
- is realistic, linked to practice, application and employment
- asks students to 'do' the subject and prepares them to become practitioners in their discipline

1.3 Assessment must reflect the Edinburgh Student Vision by:

- focusing on (inter)disciplinary depth and expertise
- supporting the development of students as learners ready to thrive in a changing world
- supporting students' ability to translate their learning into future success

1.4 Staff involved in the design and delivery of teaching must ensure that the methods of assessment used across the programme are appropriate to, and align with, the programme and course learning outcomes

2. Assessment Design

2.1 In designing assessments, staff must ensure that assessments are coherently aligned, and explicitly mapped, to programme and course learning outcomes.

2.2 The purpose of each assessment must be clear, and the chosen method of assessment must provide an appropriate and inclusive means for students to evidence achievement of the specific learning outcomes.

2.3 Assessment tasks must be designed with explicit reference to the assessment criteria and must clearly communicate the criteria by which students will be assessed.

2.4 Assessments must be aligned with the relevant Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level and applicable subject benchmark statements or Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements, and reflect relevant academic, professional and graduate skills, underpinned by the Skills for Success Framework.

2.5 The amount of student effort required to complete the assessment should be proportionate to the amount and level of credit and explicitly communicated to students. While the number of individual assessments may differ across courses, staff should ensure that assessment workload should be comparable across courses or units of learning at the same level and credit weighting.

2.6 Assessment design must support and encourage good academic practices and academic integrity, as well as minimise opportunities or incentives for academic misconduct. Expectations regarding the use of AI and how this should be evidenced within the assessment, should be made explicit.

2.7 Assessment and feedback approaches should be developed and monitored at the programme level to ensure:

- alignment with programme learning outcomes and development of the Edinburgh Student Vision
- variety in assessment methods across a programme of study, including an appropriate balance of formative versus summative assessment
- appropriate challenge and opportunity for the level of study, enabling students to develop and improve during their degrees
- assessment timing is suitably coordinated and sufficiently distributed across the programme, affording students appropriate time to undertake each assessment, and enough time for feedback to be provided by staff and used by students
- consistency in assessment load relative to credit over the duration of the programme (to protect against over-assessment)

2.8 School Boards of Studies are responsible for ensuring that assessments meet the above expectations and that assessment methods are academically appropriate, fair, proportionate and align with the Edinburgh Student Vision.

3. Equitability and Fairness of Assessment and Feedback

3.1 Staff involved in the delivery of teaching must comply with the Equality Act 2010, which includes a duty to make anticipatory reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities. These adjustments are in relation to:

- policies, criteria or practices (including learning outcomes and methods of assessment)
- physical features (the environment in which the assessment takes place)
- the provision of auxiliary aids/services (such as the use of technology or provision of support staff)

3.2 Assessments must align with the principles outlined within the University's Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy:
Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy

3.3 There may be programmes which have competence standards. These are usually set by a Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB). Competence standards are legally non-negotiable skills or knowledge standards that all students studying for the degree must meet in order to successfully pass the programme. While the competence standard itself cannot be adjusted, assessment methods and practices remain subject to reasonable adjustments.

3.4 All competence standards for any programme or course delivered by the University must be clearly identified and communicated to prospective and current students.

3.5 All competence standards must be approved by a Board of Studies, ensuring that staff assessing competence standards have undertaken the appropriate training on competence standards and reasonable adjustments.

4. Assessment and Feedback Engagement with Students

4.1 In line with the Student Voice Policy, assessment and feedback practices must provide students with opportunities to be active participants in their own learning over the course of the programme.

4.2 Students must be provided with complete assessment information at the start of the course so they can be fully informed about how they will be assessed. This should include an overview of the methods of assessment, the relative weighting of

assessments or marks, the assessment task, the criteria and/or marking rubric by which the assessment will be assessed, and when feedback will be returned to students.

4.3 Time must be set aside during the course for the discussion of assessment tasks, ensuring students understand the expectations of assessment and the criteria by which they will be assessed. Students must not be expected to be responsible for identifying this information.

4.4 Unless stated otherwise, students should be able to make use of AI in their learning in line with the University's guidelines for students on the use of AI. The assessment task must make clear to students whether, and in what way, the use of AI is permitted for a particular assessment. If the use of AI is not permitted, or is permitted with restrictions, this must be clearly stated and explained alongside the assessment task.
Using generative AI in your studies: guidelines for students

5. Moderation and peer review of assessment

5.1 Moderation of all components of summative assessment and feedback must be carried out in accordance with Taught Assessment Regulation 31. The marking and moderation process is undertaken to support consistency in standards and feedback.

5.2 Moderation, including peer review of assessment design and marking practices, must operate across the entire assessment process, from assessment design and task setting through to marking and feedback, and must not be confined solely to the moderation of marked assessments.

5.3 Schools should align their moderation practices with the moderation guidance:
Moderation guidance (in development – add link once published)

6. Feedback

6.1 Feedback must be provided on all formative and summative assessed work, including exams.

6.2 Feedback should facilitate student learning by enabling students to evaluate their performance and identify how to improve.

6.3 Feedback may take a variety of forms, including individual, group, or whole-class (generic) feedback, depending on the nature of the assessment.

6.4 Generic feedback may be appropriate for examinations where common strengths and areas for improvement can be identified across a cohort.

6.5 Where generic feedback is provided for examinations, students must also have access to comments on their individual examination script sufficient to enable them to understand how their mark was determined and how they can improve.

6.6 Notwithstanding the above, assessments must be designed so that students receive individual feedback on their assessment performance at least once per semester.

6.7 Students must be given clear information regarding the nature and format of feedback they can expect to receive including opportunities for students to discuss their feedback.

6.8 Feedback on all assessed work must be returned to students within three weeks of the communicated submission date. For example, if the date of submission is noon on a Thursday, students submitting by this date should receive their feedback by noon on the third Thursday after this date. Where a student has an approved

course extension or extra time adjustment, they should receive their feedback no later than three weeks from their agreed submission date. Students should not have to wait until all students' work has been marked before they receive feedback, and should not wait more than three weeks from the agreed date of submission to receive feedback.

6.9 Exceptions to the three-week rule include:

- the University's winter closure (although every effort should be made to set assessment deadlines to avoid delaying the return of feedback due to the winter closure)
- examinations scheduled in the examination diet by Registry
- items of assessment equivalent to 40 credits or more, or assessments with interconnected elements that are in total equivalent to 40 credits or more (typically theses, dissertations and capstones), where independent double-marking is required

6.10 In all such exceptions, the return date for feedback must be clearly communicated to students, noting these as exceptions from the standard feedback return times.

7. Learning Technologies

7.1 Wherever practicable, assessments should be completed, submitted, marked and feedback provided in digital format. Where feedback is provided in a digital format, this should be done via a University system to ensure that feedback has been given and received.

7.2 Only systems, platforms and tools that are either centrally supported by Information Services or supported by Schools/Colleges with approval of IS, should be used for the purpose of managing assessment, marking and the provision of feedback.

7.3 Systems, platforms and tools used for assessment should have a clearly stated, named service owner responsible for the security and integrity of the system. Training and support for use of the system must be available for staff and students. The moment of assessment should not be the first time the student has used the system.

7.4 Any system used for assessment should have a published Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA), Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA), accessibility statement and IS Helpdesk support available during the planning and delivery of the assessment. A clear understanding of the reasonable adjustments needed for use of the system must be shared between the service owner, the IS Helpdesk and the Disability and Learning Support Service (DLSS).

7.5 For any assessments which need Information Services support (e.g. online exams or computing lab setup), Information Services should be notified at least one week in advance.

7.6 No system or tool in 'pilot' should be used for high-stakes assessment. Only systems which have a 'under exam conditions' mode should be used for digital exams.

7.7 Media (or other large) files created for assessment should only be uploaded to University systems in line with IS guidance on system, size and formats. IS guidance on system, size and formats (in development – add link once published)

8. Working with Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

8.1 Assessment practices should support the responsible and critical use of AI and, where appropriate, enable innovation.

8.2 Assessment practices must ensure that the use of AI does not compromise academic standards or the integrity of awards.

8.3 Students should be made aware that they are responsible for using AI with integrity, and that their use does not breach the University's rules on academic misconduct.

8.4 Assessment should, where appropriate, support the development of AI-related skills relevant to academic, professional and civic contexts (aligning with the Skills for Success Framework).

8.5 Staff must not use AI tools to replace, automate or delegate assessment and marking processes or the exercise of academic judgement. While AI may support aspects of assessment and feedback, final decisions regarding assessment design and setting, marks, grades, and feedback content must be made and confirmed by academic staff. Any AI-assisted outputs must be reviewed and validated by the relevant member of staff to ensure accuracy, fairness, contextual appropriateness, and alignment with assessment criteria and intended learning outcomes before being shared with students or used for assessment purposes. AI tools are intended to support, and not replace, the exercise of academic judgement.

8.6 Where AI is used to support any part of the assessment process, staff must use the University's approved AI tools, such as ELM, the University's AI innovation platform, which serves as a central gateway providing secure and managed access to Generative Artificial Intelligence through Large Language Models (LLMs). Open or publicly available AI platforms must not be used for assessment purposes due to risks associated with data security, confidentiality, and privacy protection.

8.7 All uses of AI by staff for any part of the assessment, marking and feedback process must be approved by a Board of Studies.

8.8 Staff must ensure that the use of AI does not undermine the University's responsibility to ensure that students develop and demonstrate critical thinking, independent judgement, disciplinary understanding, creativity, ethical reasoning, and the ability to synthesise complex knowledge.

9. Roles and Responsibilities

Roles	Responsibilities
Students	• Engage appropriately with assessment tasks. • Proactively seek support if unclear on what is required in an assessment. • Read, reflect on and act in future assessments upon the feedback provided. • Engage with assessments honestly and fairly, upholding academic integrity and principles on the use of AI.

Course Organisers	• Design and manage assessment and feedback in accordance with this policy. • Engage in continuous professional development to enhance assessment and feedback practice. • Oversee and report on progress against Course-level actions and priorities for feedback and assessment development. • Ensure teaching teams (including tutors and demonstrators) are appropriately supported and trained to undertake the assessment responsibilities assigned to them.
Programme Directors/Directors of Teaching	• Oversee and regularly review assessments within their programmes, ensuring continued alignment with this policy. • Provide leadership and direction to staff involved in the delivery of taught provision in assessment design and innovation. • Oversee programme-level assessments. • Oversee and report on progress against programme-level actions and priorities for assessment and feedback development.
Heads of School / Directors of Teaching/Directors of Quality	• Ensure adherence to this policy. • Undertake review of School assessment and feedback practices against the policy and wider guidance, identifying gaps and developing action plans for development. • Oversee and report on progress against School-level actions and priorities for assessment and feedback development.
Boards of Studies	• Ensure adherence to this policy. • Ensure that assessment methods and practices within courses and programmes in the School are academically appropriate, including learning outcomes, assessment tasks and assessment weightings • Ensure that assessments are proportionate to the SCQF credit level and volume, and that they align with the Edinburgh Student Vision.
Boards of Examiners	• Ensure that all students are treated with consistency and fairness, that the assessment process runs smoothly and correctly, that appropriate standards are set and maintained, and that the External Examiner plays an appropriate role • Oversee and conduct the assessment process according to the University's Taught Assessment Regulations and other relevant regulations and policies, along with the principles approved by the appropriate Boards of Studies

Heads of Subject Area/Directors of Teaching	• Ensure appropriate allocation of teaching expertise to assessment processes. • Allocate appropriate staff capacity to undertake the assessment process, ensuring that assessments can be marked, moderated and feedback returned to students within the expected feedback turnaround times. • Ensure support and time is available for ongoing development of professional practice, CPD, in assessment and feedback.
College Committees	• Provide fora for sharing best practice in assessment and feedback. • Advise on areas of priority or development within the College. • Oversee and report on progress against College-wide actions and priorities for assessment and feedback development.
Senate Education Committee	• Oversee and maintain this policy. • Advise on areas of priority and development at institution level. • Oversee and report on progress against institution-level actions and priorities for assessment and feedback.

Senate Education Committee

5 March 2026

School-Level Pastoral Support for Postgraduate Research Students

Description of paper

1. This paper proposes the establishment of a short-life working group (see Appendix A) focusing on Postgraduate Research (PGR) School-level pastoral student support:

    a) To identify the pastoral support needs amongst PGR students across all Schools.
    b) To evaluate the current school-level pastoral support systems and processes for PGR students.
    c) To ensure a consistent PGR student experience through developing guidance/ a framework/ a set of principles for robust, equitable and consistent school-level PGR support across all Schools.
    d) To identify barriers to implementation (with mitigations).

2. This work aligns with the University's Strategy 2030 in the following ways:
    a) We are a place of transformation and of self-improvement, driven to achieve benefit for individuals, communities, societies and our world.
    b) We will encourage and take care of one another. We will provide support in times of difficulty and celebrate every success. We will build relationships that are mutually beneficial, long lasting and constructive.
    c) We will create initiatives in a variety of areas including justice, data science, environmental sustainability, mental health and wellbeing, ageing and dementia, human rights, and global governance, driven by new collaborative research communities.
    d) Multidisciplinary postgraduate education pathways will support flexible whole-life learning.
    e) We will see our research having a greater impact as a result of partnership, international reach and investment in emergent disciplines.
    f) We will have more user-friendly processes and efficient systems to support our work.
    g) We will be a destination of choice, based on our clear "Edinburgh Offer". All of our staff and students will develop here, whether they are from Leith, Lisbon, Lahore or Lilongwe.

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**
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**

Action requested / recommendation

3. Senate Education Committee is asked to **approve** the establishment of a short-life working group (see Appendix A) focusing on Postgraduate Research (PGR) School-level pastoral student support, as well as the connection through with University-wide support services.

Background and context

4. The pressures of PGR study and the consequent mental health and wellbeing needs of PGR students are well documented as a sectoral challenge. In response to this, the University ensures that all of its Wellbeing Services (Student Wellbeing Service, Disability and Learning Support Service, Student Counselling Service, Chaplaincy and Residence Life) are both accessible to and work with PGR students.

5. Feedback over many years from across the University (Doctoral College, SQAC, PGR student representatives, School Internal Periodic Reviews and College PGR Deans) indicates that there is inconsistency in the provision of pastoral support at School-level for PGR students.

6. Further evidence of this widespread inconsistency is provided in a report commissioned by the Doctoral College and completed by a student intern in late 2025 (Appendix B) to map out the current level of provision of school-level PGR pastoral support (outwith the supervisory relationship). Schools were asked to complete a short survey (Appendix C), and the attached report summarises the survey results, provides additional benchmarking information, and a set of recommendations. The report is a first attempt to summarise the current University landscape for PGR pastoral support delivered at school level, and to serve as a conversation starter.

7. The University reviewed student support provision for taught students in 2019 and introduced a new support model, with full roll-out completed in September 2024. PGR students were not in scope of that review. However, it was agreed that the new Student Wellbeing Service (along with the other Wellbeing Services) would extend to provide support for PGR students.

Discussion

8. There is no formal consensus in the University on what improvements to PGR support are needed / possible, and some Schools and Colleges are currently planning to enhance or are already enhancing their PGR support provision through local developments. Although good to see, this is exacerbating the existing inconsistency in PGR student experience.

9. Following the sharing of the report at Appendix B there was discussion and further consultation with the Doctoral College Management Group, the Student Lifecycle Management Group, PGR Deans, College Heads/ Directors of Academic Administration, Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary Students, and the Chair of Senate Education Committee regarding (a) the most effective way of moving this work forward; and (b) the most suitable governance structure for this work. There was consensus that a short-life working group should be set up, and that this should report into Senate Education Committee.

10. The establishment of a short-life working group focusing on PGR School-level pastoral student support will enable the University to take a strategic, system-wide and comprehensive approach to this work, with the aim of enhancing the PGR student experience for all PGR students.

11. Areas of consideration for the short-life working group will include:

    a) Pathways/ points of contact for pastoral support for PGR students at School-level.
    b) Potential new or revised roles and functions required to deliver PGR student support.
    c) Boundaries and functions of the supervisor role with regard to pastoral support, especially when there are challenges/ difficulties within the student/ supervisor relationship.
    d) Escalation pathways to Wellbeing Services.
    e) Consistent/ standardised case management system for recording information relating to PGR student situations.

12. All the above will need to be aligned with the University's Student Administration review, and potentially other Workstream projects.

13. There will be clear outputs from the short-life working group, and these may take the form of guidance/ a framework/ a set of principles for robust, equitable and consistent School-level PGR support across all Schools.

14. The report at Appendix B provides detailed information on the current situation and is a useful starting point, but there is more thorough and nuanced work to be done through consulting with staff and students to understand fully the pastoral support needs amongst PGR students across all Schools, as well as identifying barriers to delivering successfully on this, along with mitigations.

15. Resource and investment needs will need to be captured at high-level and considered in the context of the University's change programme.

Resource implications

16. The short-life working group will require administrative support to organise meetings, prepare papers and take minutes of meetings Please note that the Doctoral College is a virtual organisation and does not have direct control of resources.

17. Some elements of the implementation of recommendations from the short-life working group may require additional resources, and this will be raised with relevant managers and committees at an appropriate time.

Risk management

18. Failure to deliver an effective model of school-level pastoral support for PGR students would mean that we have not met our strategic ambitions as set out in Strategy 2030. It also carries reputational risk.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

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

Equality & diversity

20. This work supports greater equality, diversity and inclusion for PGR students within our community, and an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) will completed when the outcomes and recommendations of the short-life working group have been formulated.

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

21. The short life working group will be responsible for driving this work forward in the first instance, collaborating closely with stakeholders from the student and staff community at the University. Once the group has made recommendations, consideration will need to be given for leadership, delivery and evaluation of the next phase of this work.

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January 2026

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Director of Student Wellbeing

Freedom of Information: *This paper is open*.

If you require this document in an alternative format, such as large print or a coloured background, please contact academic.quality@ed.ac.uk or Academic Quality and Standards, Old College, South Bridge, Edinburgh, EH8 9YL.

Appendix A

The University of Edinburgh
Short-Life Working Group: PGR School-Level Pastoral Student Support
Terms of Reference (Version 1.1, January 2026)

1. Purpose

The purpose of this group is:

e) To identify the pastoral support needs amongst PGR students across all Schools.
f) To evaluate the current school-level pastoral support systems and processes for PGR students.
g) To ensure a consistent PGR student experience through developing guidance/ a framework/ a set of principles for robust, equitable and consistent school-level PGR support across all Schools.
h) To identify barriers to implementation (with mitigations).

2. Objectives

a) **Assessment of Current Practices**: Analyse existing school-level pastoral support provided to PGR students across schools, including support delivered through centres for doctoral training and doctoral training partnerships.
b) **Benchmarking:** Compare school-level pastoral support practices with those of leading universities nationally and internationally, and consider funder expectations, particularly UKRI training grant requirements.
c) **Stakeholder Engagement:** Gather input and feedback from PGR students, academic staff and professional services staff through a range of methods, including surveys, focus groups, and interviews.
d) **Recommendations for Improvement:** Develop strategies and recommendations for consistent school-level pastoral support frameworks that can be implemented University-wide.
e) **Implementation Plan:** Propose an actionable plan for the integration and standardisation of identified best practices.

3. Scope

a) Review of school-level pastoral support practices, structures and roles currently in place for PGR students at the University of Edinburgh.
b) Exploration of innovative and inclusive approaches to school-level pastoral support for PGR students.
c) Collaboration with relevant University bodies to ensure alignment with overall student support services.
d) All outputs of the group need to align with the Doctoral College's Principles and Priorities for PGR Students.

4. Membership

a) **Chair:** TBC- needs to be senior academic colleague
b) **Members:**
   i. PGR Deans
   ii. EUSA Sabbatical Officer
   iii. PGR student representative(s)
   iv. Head of Student Wellbeing Service

v. Frontline PGR student support staff (1 from each College)
vi. Director of Residence Life
vii. College Head/ Director of Academic Administration (1 from each College)

c) **Administrative Support:** TBC

5. Meetings

a) Frequency: The group will meet monthly.
b) Duration: Twelve months, subject to review based on progress and outcomes.
c) Location: Meetings will be held both in person and online to accommodate all members.

6. Deliverables

a) Mid-term progress report at 6 months, summarising current progress.
b) Final report at 12 months containing detailed recommendations and implementation plans.
c) Presentation to the University Senate Education Committee at 12 months.

7. Governance

a) The Group will formally report to the Senate Education Committee and liaise with the Director of Student Wellbeing.
b) The Group will also report to the Doctoral College Operations Group.
c) Regular updates will be provided to ensure alignment with the University's policies and strategic goals.

8. Review and Evaluation

a) The Group will conduct a review of its effectiveness at the end of the 12-month term and make recommendations for future actions if necessary.
b) These terms of reference will guide the Group in achieving its objectives and supporting the University of Edinburgh's commitment to delivering exceptional student support services.

Appendix B

Postgraduate Research School-Level Student Support 2025 Report

Written by Shirley Tian (student intern)

Table of Contents:

1. Executive Summary

This report provides a cross-institutional overview of current support structures for Postgraduate Research (PGR) students at the University of Edinburgh. It draws on detailed responses to a short questionnaire from Schools and Deaneries, focusing on the provision of in-School/ Deanery/ Institute pastoral support for PGR students with mild to moderate/ low to medium risk mental health and wellbeing presentations outwith the support provided by supervisors. The Student Wellbeing Service provides mental health and wellbeing support for PGR students with more complex, higher risk presentations, and services such as SCS, DLSS, Res Life and Chaplaincy are all available for PGR students.

The primary aim is to identify common strengths, gaps, and emerging models of good practice in how support is delivered for PGR students with mild to moderate/ low to medium risk presentations, while surfacing recurring challenges such as a lack of structured wellbeing provision, unclear points of contact, and gaps in out-of-hours support.

The findings presented here are intended to inform College-level and School-Level discussions on how we can enhance equity, consistency, and responsiveness in PGR support. This includes considering how existing taught student support models (UGT/PGT) might be adapted for the PGR context, and what structural or cultural shifts may be required to deliver that vision effectively.

A thematic summary by School is followed by benchmarking with other universities, key insights, and targeted recommendations. Against the backdropping of thematic and cross school analysis of PGR support student model, recurring patterns of problematic support provision lie in the following areas:

- Supervisory teams remain primary support channels yet **cannot reliably provide specialist wellbeing care.**
- In many cases, **obligatory systems (e.g. EUCLID) do not support recording or routing of wellbeing-related meetings or referrals,** introducing gaps in tracking and consistency.

These findings signal a critical opportunity for institutional improvement. Drawing from sector-based evidence and internal mapping data, this report identifies how existing support infrastructures, particularly those tailored for undergraduate and taught postgraduate cohorts might be **adapted to better serve PGRs** through enhanced equity, resilience, and connectivity.

2. Background

Postgraduate Research (PGR) students form a vital and diverse part of the University community, contributing to teaching, innovation, and the research environment. However, their needs, particularly for mental health and wellbeing support, sometimes sit at the margins of institutional systems and service provision can be inconsistent. This report was commissioned to map and analyze the current landscape of PGR student-support provided within Schools, Deaneries and Institutes at the University, with later cross-comparisons with existing PGR support framework with two UK Universities: University A and B.

The new Student Support model provides a framework for the delivery of consistent pastoral, wellbeing and mental health support to UG and PGT students through clear job roles, with Student Advisers providing support for low to medium risk situations and Wellbeing Advisers (within the Student Wellbeing Service) doing the same for students presenting in higher risk situations. While Wellbeing Advisers do provide support for PGR students with higher-risk presentations, outwith the pastoral support provided by supervisors, the existing support framework for PGR students with low to medium risk presentations across the University is inconsistent.

A recent quantitative study investigating UK PGR wellbeing found that PGR students is one of the most common cohorts that struggle with mental health challenges, often situated in systemic isolation. Social Loneliness and perceived stress are identified as common factors for PGR students, when combined, generate steeper declines in their mental health. A study also demonstrated that conventional institutional support activities, such as workshops and group events, may benefit other student groups, but rarely effectively mitigate loneliness or structural wellbeing problems amongst PGRs. [1]

A short questionnaire was circulated to Schools, Deaneries and Institutes at the University and completed in early 2025. The main aim of the questionnaire was to provide baseline information on what support we already have in place within Schools/ Deaneries and Institutes for PGR students with mild to moderate/ low to medium risk mental health and wellbeing presentations. This report summarises the information from the completed questionnaires, providing a platform for further analysis and then decisions on what needs to be done to improve the situation across the system.

[1] https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/34740/

Overview of PGR Wellbeing Support (Mild to Moderate Presentations) Across Schools/ Deaneries/ Institutes:

Schools	Single Point of Contact	Thesis Committee or Equivalent	Active opportunity to Raise Issues	Wellbeing trained Staff Available
School of Engineering	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
School of Physics and Astronomy	No	Yes	Yes	No
School of Informatics	No	Yes	Yes	No
School of Biological Sciences	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
School of Chemistry	No	Yes	Yes	Yes (partially)
School of Geosciences	No	Yes	Yes	No
School of Mathematics	No	Yes	Yes	No
Institute of Genetics and Cancer	No	Yes	Yes	No
Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies	No	Yes	Yes	No
Usher Institute	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Deanery of Clinical Sciences	No	Yes	Yes	No
Business School	No	Yes	Yes	No
School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Science	No	Yes	Yes	No
School of Economics	No	Yes	Yes	No
School of Social and Political Science	No	Yes	Yes	No
School of History, Archaeology and Classics	No	Yes	Yes	No
Moray House School of	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

Education and Sport				
Edinburgh College of Art	Yes	Yes	Yes	No (Resource Constraint)
School of Divinity	Yes (partial 0.35 FTE)	Yes	Yes	No
School of Law	No	Yes	Yes	No
School of Health in Social Sciences	Yes (0.8 FTE)	Yes	Yes	No
School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

3. PGR Student Support across the College of Science and Engineering

3.1 PGR Student Support in the School of Engineering

PGR Students: ~580

Strengths of PGR Support

- Multi-layered support involving **supervisors, academic advisors, and Graduate School committees**.
- Comprehensive **induction process** covering academic, administrative, and wellbeing guidance.
- Access to trained admin staff, **monthly wellbeing newsletters**, and a **dedicated wellbeing email**.

Gaps and Areas for Improvement

- **No student support tracking system** for PGRs; reliance on email and spreadsheets.
- **Limited functionality in EUCLID**: PGRs cannot use the Meetings and Notes feature.
- Existing central services are **primarily tailored to UG/PGT students**, leaving PGR needs underserved.

Single Point of Contact

- No formal single contact, but **Graduate School Office staff** are trained and available in person and via email.

Recommended Actions

- Implement a **PGR-specific case recording tool**.
- Extend **Meetings and Notes access** in EUCLID to PGR students.
- Improve **dedicated PGR support infrastructure**, mirroring UG/PGT provision

3.2 PGR Student Support in the School of Physics and Astronomy

PGR Students: ~223

Strengths of PGR Support

- Students are supported by **2 supervisors, 2 assessors, and a local PhD coordinator**.
- First-year **pastoral interviews are mandatory**, with optional follow-ups.
- Strong graduate school team (DoGS, admin, finance), plus student networks (e.g. PPA, BAME, Neurodiversity).
- **PPA Society** offers structured community engagement and wellbeing events.

Gaps and Areas for Improvement

- **No dedicated welfare officer** or mental health specialist within the school.
- **No structured out-of-hours support**, beyond academic staff (e.g. DoGS, coordinators).
- Support provision lacks **PGR-specific wellbeing expertise**.

Single Point of Contact

- No named PGR officer, but support is available from:
  - **DoGS** for escalation
  - **PhD Coordinators** and **pastoral advisors** for routine support
  - **Admin staff (UE05)** via Teams/email

Recommended Actions

- Appoint a **full-time welfare-oriented PGR support staff member**.
- Develop a **clear out-of-hours support process**.
- Introduce **trained pastoral/wellbeing expertise** within the school.

See Appendix A2 for full data breakdown and summary response analysis

3.3 PGR Student Support in the School of Informatics

Strengths of PGR Support

- Large and varied support ecosystem: includes academic (e.g. PGR Personal Tutors, CDT/Institute Directors), admin (e.g. Graduate School and CDT staff), and financial guidance.
- Emphasis on **proactive support**, especially after interruptions to study (e.g. AIS) or when red flags (e.g. disengagement) appear.
- Clear commitment to cohort building through **events and community efforts**.
- Support roles are **visible on SharePoint** and regularly communicated through email reminders.
- Students report they **do use the support available**, suggesting services are generally accessible and effective.

Models of Good Practice

- Use of **dedicated CDT and Graduate School teams** with layered support staff from grades 5–8 (e.g. coordinators, managers, directors).
- Proactive **check-ins after absence** (AIS returns), which are not universal across Schools.
- Ongoing awareness-raising of support channels through SharePoint and comms.
- Personalized contacts beyond just supervisors: includes PGR Personal Tutors and Directors.

Gaps and Room for Improvement in PGR Student Support for School of Informatics:

- **Student engagement** with support mechanisms remains inconsistent.
- **Uneven provision across CDTs and Institutes** — with some subgroups receiving more proactive support than others.
- No formal tracking of **who may be under-supported**; makes intervention harder.
- **No out-of-hours School-level support**, beyond standard University-wide provision.

Single Point of Contact

- There is **no single named "PGR Support Officer"**, but support is available via:
  - PGR Personal Tutors
  - CDT Directors and Admin Teams
  - Graduate School staff (Admins, Coordinators, Managers)
  - Deputy and Director of Graduate School
- Students are directed to the appropriate contact based on the issue type (academic, financial, pastoral)

Recommended steps

 Increase **awareness and trust** in support channels through better communication and more visible presence of staff.

 Identify **under-engaged or at-risk students** and create systems to ensure they aren't overlooked.

 Consider reviewing **support consistency** across CDTs and Institutes to ensure equity of access.

 Explore strategies to **normalize asking for help** and reduce stigma around needing support.

See Appendix A3 for full data breakdown and summary response analysis

3.4 PGR Student Support in the School of Biological Science

Strengths of PGR Support

- Comprehensive, layered support structure involving both academic and professional staff.
- A **dedicated Postgraduate Research Student Advisor (1 FTE, 100%)**, mirroring the successful Taught Student Support Model.
- Multiple roles involved in student support: thesis chairs, institute PGR academic advisors, administrative and financial leads, and mental health first aiders.

- Strong integration of funding support (e.g., sickness/parental leave, conference, networking, and internships).
- Active induction processes: in-person programme-level, institute-specific welcomes, and individual admin 1-on-1 meetings.
- Weekly PGR newsletter includes events, updates, and links to resources.
- Funding and support info clearly housed on the PGR Wiki (with a move to a new School website in progress).

Models of Good Practice

 Appointment of a full-time **PGR Student Advisor** dedicated entirely to PGR support.

 Scheduled **1-on-1 admin meetings** for every incoming PGR student to explain programme and funding pathways.

 PGR-specific funding extensions offered for students with chronic health issues or RAAC impact.

 Mental Health First Aiders embedded across staff groups and student rep co-leads.

 Annual cohort-wide social events (e.g. evening Ceilidh at the symposium) supported by staff with First Aid/Fire Steward training.

 Introduction of a “Book with me” system in development to streamline appointment access.

Gaps/Room for Improvement in PGR Support

- Limited access to **hardship or emergency funding** flexibility at the School level.
- Inability to **offer funded extensions** in line with programme extensions.
- Lack of **PGR focus in institutional structures** such as the Student Support Forum or CQAC, when good practices on student support are modelled for UGT or PGT.
- **Limited uptake and engagement** with the School’s PGR Wiki.
- Recurrent SSLC complaints regarding sport facilities, transportation, and food provision (outside School’s direct control).
- Absence of a **formalized training framework** for PGR admin staff (unlike the UGT/PGT student advisor model).

Single Point of Contact

 The **PGR Student Advisor** (Grade 6, 1.0 FTE, 100% time on PGR support) acts as the main central contact.

 Students also access support through PG Administrators (1.8 FTE), Graduate School leadership, and the Research Programme Admin team.

 Flexible email-based contact, drop-in sessions, and future direct booking system all aim to enhance accessibility

Actions for Improvement Requested / Recommended Steps

- Improve **financial flexibility** within the School to respond to urgent support needs (hardship, extension funding).
- Complete the **transition of the PGR Wiki** into a more user-friendly School website (ongoing project, target: October 2025).
- Enhance **training consistency** for PGR support staff by creating a shared development model (especially for admin staff).
- Ensure better institutional integration of PGR voices in university-level committees or review the effectiveness of existing forums.
- Maintain transparency with students regarding **non-School-controlled issues** (e.g., facilities, transport) by communicating progress or barriers.

3.5 PGR Student Support in the School of Chemistry

Strengths of PGR Support

- **Dual-layer support model** combining academic (PG Advisors) and professional (Head of Student Experience, Student Support Team) contacts, giving students meaningful choice.
- **11% of PGR students engaged with support services** in 2022/23 without needing referral to central services, an indicator of **proactive, effective local support**.
- The Student Support Team also **assisted 20 PhD supervisors**, highlighting Chemistry's whole-community approach.
- **Mental health and wellbeing support is embedded** in:
    - Induction sessions
    - Chemistry Hub homepage
    - PGR manual and EUCLID Annual Review guidance
- Ongoing efforts to improve **signposting and outreach**, particularly in periods of heightened stress (e.g., pre-first-year viva).
- Regular **coffee morning attendance** by the Head of Student Experience and Graduate School Director fosters informal contact.

Gaps and Areas for Improvement

- Main constraint is **capacity**, key staff involved in support also carry multiple roles and responsibilities.
- Support remains dependent on **small, overstretched teams**; no mention of designated crisis response structure or system-wide resilience planning.
- **No out-of-hours School-specific provision**.

Single Point of Contact

- While no formal single named officer, students may access support via:
    - Graduate School team
    - PG Advisors
    - Head of Student Experience
    - Student Support Team (for pastoral care)
- **Support is most often accessed in person**, with Teams used by some.

Recommended Actions

- Continue strengthening integration between **PGR and taught student support models**, ensuring all staff understand cross-applicable services.
- Consider increasing **resourcing or delegated capacity** to ease current pressure on staff delivering frontline support.
- Explore ways to **bolster visibility and flexibility of support** during high-stress periods, especially when formal referrals are not desired.

3.6 PGR Student Support in the School of Geosciences

Strengths

Multi-layered support model with supervisors, advisors, deputy directors, and a visible Director of PGR, building a net of care and multiple points of contact for students.

- The **Director of PGR has an active, open-door approach**, directly supporting or referring students when needed.
- Good communication channels: email, Teams, and in-person open-door access.
- Students are made aware of support through **induction**, semester workshops, supervisory teams, and SharePoint.
- Clear focus on **mental health, financial concerns, working relationships, and harassment,** including support for international students and carers.

Gaps and Areas for Improvement

- **No dedicated trained Student Experience Team (SET) member** for PGRs — unlike UGT/PGT students, welfare responsibilities are shared across office staff.
- **Lack of structured case monitoring** or confidential tracking system for student issues over time.
- **No School-level out-of-hours support**, relying on central services.

Single Point of Contact

- No single named individual; instead, a **distributed model:**
  - PGR Manager and Admin Assistant (1 FTE each)
  - Advisors and Deputy Directors across research institutes
  - Director of PGR remains highly visible and accessible

Recommended Actions

- Consider appointing a **dedicated PGR welfare-focused staff member**, as in Student Experience Teams for taught students.
- Develop a **confidential, structured monitoring tool** for complex or ongoing student cases.
- Clarify SET's role regarding PGRs and consider better integration.
- Maintain emphasis on in-person support for students in distress while improving clarity of available pathways.

See Appendix A6 for full staff list, workload tariffs, and named postholders involved in PGR support.

3.7 PGR Student Support in the School of Mathematics

Strengths of PGR Support

- Every student is assigned a **mentor from outside their research theme**, designed to offer a confidential space independent of the supervisory team.
- A dedicated **Graduate School Manager (GSM)** coordinates student support and mentor allocations, supported by **Graduate School Administrators (GSAs)**.
- Recent efforts to **train GS staff in student support awareness** are bridging gaps between academic and professional support structures.
- Students are made aware of support via **email, posters, and office signage**, and generally do engage with their mentors.
- A **refresh of the mentor system is underway**, including student/staff polling and a new structured framework with clearer expectations and staff training.

Gaps and Areas for Improvement

- **Limited provision for acute crises**: mentors and GS staff may not always be physically accessible or trained for serious incidents.
- **Mentors lack formal training** to identify and escalate urgent cases appropriately.
- **No consistent out-of-hours support**, beyond UoE crisis information and ResLife involvement in rare cases.
- Student engagement with referrals to external services (e.g. DLSS) varies significantly.

Single Point of Contact

- **Graduate School Office** is informally viewed as the main support hub.
- No formal single contact person, but the GSM and GSAs provide ongoing, flexible support.

Recommended Actions

- Continue with planned **mentor system overhaul**, including structured expectations and clearer signposting.
- Provide **targeted crisis training** for mentors and GS staff.
- Strengthen the **visibility of the GS Office** as the go-to support point.
- Consider low-cost strategies to **expand after-hours clarity**, such as pre-agreed pathways with ResLife or welfare flags.

4. Support Across the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine

4.1 PGR Support in the Institute of Genetics and Cancer

PGR Students: ~120

Strengths of PGR Support

- Students are supported primarily through **regular communications from the PGR team** and **information sessions during induction**.
- The **Director of PGR** serves as the key contact for support, especially out of hours.
- Most students are **on-campus**, and in-person support is preferred and encouraged.

Gaps and Areas for Improvement

- The Institute currently has **no dedicated staff** for PGR wellbeing or pastoral support.
- There is a **lack of structured student support infrastructure** equivalent to that provided for UGT/PGT students.
- Existing support responsibilities are informally managed and **fall to academic staff**, who may not be trained or resourced to address complex wellbeing needs.

Single Point of Contact

- The **Director of PGR** acts as the primary contact for support, including out-of-hours situations.
- However, this model lacks the backup of trained **professional services or wellbeing personnel**.

Recommended Actions

- Introduce access to **dedicated Wellbeing Advisers or trained pastoral staff** for PGR students.
- Develop a **structured PGR support model** aligned with wider University frameworks.
- Reduce reliance on individual academic staff by formalizing **support roles and pathways** within the Institute.

4.2 PGR Support in the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies

PGR Students: 180

Strengths of PGR Support

- Students are supported by a **PGR team** that includes administrative and academic roles, including the **Director of PGR**.
- Support services include:
    - Deadline and thesis submission guidance
    - Concession processing
    - Supervision concerns
    - Support for students in difficulty (academic or wellbeing)
- Students engage with support **in-person or via email/Teams**, and support is regularly signposted through multiple channels.
- A strong **on-campus presence** (99% of students) helps maintain accessibility and face-to-face contact.

Gaps and Areas for Improvement

- **No named Student Adviser** or dedicated wellbeing contact specifically for PGR students.
- **No formal out-of-hours policy**, limiting crisis response options at the School level.
- There is a **desire for improved clarity and coordination** across the University on what other Schools are doing for PGR support.

Single Point of Contact

- The **Director of PGR (Grade 9)** is the main academic lead.
- Support is informally accessed through **various members of the PGR team**, but there is no named welfare contact.

Recommended Actions

- Introduce a **dedicated Student Adviser or wellbeing officer** for PGR students.
- Develop a formal **out-of-hours support strategy**, or more clearly signpost available emergency options.
- Engage in **cross-School networking** to build awareness of effective PGR support models and build community of practice

4.3 PGR Support in the Usher Institute

PGR Students: 74

Strengths of PGR Support

- **Comprehensive support structure** including:
  - Supervisory teams
  - Thesis committees
  - PGR Advisors
  - A dedicated **PGR Support Officer (Grade 6, 1.0 FTE, 80% student support)**
- **Wellbeing Advisor appointments**, thesis committee meetings, and supervisory reviews are embedded into the support process.
- Key contact details and support information are housed in the **Usher PGR Handbook**, ensuring consistent communication.
- Focus areas include:
  - Managing interruptions and extensions
  - Progression tracking
  - Supporting students through difficulties (academic or personal)

Gaps and Areas for Improvement

- Need for more **structured support for career and professional development**, beyond thesis completion.
- **Networking and peer connection opportunities** are currently limited or informal.
- Like other Schools, the **Institute relies on central services for out-of-hours support**, without local provisions.

Single Point of Contact

- The **PGR Support Officer** acts as the main contact point and oversees day-to-day support provision.
- Academic advisors and supervisory teams supplement this support, providing coverage across academic and pastoral needs.

Recommended Actions

- Enhance the structure and visibility of **career development pathways** and mentoring opportunities.
- Consider embedding **networking support mechanisms**, such as internal peer groups or alumni panels.
- Continue integrating the support team's work with the Wellbeing Service and the Doctoral College to maintain a joined-up experience.

4.4 PGR Support in the Deanery of Clinical Sciences

(includes Centre for Reproductive Health, Centre for Regenerative Medicine, Centre for Inflammation Research, Centre for Brain Sciences, Centre for Vascular Sciences, Dentistry etc.)

PGR Students: Approx. 380
(CRH: 26, CRM: 41, CIR: 45, CCBS: 91, CGEM: 47, ECTU: 88, IRR: 42)

Strengths of PGR Support

- Each Centre provides tailored support via:
  - **PGR Administrators and Coordinators** who offer 100% of their time to PGR support.
- Students access support through:
  - **Email communication**
  - **Anonymous online forms**
  - **Drop-in sessions**
- Focus areas include:
  - Administrative guidance (e.g. thesis committees, leave of absence)
  - Signposting to student wellbeing and academic resources
  - Support navigating **interruptions, visa concerns, or supervisor issues**

Gaps and Areas for Improvement

- **No independent pastoral support** specific to PGR students.
- Students may avoid seeking help if they feel support is linked too closely to academic performance.
- Inconsistencies across centres regarding **proactive engagement**, wellbeing awareness, and perceived approachability of admin staff.

Single Point of Contact

- Support is **Centre-specific**, with administrative staff as the main contact point for queries.

- No **named or dedicated pastoral contact**, creating a potential support gap for sensitive issues.

Recommended Actions

- Establish a **quality assurance process** for PGR student support that spans all centres.
- Provide **pastoral training** and increase visibility of student support staff.
- Explore introducing **neutral, independent support roles** that students can trust for wellbeing concerns.

5. PGR Support Across the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

5.1 PGR Support in Business School

Strengths:

- The school has **clear academic leadership** for PGR support, including a **Director of PGR Programme, Deputy Director,** and **Academic Advisor** roles.
- A **professional services support post (UE06, 1.0 FTE)** is in place to provide consistent assistance across the PGR student lifecycle.
- Students are encouraged to contact **whichever support person they feel most comfortable with**, enabling flexibility.
- Information on support structures is included in the **programme handbook**, housed on **SharePoint.**
- Students **do actively use** the support systems in place.

Models of Good Practice

- The **flexible access model** (students self-selecting support contacts) promotes autonomy and choice.
- Coordination between academic and professional services staff suggests a layered support model, even if lean in numbers.
- Handbook/SharePoint integration centralizes resources in a structured way.

Gaps / Room for Improvement in PGR Support

- No specific gaps were directly identified, but the **response indicated uncertainty** about the nature of the question regarding focus areas of support.
- **No mention of structured pastoral systems** or designated wellbeing support tailored for PGRs.
- **No dedicated out-of-hours support**, beyond contracted working hours.

Single Point of Contact

- No **single dedicated point of contact** for PGR Support was identified.
- Students are encouraged to reach out to a range of staff (academic or administrative) based on the situation.
- The key professional support role is the **1.0 FTE UE06 staff member**, alongside distributed support across the broader academic team.

Recommended Actions

- Clarify and potentially **formalize the support structure** with clearer designated roles for pastoral care and wellbeing.
- Explore the possibility of appointing a **welfare-trained staff member** or linking more directly with Student Adviser infrastructure.
- Consider minimal **signposting or contingency planning for out-of-hours concerns.**

5.2 PGR Support in the School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences

PGR Students: 189 (fully registered, plus 30–40 visiting students)

Strengths of PGR Support

- The **PGR Team within Student Services** delivers academic, personal, and pastoral support.
- Students can access the team via **email, phone, MS Teams, or in person**, offering multi-channel flexibility.
- A structured staff team supports PGRs, including:
  - **1 FTE School PGR Coordinator (Grade 6, 20% role)**
  - **1 FTE PGR Administrator (Grade 5)**
- The **School PGR Student Hub**, **induction sessions**, and communications like newsletters are used to raise awareness of support options.
- Support activities include **skills training, personal support, and academic guidance**.

Gaps and Areas for Improvement

- Although the PGR team is established, there is still **scope for greater integration into wider student support systems**, such as inclusion in the Student Adviser distribution list.
- **No specific mention of out-of-hours support**, though standard University emergency resources are available

Single Point of Contact

- No explicit single named contact, but the **PGR team** and Coordinator provide a **centralised, accessible structure**.
- The Coordinator's role is part-time (20%), potentially limiting availability.

Recommended Actions

- **Add the PGR team to the Student Adviser network** to ensure better integration and information flow.
- Consider increased visibility and outreach to further boost **student awareness and engagement**.
- Evaluate whether the current **staffing allocation** is adequate, especially during peak periods.

5.3 PGR Support in the School of Economics

PGR Students: 33

Strengths of PGR Support

- **Supervisors serve as the primary contact** for all academic and career development support.
- Students also receive pastoral support from administrative staff via **informal arrangements** based on need.
- Support access is **flexible**, with students encouraged to reach out to supervisors, admin teams, or central services as appropriate.
- Awareness of support services is provided through:
    - **Induction talks**
    - **Posters in PhD offices**
    - **Supervisor communication**
- Students engage with support **when they feel it is required** and value the autonomy of a lean, student-led approach.

Gaps and Areas for Improvement

- **No formal structure beyond supervisors and informal admin support**.
- **Lack of clarity** due to small cohort size and variable support demand — current provision is ad hoc rather than systematic.
- No dedicated welfare-trained staff or embedded student experience team model.
- **Out-of-hours support** is reliant on central University services (e.g., Listening Service, Counselling, ResLife).

Single Point of Contact

- No designated individual; the model is intentionally **decentralised and informal**.
- Students may approach **supervisors or admin team members**, but no named contact is responsible for welfare support.

Recommended Actions

- Consider introducing **a formal pastoral support structure**, even part-time, to reduce uncertainty and ensure consistency.
- Build a **staffing buffer** to handle fluctuating support demands and protect against overreliance on individual staff availability.
- Engage in **cross-School networking** to explore small-cohort best practices and sustainable support models.

5.4 PGR Support in the School of Social and Political Science

PGR Students: Approximately 340–370

Strengths of PGR Support

- **Supervisory relationship remains the primary channel** of support for most students.
- Information about support services is disseminated via:
  - **PGR handbooks**
  - **School webpages**
  - **Welcome sessions**
- Security or informal supervisory contact is sometimes used in out-of-hours or urgent situations.

Gaps and Areas for Improvement

- The School acknowledges **ambiguity around what counts as PGR support** and where responsibility lies.
- **No central guidance** articulates how PGR support should function at the School level.
- The lack of **systematic structures or role clarity** beyond supervision leads to inconsistent support experiences.
- The School expresses concern that **larger structural issues** (beyond student services networking) must be addressed.

Single Point of Contact

- No single dedicated staff member or coordinated team manages PGR support.
- Support is described as **diffuse**, with supervision acting as the de facto system.

Recommended Actions

- Use the **Annual Review process as a structured checkpoint** for capturing and responding to student wellbeing or academic issues.
- Consider developing a **centralised PGR support model or point of reference**, to supplement the supervisory relationship and improve oversight.
- Clarify the **definition and scope of "support" responsibilities**, both within the School and in communication with students.

5.5 PGR Support in the School of History, Classics and Archaeology

PGR Students: 189 (including PhD, MScR, and visiting research students)

Strengths of PGR Support

- **Administrative support is well established**, covering registration, progression, assessment, and graduation queries.
- Support is accessed through the **PGR Office**, primarily via email and in-person drop-ins.
- Staff roles involved:
  - **2 x Grade 5 PGR Administrators (FTE, 15% student support)**
  - **1 x Grade 7 PGR Manager (FTE, 50% student support)**
- Students are made aware of available support during **induction** and via ongoing communication from the PGR Office.

- Students **do engage with support services**, and routine systems appear to be functioning well administratively.

Gaps and Areas for Improvement

- Difficulty in **navigating PGR-specific support within broader university systems**, particularly for welfare and wellbeing.
- **No student experience-style support tailored to PGR students** (unlike taught students).
- Lack of dedicated personnel to handle **mental health and pastoral support** specifically for PGRs.

Single Point of Contact

- **No formal single contact**, but the **PGR Office** is the central hub for all student enquiries and is considered the main access point.
- Welfare and wellbeing issues are managed through referral or redirection.

Recommended Actions

- Establish or assign a **dedicated CAHSS-wide PGR support officer or network**, with welfare/pastoral expertise.
- Improve clarity and visibility around **where to go for different types of PGR support**, especially in crises.
- Enhance existing induction and info materials to make **non-academic support more accessible**.

5.6 PGR Support in Moray House School of Education and Sport

PGR Students: 253

Strengths of PGR Support

- A clearly structured **Teaching Office (TO)** provides support from application through to graduation, including:
  - Application processing
  - Visa support
  - Monitoring progression and extensions
- **Student support routes include** PGR Team, PGR Director, PGR Reps, Induction, and SharePoint resources.
- Support roles involved:
  - **Senior Academic Services Administrator**
  - **Undergraduate & PGR Teaching Office Team**
  - **Student Adviser in PGR Support Office**
- Well-maintained **PGR SharePoint site** with comprehensive documentation and contacts.
- Communication via **Programme Hub announcements** ensures timely updates to students.

Gaps and Areas for Improvement

- Until recently, the **PGR team was understaffed**, leading to reduced service quality.
- Some students **don't engage with digital support resources** (e.g., SharePoint) and miss key information.
- Fragmentation between administrative and wellbeing support processes could lead to inconsistent student experiences.

Single Point of Contact

- No single named contact; however, the **PGR Team and Programme Hub** act as central coordination points for support.
- The **Student Adviser (SESO)** provides additional individualised support when needed.

Recommended Actions

- Continue efforts to **strengthen the PGR team capacity** and maintain current staffing levels.
- Improve **student onboarding to digital platforms** like SharePoint to ensure full access to support resources.
- Explore stronger integration of academic and pastoral pathways for seamless student experience.

5.7 PGR Support in the Edinburgh College of Art

PGR Students: 306 (as of February 2025)

Strengths of PGR Support

- **Multi-touchpoint support system** including:
  - Supervisors
  - Postgraduate Research (PGR) Support Officer
  - Dedicated **Professional Services** team providing wraparound admin and pastoral support
- Key focus areas include:
  - **Pre-arrival guidance**
  - Visa and arrival support
  - Concessions, leave of absence, and supervision-related matters
  - Access to **University-wide services**
- Support is accessed both **in-person and online** (via email, Teams, and scheduled meetings).
- Students are made aware of support options via:
  - **Induction sessions**
  - Supervisor communication
  - Programme SharePoint and online resources

Gaps and Areas for Improvement

- **Resource limitations**, particularly in terms of staff FTE and capacity, pose challenges to sustaining high-quality support.

- Concerns about **invisible emotional labour** and under-recognised support roles within professional services.
- No dedicated after-hours provision; students are signposted to **central emergency and wellbeing services**.

Single Point of Contact

- The **PGR Support Officer** and Professional Services team provide primary admin and pastoral support.
- Supervisors remain the first academic contact, with signposting integrated across channels.

Recommended Actions

- Recognise and support the **emotional and administrative load** carried by staff in PGR support roles.
- Allocate **additional staff capacity or FTE** to meet increasing student needs.
- Further integrate **professional services voices into School and College-level PGR strategy** and wellbeing planning.

5.8 PGR Support in the School of Divinity

PGR Students: 159

Strengths of PGR Support

- Students are supported by:
  - **Supervisors** for academic matters
  - A **PGR Support Officer (1.0 FTE, 35% student support)**
  - The **Director of Postgraduate Studies**
- Support includes:
  - **Pastoral care**
  - Concessions advice
  - Guidance on supervision and Leave of Absence
- Students are signposted to relevant resources and **external support services** when needed.
- Information is disseminated via:
  - **PG Student Hub on SharePoint**
  - **Word-of-mouth and supervisor communication**

Gaps and Areas for Improvement

- Despite available support, **many PGR students appear reluctant to seek help**.
- No additional welfare-specific staff beyond the administrative and academic team.
- Limited internal visibility may contribute to under-utilisation of available services.

Single Point of Contact

- The **PGR Support Officer** acts as the administrative lead and primary contact for pastoral support, with 35% of time dedicated to PGR matters.
- The **Director of PG Studies** offers academic and supervisory support escalation.

Recommended Actions

- Improve student engagement with existing support structures through **awareness campaigns and proactive outreach**.
- Explore ways to **normalise help-seeking behaviour** among PGRs (e.g. peer stories, informal check-ins).
- Consider supplementing current provision with **dedicated wellbeing programming or training** for staff.

5.9 PGR Support in the School of Law

PGR Students: 116

Strengths of PGR Support

- Students are directed to **University-wide wellbeing services** for any pastoral or mental health concerns.
- Support is **clearly signposted**, and PGR students are informed about central service availability.
- Supervisors play a key role in supporting students academically and informally.

Gaps and Areas for Improvement

- The School explicitly stated that it **does not provide internal wellbeing or pastoral care provision** for PGR students.
- No structured School-level mechanism exists beyond signposting to external services.
- There's a **desire for clearer guidance** and shared examples of good practice from other Schools to strengthen internal support.

Single Point of Contact

- **None formally designated** within the School for PGR wellbeing or pastoral support.
- Supervisors remain the **primary (and sole internal) support contacts**.

Recommended Actions

- Consider designating a **PGR support liaison** within the School (even part-time) to bridge the current gap.
- Seek involvement in cross-School knowledge exchange on PGR wellbeing practices.
- Improve **institutional integration** by tailoring University-wide services more clearly to the PGR context in Law

5.10 PGR Support in the School of Health in Social Sciences

PGR Students: Approximately 180 (rising to ~200 annually)

Strengths of PGR Support

- Support primarily offered through:
  - **Supervisors** as the main point of contact
  - **PGR Officer (Grade 6, 0.8 FTE)** handling a wide range of student administrative and pastoral queries
- Key support areas include:
  - Concessions and Leave of Absence support
  - Thesis submission and progression guidance
  - Referral to central services when needed
- Students are informed of support through:
  - Supervisor meetings
  - PGR webpages and SharePoint
  - Direct staff emails (e.g. from PGR Officer)
- PGR Officer attempts to resolve queries internally before escalating to the College Office

Gaps and Areas for Improvement

- **No Student Adviser allocation for PGR students**, creating inconsistency with UGT/PGT support frameworks
- Very **limited pastoral or welfare-specific support** at the School level
- Lack of structured follow-up on student issues — support is heavily supervisor-led

Single Point of Contact

- The **PGR Officer (Grade 6, 0.8 FTE)** acts as the central administrative point of contact
- Academic support is entirely handled by **supervisors**

Recommended Actions

- Introduce a **Student Adviser-style role or welfare contact** for PGR students
- Provide **more structured support mechanisms** for students who may not feel comfortable approaching supervisors
- Consider ways to **track support engagement and follow-up**, beyond ad hoc supervisor action

5.11 PGR Support in the School of Literature, Languages and Cultures

PGR Students: 239 total
(PhD: 216, MPhil: 1, MScR: 22)

Strengths of PGR Support

- Support encompasses **academic, administrative, and pastoral care**.

- Administrative and pastoral support is delivered via the **LLC Postgraduate Office**, accessible through Teams, SharePoint, email, and in person.
- The School employs a **PGR Support Officer (UE06, 1 FTE)** with a wide-ranging remit, including:
    - Advice on concessions, leave of absence, and changes to study
    - Support for supervision-related issues
    - Extensions, suspensions, thesis submission, and annual review queries
- Students are informed about support services through **online platforms, community events, and induction activities**.
- The **CAHSS PGR Manager Forum** is identified as a helpful peer-sharing network for those working in PGR support.

Gaps and Areas for Improvement

- Several responses flagged **unclear questions**, and no detailed gaps were reported.
- Ambiguity around **out-of-hours provision** or centralised crisis response was noted but not elaborated.
- Responses suggest a need for **clearer definitions or guidance** in relation to institutional responsibilities for PGR support.

Single Point of Contact

- The **PGR Support Officer (UE06, 1.0 FTE)** appears to be the de facto primary contact for pastoral and administrative matters.
- Supervisors provide academic support as expected.

Recommended Actions

- Clarify **roles and responsibilities across staff levels** to improve transparency in support pathways.
- Enhance documentation or institutional guidance to reduce ambiguity around common concerns (e.g., out-of-hours response, role clarity).
- Continue leveraging strong internal platforms (SharePoint, Teams, forums) for **student communication and engagement**

6 Benchmarking with other universities

Case Study A: The University of Cambridge

Collegiate Model of Support

The Model used for PGRs at the University of Cambridge is a multi-layered wellbeing framework, leveraging its collegiate systems alongside departmental and central services. It includes the following features.

Points of Contacts:

1. Each postgraduate belongs to a College Community that provides dedicated pastoral care, a dedicated postgraduate tutor and a college-based wellbeing advisor or nurse, a graduate student body (MCR) for peer support.[2]
2. At the departmental level, PGRs have a separate academic mentor that is separate from their supervisor and a Postgraduate Education Team of staff as additional point of contracts. This allows the PGR student to raise issues with someone other than their director supervisor. This level of integrated support for PGR students also means that no single person bears all pastoral responsibility to the student.

Support Systems:

1. Specialized support services for PG students (including PGT and PGR): University's Student wellbeing Services includes a Postgraduate Wellbeing Service specifically for taught and research postgraduates, with one on one appointments (online or in person) and group workshops extending to summer months.
2. PGRs can also access the central University Counselling Service and a **Mental Health Advice Service** (via referral) for more acute issues. This targeted provision recognizes that doctoral researchers often face different stresses (e.g. isolation, imposter syndrome) than undergraduates, and it embeds mental health support within the graduate journey.
3. Supervisors are expected to encourage work–life balance and to **direct students toward professional support services when needed**, in line with sector good practice framework

Case Study B: Imperial College London

Enforcing institution-wide structured support mechanism

Imperial College London illustrates a robust institution wide system of PGR wellbeing with clearly defined staff roles and proactive services. They follow a central operation system with a central Graduate School and departments to embed support. This includes:

Points of Contacts:

1. Every department has a **designated Wellbeing Advisor** who serves as the first point of contact for research students facing personal or welfare difficulties/ These advisors are typically trained staff (often within the faculty or admin teams) who can offer confidential support and triage students to appropriate services.
2. Oversight is provided by **Senior Tutors at department and faculty level**, who ensure consistent, high-quality pastoral provision across the institution. This hierarchy means that PGRs have both local support and a path for escalation if needed, creating a **clear pastoral care chain.** [3]

[2] https://gradstudents.ch.cam.ac.uk/support#:~:text=Support
[3] https://www.imperial.ac.uk/early-career-researcher-institute/learning-and-development/cornerstone/signposting-pgr-support/#:~:text=,links%20for%20students%20and%20staff

3. Imperial also stands out for its **specialist wellbeing roles and crisis support mechanisms**. It employs dedicated **Mental Health Intervention Officers**, professionals whom students or staff can contact when there are serious concerns about a student's mental health. These officers are part of an early intervention strategy, they can respond to urgent cases, reach out to students in distress, and guide them to clinical care or emergency services as required.

Wellbeing Services:

1. For out-of-hours emergencies, Imperial ensures students know how to get help: the university advertises a student-run **Nightline** (confidential listening service available overnight) and instructs that campus security or NHS helplines be contacted for 24/7 crisis support. By providing both in-department support and institute-wide emergency contacts, Imperial creates a safety net at all times.
2. Imperial has developed an online **"Report and Support" tool** that allows students or staff to report wellbeing or harassment concerns (anonymously if preferred) and seek help. This platform not only encourages reporting of issues that might otherwise stay hidden, but also enables the institution to **track incidents and responses** centrally , an innovative step toward case tracking and ensuring no cry for help falls through the cracks
3. Another distinctive aspect of Imperial's approach is its emphasis on **structured programs and training to build a supportive research culture**. The Graduate School requires PGRs to undertake professional development (including wellbeing and resilience workshops) as part of their progression, implicitly normalizing self-care and help-seeking as elements of a successful doctorate.
4. Imperial provides extensive resources to **train and guide supervisors** in supporting student wellbeing. For example, the College's supervisor development materials include a dedicated wellbeing section to help faculty recognize signs of struggle and signpost students to the right support. This ensures that frontline academic staff are prepared to handle pastoral issues appropriately rather than leave them unaddressed .
5. **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in PGR Support:** Imperial fosters **community-based support networks** that are particularly innovative. It runs the *Activate Student Mentoring Programme*, which pairs senior PhD students or postdocs with PGRs from under-represented groups (such as minority ethnic or disabled researchers) to provide peer mentorship and a sense of belonging. In parallel, the university's diversity networks (like **"Imperial 600" for LGBTQ+ postgraduates and staff, and **"Imperial As One" for race equality)** offer group support and regular events for PGRs, creating safe spaces to discuss challenges beyond academics.
6. Imperial offers a **Postgraduate Coaching Programme**, giving doctoral candidates access to one-on-one coaching sessions independent of their department to talk through any difficulties and develop coping strategies. These community and coaching initiatives recognize that wellbeing is not only about reactive services but also about *preventative, inclusive engagement*.

By integrating these programs into its doctoral college structure, alongside formal roles and training, Imperial has built a **comprehensive wellbeing support system** that could serve as an excellent benchmark for research-intensive institutions like Edinburgh.

Summary: Cambridge and Imperial PGR Models

Both Cambridge and Imperial demonstrate that **clear frameworks, dedicated personnel, and proactive outreach** can significantly strengthen PGR pastoral support. Their approaches differ ; one leveraging a collegiate model and the other a centralized departmental model, each provides valuable innovations (from Cambridge's embedded college mentors to Imperial's department wellbeing advisors and mentoring schemes) that ensure postgraduate researchers are not left to struggle in

These universities exemplify how Research-intensive institutions can deliver structured, well-resourced wellbeing and mental health support tailored specifically to the needs of doctoral students, with features that can be taken into account for the Edinburgh PGR support model.

7 Conclusion

This report has highlighted the fragmented and uneven landscape of PGR student support across the University. While many Schools demonstrate strong local commitment—through academic supervision, Graduate School structures, and informal support networks, there remains **no consistent or institution-wide model for PGR-specific wellbeing provision for students with low to medium risk presentations.**

Crucially, the absence of trained pastoral staff within Schools, clear escalation pathways, and formal tracking tools limits the University's ability to **effectively meet the complex and often hidden wellbeing needs of PGR students.** These gaps are not unique to the University of Edinburgh; as national research shows, loneliness, stress, and uncertainty are widespread in the PGR experience, and existing university interventions frequently fail to address these issues in a meaningful way.

The mapping also revealed that several Schools are already innovating, through dedicated roles with a wellbeing function within them, improved signposting, student-led networks, and structured first-year pastoral check-ins. However, these examples remain isolated and reliant on local initiative rather than embedded strategy.

To build a more equitable and resilient PGR support environment, a shift is needed: from **individual goodwill and ad-hoc provision** to **institutionally supported, inclusive, and joined-up systems.** This includes clearer responsibilities, greater resourcing, shared tools for case tracking, and a stronger integration of the PGR population within the wider student support ecosystem.

The accompanying recommendations aim to support the development of such a model, while preserving the academic autonomy and disciplinary diversity that make the University of Edinburgh's research culture distinctive.

8 Recommendations

a. Establish a Cross-College Community of Practice for PGR Support

Develop a structured **PGR Support Committee** or working group at College level to:

- Share good practices across Schools and Deaneries
- Facilitate peer learning among staff in student-facing roles
- Improve coordination and alignment of PGR support approaches

This would foster a more connected, less siloed ecosystem for supporting PGR students.

b. Invest in Wellbeing Capacity Through Trained PGR Support Roles

Allocate dedicated resources for:

- Recruiting or designating **PGR-specific wellbeing advisers or officers** within Schools
- Providing specialist **mental health and pastoral training** to existing academic and administrative staff with responsibility to PGR support.

This addresses the widespread concern about emotional labour falling on untrained staff, and improves early intervention and support quality.

c. Develop a University-Wide Support Model Tailored to the PGR Context

Adapt the successful UG/PGT student support frameworks to reflect the unique needs of PGRs by:

- Defining clear escalation routes
- Clarifying the roles of supervisors vs professional services staff
- Ensuring pastoral care is embedded within—not adjacent to—the research experience

This includes reviewing the current **Student Adviser model** and its relevance for PGRs.

d. Implement a Unified Case Tracking and Communication System for PGR Support (Can be integrated with Recommendation A)

Introduce a case management system (or expand EUCLID functionality) to:

- Log wellbeing-related meetings or concerns

- Enable secure referral and tracking of ongoing support cases
- Provide visibility across academic and support teams while maintaining student confidentiality

This would address the current inconsistencies in how student issues are monitored and escalated.

e. Prioritise Out-of-Hours and Crisis Support Awareness for PGRs

Ensure all Schools visibly signpost:

- University-wide emergency and mental health services
- After-hours contacts such as Nightline, Samaritans, and ResLife
- Crisis procedures for PGR-specific contexts

In parallel, explore options to pilot structured, School-based **out-of-hours support mechanisms**—particularly during vulnerable academic periods like the first-year viva or final submission deadlines.

f. Co-design Support with PGR Students to Address Hidden Wellbeing Needs

Involve PGR students more directly in shaping the systems designed to support them by:

- **Partnering with PGR student reps, societies, and networks** (e.g. international, neurodiverse, parent-carers) to identify unmet needs and lived experiences
- **Recognising the hidden wellbeing costs** of doctoral study, including isolation, visa issues, caregiving responsibilities, and financial insecurity
- Embedding **student voice** in ongoing design and evaluation of wellbeing initiatives at School, College, and institutional levels

This would ensure support systems are more equitable, inclusive, and responsive to the **diverse realities of PGR life.**

Appendix C

PGR Student Support Mapping Exercise
December 2024
Questions for Schools, Institutes and Deaneries

Please respond by 31st January and only provide one for each School, Institute or Deanery as appropriate.

1. Name of School/ Institute/ Deanery:

2. How many PGR students do you have in your School/ Institute/ Deanery?

3. What support is provided for PGR students in your School/ Institute/ Deanery?

4. How is support accessed by PGR students in your School/ Institute/ Deanery?

5. Apart from supervisors, which staff roles provide support for PGR students in your School/ Institute/ Deanery?

    5a. What grade(s) are they employed at?

    5b. What fte of this/ these role(s) do you have?

    5c. If it's a proportion of this/ these role(s) that provide support for PGR students, what % of the overall role is this 'support' element?

    5d. Approximately how many PGR students would these staff be expected to provide support for within an academic year?

6. What are the main focus areas of the support that is provided to PGR students in your School/ Institute/ Deanery?

7. What gaps do you feel there are in PGR student support within your School/ Institute/ Deanery?

8. What would be the best way to fill these gaps in your School/ Institute/ Deanery?

9. How is support provided for PGR students out of office hours in your School/ Institute/ Deanery?

10. What is the approximate split between the provision of in-person/ on-campus support and online support for PGR students?

11. Would you value networking opportunities/ development of 'a community of practice' with other staff from across the institution who provide a similar PGR support function?

12. How do you make students aware of the support available?

13. Do students use the support?

Senate Education Committee

5 March 2026

Regenerative Sustainability Strategy: Our Pathway Beyond Net Zero

Description of paper

1. The University's Regenerative Sustainability Strategy will launch in March 2026. To truly achieve our Strategy 2030 vision to make the world a better place, the strategy adopts a regenerative sustainability outlook whereby we not only minimise damage to environmental systems but actively repair them. This paper outlines the learning and teaching commitments within the strategy and priority actions, with a specific focus on the formal academic curriculum.

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. The Senate Education Committee is asked to discuss the paper and provide recommendations on how to progress the learning and teaching commitments within the strategy, including how best to measure and evaluate climate and nature in the curriculum.

Background and context

3. As a University we are proud of the significant contribution our staff, students and graduates have already made in reducing the damage we cause, in adopting climate change and environment as one of our three core research missions, increasing renewable energy generation on campus 15-fold in the last two years, supporting the scaling and commercialisation of innovative sustainability solutions, and in the strong provision of learning opportunities in the curriculum for students to deepen their understanding of climate and nature.

4. We recognise that to meaningfully address environmental challenges we must urgently step up the scale of action. The strategy goes beyond a primarily operational approach, to proactively focus on areas of highest potential impact:

our research and innovation, learning and teaching, partnerships, driven by our people and culture.

5. The University has a global alumni community of over 300,000 graduates and the most recent Annual Report and Accounts 2025 highlighted student numbers totalled 49,640. Every career path interacts with climate, nature and sustainability issues. By ensuring students graduate with an understanding of climate and nature in relation to their academic discipline, and relevant competencies, they have the potential to go on and drive regenerative sustainability approaches through their communities and the organisations they found, join and lead.

6. The strategy includes two high level learning and teaching commitments. By 2030, all students will have access to climate and nature learning experiences that are meaningfully embedded in their curriculum. By 2030, we will train at least 5,000 staff, students and alumni on Carbon Literacy, Biodiversity Literacy, the Circular Economy and more, regardless of role or programme of study.

7. These commitments were developed in collaboration with key stakeholders. The strategy was created by, and written for, our University community, created over two years, with 1,500 hours of stakeholder input from across the University. This included an extensive staff and student consultation in 2023 and 2024. The development of these commitments included engagement with University Court (via a Court Seminar), University Senate, University Executive, College Education Committees and through engagement with Deans of Education, Heads of Schools, Directors of Teaching and the Students' Association.

8. The consultation around the development of the learning and teaching commitments included senior sponsorship and oversight from Professor Iain Gordon, Vice-Principal, Head of College of Science and Engineering, and Chair of the Regenerative Sustainability Strategy Delivery Board; Professor Colm Harmon, former Vice Principal Students; and Dr Jon Turner, former Curriculum Transformation Project Lead.

9. A Working Group, until recently chaired by Professor Vel McCune, Personal Chair of University Education, is responsible for overseeing the implementation of actions that work towards the learning and teaching commitments within the strategy. The Working Group is responsible for reporting progress, including successes and challenges, to the Regenerative Sustainability Strategy Delivery Board. The Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability (SRS) on behalf of the Working Group, has been leading continued efforts to engage and update College Education Committees and other key stakeholders and governance structures. The Working Group previously reported directly into the Curriculum Transformation Programme Board.

Discussion

10. The above Working Group has prioritised a number of actions within its implementation plan across the themes of strategy, pedagogy, student engagement, college and school engagement, monitoring and evaluation. The

intention of the implementation plan is to effectively support College and School-led action in this area. Recently this has included supporting the School of Mathematics to include a question on climate and nature in course proposal forms and to develop complementary guidance. The implementation plan involves close collaboration with the Skills for Success Framework, where there is clear overlap in intended outcomes, including the development of key competencies for sustainability in the curriculum, aligning with the University's Student Vision.

11. In the last six months progress has been shared and presented to Education Committees in the College of Science and Engineering, and the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine. These updates have been positively received, with requests to better evidence and utilise current provision in the academic curriculum. An update regarding progress in the Collage of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences will be presented via their Education Committee in April.

12. Portfolio Reviews will likely lead to a reduction in the overall number of degree programmes and courses at the University. This could lead to climate and nature related learning opportunities being negatively impacted in the curriculum. Space in the curriculum is already a challenge, especially at postgraduate level and in certain academic disciplines, such as medicine, where the learning content is driven by professional standards. The Portfolio Review might also lead to opportunities for Colleges to cluster courses at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, around thematic areas and share resources to support courses that provide multidisciplinary learning opportunities that address climate and nature. The Working Group continues to pro-actively engage with both Colleges and Schools on the above.

13. The Teaching Climate and Sustainability in Curriculum Community of Practice continues to support staff and PhD students involved in teaching climate and nature in the curriculum, bringing more visibility to best practice in the curriculum. The Community of Practice is co-delivered with Learning for Sustainability Scotland and includes 160 individuals. By working with the Institute of Academic Development, sustainability has now been formally included in the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice.

14. The Department for SRS has been managing an increase in requests to support experiential learning and authentic assessment through living lab projects, including through the University's Forest and Peatlands Project, and is involved in the University's Community of Practice for Experiential Learning and Challenge-based learning.

15. As a university we currently do not have a quantifiable baseline of the number of students who have access to meaningful climate and nature learning experiences in their curriculum. The strategy defines 'meaningful' as embedding climate and nature in learning outcomes and assessment. The Working Group has recommended that degree programmes offer a combined total of at least 20 academic credits where climate and nature is meaningfully embedded. It is

important to note that the strategy adopts and encourages a flexible approach to this, as a 'one size fits all' will not work, as embedding will be materially different across academic disciplines and programmes.

16. The limited functionality of systems such as the Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study (DRPS), has influenced the implementation of a curriculum mapping approach that analyses course information in DRPS through a keyword search developed by the University of Toronto, which has been adopted by several institutions across the Higher Education Sector. This keyword search, utilising the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is complemented by consulting academics and students on the analysis of the information.

17. This approach has been completed across six academic schools and two subject areas, and has supported the employment of several student Earth Fellows. 86% of the 851 courses mapped included a reference to the SDGs in their course description on the DRPS.

18. Curriculum mapping will continue this year across CMVM and CSE with funding from the Climate Strategic Fund to support student Earth Fellows. The mapping will utilise the terminology and definitions within the new strategy, instead of utilising the SDGs framework. Efforts are also being undertaken to identify potentially relevant functionality in PATH and how the Edinburgh Language Model (University's AI innovation platform) could support work to baseline and report where climate and nature is addressed in the University's academic portfolio.

19. Another area of focus has been identifying opportunities to deliver the strategy's learning and teaching commitments through the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030, and the Learning and Teaching Workstream. The Working Group, through former Chair, Professor Vel McCune, and the Department for SRS, has engaged with Professor Tina Harrison, providing potential actions for consideration as part of the implementation plan for the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030.

20. The proposed actions include, but not limited to developing guidance for Schools about how about how key global challenges addressed in the University's Research Strategy (Shaping the Future of Health and Care; Harnessing Data, Digital and AI; Tackling the Climate and Environmental Crisis) can be embedded into research-informed curricula available to all students; whether Quality Assurance reporting from schools can ask how their subject areas are relevant to key global challenges; implementing a longitudinal study to capture student and graduate feedback on how these global challenges are integrated into both the formal and informal curriculum across multiple years of study and academic disciplines; and to develop approaches for key strategic themes and global challenges to be effectively mapped and measured across the curriculum.

21. The remit of the Curriculum Development and Innovation Group now includes reference to the Regenerative Sustainability Strategy and includes the University's Climate and Sustainability in the Curriculum Manager in its membership. The Department for SRS, on behalf of the Working Group, is also meeting with colleagues involved in the Timetable and Course Selection Review Project to talk through potential tagging functionality in PATH.

Resource implications

22. The main focus of the learning and teaching commitments within the Regenerative Sustainability Strategy is to guide and focus the utilisation of existing resource across the University. Additional financial resource to support School and College-led action is being drawn from the Regenerative Sustainability Strategy's Fund (part of BA7).

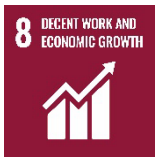
Risk management

23. There is a risk that a lack of effective implementation and evaluation will result in not meeting the learning and teaching commitments within the Regenerative Sustainability Strategy. There is reputational risk that we do not effectively communicate or promote the University's strong provision of learning opportunities in the curriculum for students to deepen their understanding of climate and nature. If we do not effectively provide students with the learning opportunities to develop their understanding and competencies around climate and nature, we are placing our graduates at a competitive disadvantage compared to peer universities who are successful at meaningfully embedding climate and nature in their curriculum.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

24. The Regenerative Sustainability Strategy addresses all of the SDGs either directly or indirectly. The learning and teaching commitments primarily focus on the following.

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

25. Equality, diversity and inclusion are core considerations of the Regenerative Sustainability Strategy. An Equality Impact Assessment was completed as part of the development of the strategy and will be published via the EqIA website when the strategy is launched in March 2026.

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

26. Actions and communications to be implemented through the Learning and Teaching Working Group of the Regenerative Sustainability Strategy Delivery Board.

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February 2026

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Senate Education Committee

5 March 2026

Open Educational Resources Report and Policy Review

Description of paper

1. With the tenth anniversary in 2026 of the University's innovative Open Educational Resources (OER) Service and the enabling policy that underpins it, this paper reports on the success of the University's approach to OER over the last decade and proposes some minor updates to the OER Policy following routine review.

2. The service and policy support many of the Strategy 2030 outcomes, most notably outcomes iv, by providing global reach and outreach for our digital resources; vii, by making our resources available to and adaptable by partners, friends, neighbours and supporters, amplifying their reach; xi, through promoting content re-use that often uses less resource than creation or generation; and xiii, by providing resources and content repositories to support collaborative learning with neighbours, businesses and partners.

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**
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

3. The committee is requested to consider and **note** the report and to **approve** the recommended updates to the OER Policy.

Background and context

4. We believe that the creation of open knowledge and OER are in keeping with our institutional vision and values, to make the world a better place with the knowledge we discover, while ensuring that our teaching and research is

relevant to society, and to be diverse, inclusive, accessible to all.

5. In 2015 the University was already seen as a world leader and early adopter of MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), having developed its pioneering free short online courses. Building on this success, and the University's strategic vision to increase the provision of world-leading online distance learning and embed open education across the institution, Dr Melissa Highton led the development of a new vision for OER at the University of Edinburgh. Edinburgh University Students' Association were also instrumental in encouraging the University to support engagement with OER at this time.

6. To support this vision, Information Services Group established a central OER Service in 2015 and in 2016 the University approved a new OER Policy. This policy, which encourages our staff and students to engage with the creation and use of OER, was approved by Learning and Teaching Committee, placing open education and OER squarely in the domain of teaching and learning. The development of this policy, which was adapted from a policy created by the University of Leeds, was led by Stuart Nicol, Head of Educational Design and Engagement.

7. In keeping with our commitment to open knowledge, we have shared these policies as part of a suite of influential open licensed teaching and learning policies to benefit institutions across the Higher Education sector. These policies were awarded Open Education Global's 2021 Open Policy Award, which recognises policies with a clear impact in the development of open knowledge through the efficient use and reuse of resources for the public good.

8. The University consolidated its reputation as a world leader in open education when we hosted the 7th OER Conference in 2016. 'OER16: Open Culture' focused on the value proposition of embedding open culture in the context of institutional strategies for learning, teaching and research. OER16 was the first OER conference to feature a Wikimedia in Education strand and received Wikimedia UK's Partnership of the Year award.

9. Based in Learning Teaching and Web Services, the OER Service works in partnership with other central services[1] to support the university's Strategy 2030 and vision for OER. The OER team provides staff and students with advice and guidance on creating and using OER and engaging with open education. The service runs a digital skills programme focused on copyright literacy, open licencing, OER, and open education, and offers bespoke support to Schools and Colleges on request. We work directly with academic colleagues and course leaders to see opportunities for OER to diversify and

[1] Including the Online Course Production Service, Learning Technology Policy officer, Wikimedian in Residence, Academic Blogging Service, Media Team, Interactive Content Service, and Edinburgh Diamond.

decolonise their curriculum[2] and to co-create authentic assignments through open assessment practices[3].

10. The OER Service manages Open.Ed, a one-stop-shop that provides staff and students with advice and guidance on creating and using OER and engaging with open education. Through Open.Ed, the OER Service provides access to a range of channels to share OERs and enable their discovery and use by others, including Media Hopper Create, TES Resources, Flickr, and Sketchfab. To highlight the open educational resources created by staff and students across the University, we have a show case of Edinburgh's OERs on Open.Ed, and an Open Media Bank where we share high quality media content created for the University's MOOCs and free short online courses.
    - Creative Commons licensed videos on Media Hopper Create – 7,332 teaching, learning & research videos.
    - Open Media Bank on Media Hopper Create – 1,321 MOOC videos.
    - Open.Ed OER Showcase – 524 OERs.
    - TES Resources – 107 OERs for schools, downloaded 239,000 times.
    - Sketchfab – 76 3D models.
    - Edinburgh Diamond – 1 open textbook, downloaded 54,397 times.

11. The service also shares curated collections of OERs on Open.Ed. These cover a wide range of topics and significant events, including open resources to support mental health, shared during the COVID pandemic, OERs that address the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, interdisciplinary teaching and learning, Black History Month, LGBT+ History Month and environment and sustainability OERs for COP26.

12. The OER Service works closely with our big learning technology projects including Lecture Recording, Academic Blogging, Media Hopper Create, MOOCs, VLE Excellence, and Short Courses Platform, to embed support for open licensing and OER across our learning technology platforms. We have taken care to build options for choosing Creative Commons licences into the workflows of our biggest learning technology systems, making it as easy as possible for content creators to make this choice. We also upskill professional services colleagues to ensure knowledge and understanding of Creative Commons and open licensing is ubiquitous across Learning, Teaching and Web Services. The success of this approach can be seen in the large number of Creative Commons licensed videos shared on Media Hopper Create, MOOC videos shared in the Open Media Bank, open licensed and public

[2] See the Open eTextbooks for Access to Music Education project, https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/opentextbooks/ and Moran, N., & Campbell, L.M., (2023), "Using Open Educational Resources (OER) to activate and critically inform higher education in music", British Education Research Association Conference, Ashton University.
[3] Douglas, K., Cross, A., Graham, C., Zaja, E., Auyeung, B.,& Madsen, F. (2022). Geoscience Outreach: What we do, how we assess, and client/student reflections. Teaching Matters, University of Edinburgh. https://www.teaching-matters-blog.ed.ac.uk/geoscience-outreach-what-we-do-how-we-assess-and-client-student-reflections/

domain course headers used in Learn, and open content used to support short courses on the new Short Courses Platform.

13. Working with the Online Course Production Service and Media Team, the OER Service contributed to the development of a sustainable open course creation workflow. We shared this approach widely during international Open Education Week in 2023 to celebrate 10 years of MOOCs at the University of Edinburgh.

14. We continue to see student engagement as being a fundamental aspect of open education. Since the OER service started, it has employed 19 student interns across a range of projects, enabling them to gain transferable skills while developing their own open practice and digital competence and confidence. In addition to co-creating OERs and open textbooks, our student employees are encouraged to write reflective blog posts, have the opportunity to present at academic conferences, and have won prestigious awards. Our Open Content Curator interns won the 2021 Open Education Global Open Curation Repository award for the collection of OERs shared on TES Resources, and Eden Swimmer won the 2024 ISG Staff Student Member of the Year Award for Their Finest Hour project.

15. The OER service also works with academic course teams to embed open education practice in the curriculum through open course assignments. OER creation assignments help both staff and students to develop core disciplinary competencies and transferable attributes including digital and copyright literacy skills, collaborative working and collective knowledge creation, information synthesis, critical thinking, and writing as public outreach. Examples of courses with OER creation assignments include GeoScience Outreach, Creating Edinburgh, and Digital Futures for Learning. Many of the OERs created by students through these courses are shared on the Open.Ed showcase.

16. The OER Service supports the use, creation and dissemination of open textbooks and ebooks. This includes sharing GitHub ebooks developed by colleagues and creating new open textbooks. The Open eTextbooks for Access to Music Education project was a Student Experience Grant funded project that brought together staff and students from the Reid School of Music, Library & University Collections, and the OER Service to co-create a new open textbook from existing Creative Commons licensed MOOC content. Fundamentals of Music Theory was published on Edinburgh Diamond in 2021 and has since been downloaded over 54,000 times. The OER Service is now working with the Design Team and Edinburgh Diamond to create new open textbooks and ebooks.

17. The OER Service has contributed position papers to Senate Education Committee (2021), Digital Strategy Consultation (2022), Curriculum

Transformation Programme (2002), and Sustainability, Social & Civic Responsibility Committee (2023).

18. The OER Service undertakes outreach activities to share our open practice and our experience of providing strategic support for OER. This includes contributing to annual conferences and events including Open Education Week, the OER Conference, the ALT Conference, the Open Education Conference, and the University's own Learning and Teaching Conference. We run the Open.Ed Blog, share themed series of blog posts on Teaching Matters, and publish peer reviewed journal papers[4].

19. The OER Service also provides advice and guidance to other institutions and organisations who are looking to develop their own support for OER, including University College London, the University of the Highlands and Islands, University of Leeds, NUI Galway, ETH Zürich, Københavns Universitet, SURF, and UCLouvain.

20. In addition, the OER Service has provided input to significant national and international OER initiatives including Open Scotland, the UNESCO OER World Congress and Ljubljana OER Action Plan, the Open Policy Lab, the EDUCAUSE Horizon Report, and the Irish National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.

Discussion

21. This report demonstrates the important work and benefit to the University of the OER Service and policy, in supporting and upskilling students, academic and professional staff to use, create and curate open educational resources efficiently for internal, public and international benefit.

22. Education Committee agreed minor changes to the policy in 2021 following review, including reference to the UNESCO Recommendation on OER[5]. This 2021 review looked at different approaches to managing and encouraging the use of OER at several UK and international universities and we believe its conclusions remain valid regarding our ongoing approach to managing OER through a variety of distributed repositories (listed above) and communication channels.

23. The policy was reviewed again in 2025/2026, by a group representing different Colleges and Schools, Library and University Collections and Learning, Teaching and Web Services. It considered current local and wider

[4] Campbell, L., Highton, M., & McAndrew, E. (2023). Apoyando la práctica educativa abierta: estudios de casos reflexivos de la Universidad de Edimburgo / Supporting open education practice: Reflective case studies from the University of Edinburgh. **Edutec. Revista Electrónica De Tecnología Educativa**, (85), 9-28. https://doi.org/10.21556/edutec.2023.85.2865

[5] UNESCO. 2019. Recommendation on Open Educational Resources. https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/recommendation-open-educational-resources-oer.

developments in open content creation, licensing and publishing and consolidated these into several themes, most notably around the impact of generative artificial intelligence (AI) on content creation and licensing, and developments in open publishing of research outputs and academic textbooks.

24. We propose changes to the OER Policy in three areas. The proposal is appended below with substantive changes underlined in green for ease of reference.
    a. **Intellectual Property Rights.** Having considered clause 1 of the Research Publications and Copyright Policy regarding ownership of scholarly works, we believe it is prudent to include an equivalent clause in the OER Policy that clearly reflects the position on ownership of intellectual property rights in teaching materials created at the University.
    b. **Generative AI.** In encouraging the responsible use of generative artificial intelligence, we propose that content generated by AI models should not be open licensed by the University, on the principal that it is generally not possible to determine who holds copyright in the model's sources and to acknowledge their contribution. We believe that content creators should also be encouraged to consider cost and sustainability factors when deciding between existing open content and new AI-generated content.
    c. **Training and guidance.** Finally, we propose to highlight the University's provision of training and guidance on licensing and using OERs more clearly within the policy.

25. We believe that these straightforward updates should help keep the University at the international forefront of OER development and practice.

Resource implications

26. Implementation and communication of the revised policy to be undertaken within existing resource.

Risk management

27. Covering copyright and data protection issues within the policy, both in general and in particular for AI generation, coupled with providing digital skills training that is focused on copyright literacy and understanding of open licences, lessens the legal and reputational risks to the University and its members resulting from copyright infringement and inappropriate use of copyright content.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

28. The UNESCO Recommendation on OER recognises that mainstreaming OER can help to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly SDG 4 (Quality education), SDG 5 (Gender equality), SDG 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure), SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities within and across countries), SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals). The policy supports these goals and the

University's national and worldwide reputation benefits from its commitment to making high-quality open resources available for partners to re-use and re-purpose.

29. Encouraging the responsible re-use of existing resources should act to reduce the unnecessary use of resource-intensive technology, which is relevant to SDG 8 (Inclusive and sustainable growth and employment), SDG 9 (Resilient infrastructure, sustainable industrialisation and innovation), SDG 12 (Sustainable consumption and production patterns), SDG 13 (Urgent climate action).

Equality & diversity

30. The policy has the potential to have a positive impact on the needs of a range of diverse groups by facilitating sustainable curriculum diversification; by mandating that OERs created and used by members of the University must comply with policies on inclusiveness; and by making University teaching and learning materials accessible worldwide to groups who otherwise might be excluded.

31. The 2016 equality impact assessment for the policy has also been reviewed, and the proposed minor and technical changes do not appear to have specific impacts either way on protected groups.

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

32. If approved, the revised OER Policy will be communicated to colleagues and students through existing channels by Learning, Teaching and Web Services and Academic Quality and Standards. Implementation and evaluation of the impact of the policy is undertaken by the OER Service.

Author
Lorna Campbell, Stephanie (Charlie) Farley, Neil McCormick and Stuart Nicol
Learning, Teaching and Web Services
12 February 2026

Presenter
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Freedom of Information: Open paper

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Open Educational Resources Policy

Summary

This policy provides the University's position on Open Educational Resources (OERs) and guidelines for their use in learning and teaching at the University.

The University encourages staff and students to use, create, and publish OERs to enhance the quality of the student experience, increase the provision of learning opportunities for all, and improve teaching practices. It also recognises that the use and creation of OERs is consistent with the University's vision and values; to make the world a better place with the knowledge we discover, to ensure our teaching and research is relevant to society, and to be diverse, inclusive, and accessible to all.

Scope: Mandatory Policy

This policy applies to all students and staff in the University.

Contact	Learning, Teaching and Web Services	IS.Helpline@ed.ac.uk

Document control

Dates	**Version approved**: 05.03.26	**Effective date:** 05.03.26	**Equality impact assessment:** 05.03.26	**Last Reviewed:** 05.03.26	**Next Review:** 2028/2029

Approving authority	Senate Education Committee
Related policies	Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy, IP Commercialisation Policies, Lecture Recording Policy, Virtual Classroom Policy, Research Data Management Policy, Research Publications & Copyright Policy
Alternative format	If you require this document in an alternative format please email IS.Helpline@ed.ac.uk or visit https://www.ishelpline.ed.ac.uk/forms/
Keywords	Open educational resources, open education practice, open education, widening participation, copyright, open textbooks

Background

Open Educational Resources (OERs) are "learning, teaching and research materials in any format and medium that reside in the public domain or are under copyright that have been released under an open license, that permit no-cost access, re-use, re-purpose, adaptation and redistribution by others."[6]

At the University of Edinburgh we believe that OERs are strongly in keeping with our institutional vision and values; to make the world a better place with the knowledge we discover, to ensure our teaching and research is relevant to society, and to be diverse, inclusive, and accessible to all. We sustain a deep allegiance and commitment to the interests of the city and region in which we are based, alongside our national and international efforts, ensuring relevance to all. In line with the UNESCO OER Recommendation, we believe that OERs and open knowledge contribute to achieving the aims of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), which the University is committed to through the SDG Accord.

Our staff and students use, create and publish a wide range of teaching and learning materials to support exceptional learning experiences, including course notes, hand-outs, course work assignments, audio, video, images, animations, multimedia materials, e-books, open textbooks and others. Library & University Collections teams make Open Educational Resources discoverable to support teaching, learning and research.

Between this policy's approval in 2016 and its most recent review in 2026, staff and students created over 7000 Creative Commons licensed videos including 1,300 open online course videos shared on Media Hopper Create; 500 OERs shared on the Open.Ed showcase; and over 100 award-winning OERs for school teachers on TES Resources.

Staff and students at the University of Edinburgh are strongly encouraged to use OERs to enhance learning and teaching whilst contributing to "a vast pool of educational resources on the Internet, open and free for all to use … creating a world where each and every person on earth can access and contribute to the sum of all human knowledge"[7].

University position

1. The use, creation and publication of OERs is consistent with the University's vision and values; to make the world a better place with the knowledge we discover, to ensure our teaching and research is relevant to society, and to be diverse, inclusive, and accessible to all.

[6] UNESCO Recommendation on Open Educational Resources (2019).

[7] Cape Town Declaration. (2007). *Cape Town Open Education Declaration: Unlocking the Promise of Open Educational Resources.* Retrieved from: www.capetowndeclaration.org/read-the-declaration

2. The University encourages staff and students to create and publish OERs to enhance the quality of the student experience, increase the provision of learning opportunities for all, and contribute to the global pool of open knowledge.

3. The University also encourages staff and students to reuse and repurpose existing OERs and open licensed resources, created within and beyond the University, provided they are relevant, fit-for-purpose and used in accordance with the terms of the licence. This will help to expand the pool of resources available for teaching and learning, reduce duplication of effort, and increase return on investment.

4. University policies on intellectual property rights (IPR) must be adhered to.[8] The University retains the copyright in any learning and teaching materials created by an employee in the normal course of their employment, unless otherwise agreed with the employee. Students normally retain IPR in their own work.

5. It is expected that staff and students will use, create and publish OERs in a wide range of formats, including but not limited to, course materials and handbooks, images, video, multimedia resources, podcasts, assessment items, ebooks, open textbooks and course work assignments.

6. Unless stated to the contrary, it is assumed that use, creation and publication of single units or small collections will be supported. Whether or not OERs are used or published in a School or Professional Service is ultimately a decision for the Head of School or equivalent. Where use, creation or publication are to be restricted, Schools, Departments and Services are encouraged to communicate a rationale for restriction.

7. When using OERs, students and staff must comply with the terms of the licence of use.

8. University policies and guidance on data protection must be adhered to.

9. All OERs used and created must be as accessible as reasonably possible for all users and must comply with the University's .

10. The University reserves the right to restrict access to, remove or edit any resources it hosts that do not comply with its policies, and to request removal of resources from external repositories or sites.

[8] Examples of relevant policies here may include the Research Publications & Copyright Policy; Lecture Recording Policy; Virtual Classroom Policy; and University policies on IP commercialisation

Guidance

1. The University's OER Service provides training, advice and guidance on creating, finding, reusing and repurposing all kinds of open licensed content, and on understanding copyright and open licenses.

2. It is the responsibility of staff and students to ensure that they have the necessary rights to publish an OER and that all resources published comply with all relevant legislation, policy and guidance, including but not limited to copyright, IPR, data protection and accessibility.

3. Where an OER incorporates third-party content, that is, content created by another rights holder, that third-party content must either be in the public domain or shared under a compatible open licence. If the third-party content has been shared under an open licence, then the licence conditions must be followed and appropriate attribution provided.

4. Content generated by AI models shall not be published as or as part of an OER. It is not normally possible to know or properly acknowledge every copyright work that has contributed to the generated output.

5. Staff and students are advised to publish OERs using a Creative Commons Attribution licence (CC BY). Other Creative Commons licences may be used if colleagues feel this is necessary or appropriate for their particular resource, or to comply with the licence of any third-party content used in the resource.

6. When creating and publishing OERs, the copyright owner(s), author(s), date and Creative Commons licence must be visibly attributed. The copyright owner will normally be the University of Edinburgh for OERs created at the University. Author(s) and performer(s) should also be properly acknowledged, giving recognition for work undertaken, along with date and Creative Commons licence applied so that others can clearly understand what permissions for reuse are being granted. An example of good attribution would be:

   © [Author Name], The University of Edinburgh, CC BY, 2026

7. Staff and students creating OERs must ensure any personally identifiable information (PII) within their resource is processed on an appropriate lawful basis, in accordance with data protection law and University policy. Creators should be aware that resources containing PII processed on the lawful basis of "consent" are at risk of that consent being withdrawn at any time, and that a person's name, username, image, voice and personal opinions are all considered as PII.

8. The University recommends that open educational resources should be published in an appropriate repository or public-access website in order to maximise their discovery and use by others. Where OERs have been created as part of an externally funded activity, any licensing regulations and repository locations mandated as a condition of the funding should be adhered to.

9. The University recommends that audio and audio-visual OERs should be published in the University's multimedia repository, Media Hopper Create.

10. Where students are creating OERs as part of their programme of study or within a staff-directed project, these guidelines should be followed and OERs should be checked by a member of staff before publication.

11. The University actively encourages staff and students to reuse and repurpose existing OERs created by colleagues within the University, and by other institutions and organisations. Examples might include MOOC videos, open textbooks, open data sets, simulations, 3D models, cultural heritage resources. Reusing and repurposing existing OERs is more sustainable than generating new resources from AI models. Visit the OER Service website (open.ed.ac.uk) for further advice and guidance.

This document is an update of an original 2016 policy, itself adapted from University of Leeds OERs (2012, no longer available but see 2017 position statement and 2025 policy), incorporating additions from the GCU Interim OER Policy (no longer available on gcu.ac.uk) and the University of Greenwich Position in relation to Open Educational Practices 2015-2017 (no longer available on blogs.gre.ac.uk).

05 March 2026

Senate Education Committee

5 March 2026

Erasmus+ Re-association: Next Steps

Description of paper

1. This paper outlines the proposed next steps to prepare for the UK's re-association with the Erasmus+ programme from 2027 and invites the Committee to consider the strategic and operational implications for international student mobility.

2. The proposals support delivery of the University's Strategy 2030 by strengthening global engagement, widening access to international opportunities, and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience.

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

3. This paper is presented for information. It outlines the proposed approach and immediate next steps to support the University's re-association with the Erasmus+ programme, with UK participation expected to resume from 2027 and institutional access to Erasmus+ funding anticipated from the 2027/28 academic year, subject to award of the Erasmus+ Charter for Higher Education.

4. Senate Education Committee is invited to discuss the proposed forward plan and to advise on any additional stakeholders who should be engaged during the next phase of work. This will include consultation to inform the development of an Erasmus+ Re-association Action Plan by April 2026, alongside associated communications and engagement activity.

Background and context

5. **Re-association Erasmus+ timeline.** In December 2025, the UK Government confirmed that the UK will rejoin the Erasmus+ programme from 2027. The Study and Work Away Service (SWAY) will submit the University of Edinburgh's application for the Erasmus+ Charter for Higher Education in March 2026. Subject to approval, this will enable access to Erasmus+ funding for students, staff, and recent graduates from the 2027/28 academic year onwards. The University would then submit its first post-Brexit Erasmus+ funding bid in early 2027.

6. SWAY leadership was invited to brief the Lead EU/UK Negotiator on Erasmus+ re-association, reflecting the University's sector leadership and providing practitioner insight into scaling UK participation.

7. The current agreement covers participation in the 2021–2027 Erasmus+ programme. Continued participation beyond this period (2028–2034) will depend on future negotiations between the UK Government and the European Commission.

8. **Institutional track record and strategic fit.** For more than 35 years, Erasmus+ has been central to the University's international partnerships, widening participation ambitions, and commitment to producing globally engaged graduates. Prior to Brexit, the University of Edinburgh was the most successful UK institution in securing Erasmus+ funding for student and staff mobility, securing over €4 million through the 2020 call alone.

9. Erasmus+ aligns closely with the University's Strategy 2030 priorities, particularly in relation to internationalisation, student experience, research collaboration, and civic responsibility.

10. By contrast, the Turing Scheme (the UK's replacement mobility programme) funding has been lower, more volatile, and awarded on an annual basis, creating significant uncertainty for students undertaking mandatory overseas activity — particularly those from Widening Participation (WP) backgrounds. For example, the University's most recent Turing allocation in 2025/26 totalled £1.3 million, with £901k awarded in 2024/25. Several UK institutions received no Turing funding at all, and the Scottish HEI sector experienced an overall reduction of approximately 60% compared to Erasmus+ funding levels.

11. **Table 1: HEI Mobility Scheme funding by UK Nation — from Erasmus+ to Turing.**

	Erasmus+ 2020 call (GBP equivalent)	Turing 2021-22 (GBP)	Turing 2022-23 (GBP)	Turing 2023-24 (GBP)	Turing 2024-25 (GBP)	Turing 2025-26 (GBP)
England	55,217,180	56,043,934	53,064,785	53,207,751	54,473,281	35,316,945
British Overseas Territories	14,784	0	0	0	6,579	12,985
Scotland	12,536,371	6,945,543	5,806,130	5,601,002	5,034,777	4,932,592
Wales	3,142,449	3,068,337	2,162,727	1,765,823	1,295,925	1,404,929
Northern Ireland	3,007,570	944,128	1,081,783	1,164,514	815,809	616,021

Discussion

12. A core ambition of Strategy 2030 is to strengthen the University's distinctive internationalism by attracting global talent and building innovative partnerships across research, teaching, and civic engagement. Re-association with Erasmus+ provides a strategic framework and sustainable funding model to support delivery of these priorities.

13. Renewed participation will also reaffirm the University's alignment with wider European priorities, including skills development, the digital and green transitions, international collaboration, and the attraction and retention of global talent.

14. Early signals from both the UK Government and the European Commission indicate that UK participation in Erasmus+ is expected to grow significantly over time, potentially doubling or trebling previous levels.

15. The current Erasmus+ programme (2021–2027) has an indicative budget of approximately €26.2 billion. Proposals for the next Multiannual Financial Framework (2028–2034) suggest a potential increase to around €40.8 billion, with some Member States advocating for a higher overall allocation for a budget closer to €60 billion. This reflects continued European investment in mobility and collaboration.

16. **Strategic opportunities.** Re-association with Erasmus+ presents opportunities across teaching and learning, research and innovation, partnerships, and civic engagement:

    - **Teaching and Learning.** Erasmus+ will support large-scale student mobility across both mandatory and optional study and work away activity. International Credit Mobility (KA171) will also enable inbound mobility from non-EU partners, enhancing curriculum internationalisation and student diversity.
    - **Staff Mobility and Professional Development.** Funded mobility for academic and professional services staff will support collaborative

teaching, development of subject-specific exchange agreements, and professional development, contributing to institutional KPIs on student mobility participation, graduate outcomes, and staff development.

- **Strategic Partnerships (Una Europa).** Participation as a funded member will enable expanded engagement in Una Europa education, mobility, research and innovation activity. This supports Strategy 2030 priorities relating to strategic international partnerships and contributes to longer-term financial sustainability (subject to separate governance processes).
- **Research and Innovation.** Erasmus+ will facilitate international research collaboration through staff mobility and partnership development, supporting global research excellence and future external funding pipelines.
- **Civic Mission and Inclusion.** Erasmus+ supports widening access to international opportunities and engagement with diverse global partners, aligning with Strategy 2030 commitments on equality, diversity and inclusion and contributing to participation by under-represented groups.

Resource implications

17. Re-association will require integration with the fully digitalised Erasmus+ Without Paper (EWP) system for the administration and management of Erasmus+ activity. A defined transition period will be needed to support implementation. The University is well positioned to manage this transition, as the current mobility management system, Mobility Online (MO), is operated by SOP, a co-developer of the Erasmus+ Without Paper platform.

18. The University also has established due diligence processes and significant experience in developing and managing its exchange portfolio in partnership with Schools and Colleges, which will support effective oversight and risk management during the transition.

19. A detailed assessment of resource requirements to maximise Erasmus+ opportunities will be undertaken through development of the Erasmus+ Re-association Action Plan.

Risk management

20. Participation in Erasmus+ involves contractual, regulatory and compliance risks, including adherence to European Commission funding rules, financial management and audit requirements, quality assurance obligations, and the operational risks associated with managing a large international partner network.

21. These risks are well established and mitigated by the Study and Work Away Service's (SWAY) strong track record in securing and delivering Erasmus+ activity across multiple programme cycles, with demonstrated compliance with European Commission requirements.

22. Existing University governance and risk management processes provide further assurance. SWAY works closely with central services, including Finance, to ensure appropriate oversight, supported by Mobility Online for administration,

monitoring and reporting. A structured transition plan will support integration with the Erasmus+ Without Paper system.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

23. Erasmus+ aligns with European Commission priorities on the green transition, promoting more sustainable approaches to international mobility, including incentives for lower-carbon travel and dedicated “green travel” funding.

24. Re-association will support the University’s Climate Emergency commitments by enabling mobility activity that reduces environmental impact and embeds sustainable behaviours. Erasmus+ also contributes to delivery of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly climate action, reduced inequalities, quality education, and global partnerships.

Equality & diversity

25. A full Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EQUIS) impact assessment will be undertaken to ensure that re-association with Erasmus+ supports Strategy 2030 commitments to equality of opportunity and inclusive internationalisation. Erasmus+ funding provides enhanced support for students from Widening Participation backgrounds, including higher grant rates and targeted top-up funding.

26. Re-association will support increased scale and diversity of international mobility participation, broadening access to transformative educational experiences and reducing financial barriers linked to socio-economic background or personal circumstances.

27. Embedding equity and inclusion within the design and delivery of Erasmus+ activity will strengthen the University’s commitment to a diverse, globally engaged student community and more equitable access to global opportunities.

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

33. The following next steps are proposed to support institutional readiness for re-association with Erasmus+ and to ensure appropriate governance and consultation:

- **Submission of the Erasmus+ Charter for Higher Education (ECHE):** Submit the Erasmus+ Higher Education Charter application by 24 March 2026. Approval by the European Commission is a prerequisite for participation and will enable access to Erasmus+ mobility funding from the 2027/28 academic year.

- **Development of an Erasmus+ Re-association Action Plan:** Develop a comprehensive Action Plan by April 2026, setting out key milestones, governance arrangements, resource considerations, risk mitigation measures, and a draft Communications Plan to ensure coordinated messaging to internal and external stakeholders.

- **Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement:**
  Undertake structured consultation with academic and professional services stakeholders to inform implementation planning. This will include engagement with College Internationalisation Committees, Heads of School and Internationalisation Directors, the Teaching and Learning Committee, the Senate Education Committee, the Study and Work Away Resilience and Development Group, the Students' Association, Student Administration and Lifecycle Management Group, Academic Registry, Finance, and HR Organisational Development.

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23rd February 2026

Freedom of Information: *Open paper.*

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Senate Education Committee

5 March 2026

University of Edinburgh Bristol Case Working Group Action Plan

Content warning

Please be advised that this document contains reference to a situation involving suicide, which some readers may find distressing. Reader discretion is advised.

Description of paper

1. This paper provides information on the development of the University's Bristol Case Working Group Action Plan.

2. This work aligns with the University's Strategy 2030 in the following ways:
   a) We will be a destination of choice, based on our clear "Edinburgh Offer". All of our staff and students will develop here, whether they are from Leith, Lisbon, Lahore or Lilongwe.
   b) We will have more user-friendly processes and efficient systems to support our work.
   c) We aim to achieve excellence in all that we do, always being principled, considerate and respectful.
   d) We foster a welcoming community, where staff, students, alumni and friends feel proud to be part of our University.
   e) We are a place of transformation and of self-improvement, driven to achieve benefit for individuals, communities, societies and our world.
   f) We will encourage and take care of one another. We will provide support in times of difficulty and celebrate every success. We will build relationships that are mutually beneficial, long lasting and constructive.

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**
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

3. Senate Education Committee is asked (a) to note formally the information within the University's Bristol Case Working Group Action Plan (Appendix A); and (b) to support the implementation of the actions contained within the plan.

Background and context

4. In February 2024, a High Court ruling found the University of Bristol had contributed to the death of a student, Natasha Abrahart, by failing to make reasonable adjustments for her. The University of Bristol was found to have both directly and indirectly discriminated against Natasha under the Equality Act (2010). A helpful summary on the ruling can be found here.

5. In July 2024, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) provided an advice note for the higher education sector on this case (commonly referred to as 'The Bristol Case'), and this can be found here.

6. Following discussions with the University's Legal Services and the Director of the Disability Learning and Support Service (DLSS), the Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary Students and the Director of Student Wellbeing decided to establish a multi-disciplinary working group to move the University of Edinburgh's work on this forward and to identify actions to ensure the University is compliant with the Equality Act (2010). The terms of reference of the working group can be found at Appendix B.

Discussion

7. The working group was established in December 2024, chaired by the Director of Student Wellbeing, and it concluded its work in October 2025. It focused on the outcomes of the Bristol Case, and was governed through the Student Lifecycle Management Group (SLMG). It had representation from across the University, including academic staff, student representation, professional services staff and colleagues from all three Colleges. A number of other stakeholders were engaged with the group, including IAD, Academic Services, ISG, Legal Services and HR.

8. Two sub-groups of the main working group were established to drive the work forward. Both sub-groups consisted of academic and professional services staff from across the University.

(a) The Equality Act and Reasonable Adjustments sub-group was chaired by Victoria Buchanan (Director DLSS). It was responsible for policy and guidance, staff training and school-level processes.
(b) The Competence Standards sup group was chaired by Professor Cathy Bovill (formerly IAD, now Head of Academic Development, Academic Quality and Standards). This group focused on defining and planning for auditing the use of competence standards across the University.

9. The sub-groups fed their recommendations back to the working group, and the action plan at Appendix A has been written to provide a comprehensive programme of work for the University in response to the Bristol Case, ensuring compliance with

the Equality Act (2010). The action plan has been agreed by the Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary, Students. The University Secretary is fully aware of this work and supports it.

10. Stakeholder engagement has been a core element of this work from the very outset, and CAM have involved colleagues from the working group in the development of content for regular emails and articles for University staff, updating them of work achieved and plans for next steps. Regular updates have been provided to Student Lifecycle Management Group (SLMG) and colleagues within the Directors of Teaching network have also been engaged. A programme of regular presentations on the Bristol Case to the College Education Committees (CECs) has been agreed, with presentations given to all three committees in semester 1 2025/26. A further update presentation is being provided to the CMVM committee in March 2026, and to both CSE and CAHSS CECs in April 2026.

11. With regard to ongoing governance arrangements for the delivery of this work, Andy Shanks, Victoria Buchanan and Cathy Bovill continue to meet quarterly to track and drive forward progress with the implementation of the action plan, and six-monthly updates to SLMG are provided.

Resource implications

12. Some elements of the implementation of recommendations within this action plan may require additional resources, and this will be raised with relevant managers and committees at the appropriate time.

Risk management

13. Failure to deliver this action plan would mean (a) that the University is at risk of not complying with the Equality Act (2010); (b) that we have not met our strategic ambitions as set out in Strategy 2030; and (c) that there is reputational risk.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

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

Equality & diversity

15. This work supports greater equality, diversity and inclusion for all students within our community, especially those with protected characteristics. Any required Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) will be completed at the appropriate points.

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

16. This work will continue to report at least annually into the Student Lifecycle Management Group. Quarterly meetings with key staff will continue, and updates on specific pieces of work will continue to be communicated by CAM and also through existing networks (e.g. Heads/ Directors of Academic Administration and

Directors of Teaching Network). Further updates can be provided for Senate Education Committee as required.

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Director of Student Wellbeing
11th February 2026

Presenter
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Freedom of Information: *This paper is open*.

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Appendix A – Bristol Case Working Group Action Plan v7.0 (Feb 2026)

Summary of EHRC Action Points (European Human Rights Commission)	Recommended Actions	Action Lead Owner(s)	Timeline	Other required people/ resources
Key Area A	**Policy and Process: compliance with Equality Act 2010 [EHRC Points 10, 19 and UoE Legal Point: 1, 4]**			
EHRC guidance stated: • Ensure all processes and procedures, as well as common practices are compliant with the Equality Act 2010. • Should adjustments not be put in place in a timely way, consider allowing students to re-sit or re-submit assessments without applying for academic appeals and publicise this policy to students.	Existing UoE processes are broadly compliant, for example the Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy (AILP) but policies and processes need to be applied consistently (*see appendix*).			Time of contributors, Additional EqIA Training sessions (ISG),
	Short-term: 1. Victoria B to work with Philip Graham (CAM) to write (i) Awareness- raising communication piece and (ii) web content covering summary of current UoE policies and processes aligned to Equality Act. 2. Victoria to write content for drop-in / bookable training workshops (see c. Staff Training). Priority roles for this level of awareness would be Course Organisers and Programme Directors. 3. Lucy E to work on messaging for senior staff (e.g. Heads of School, Heads of College).	Victoria B and Philip G Victoria B Lucy E	By end of Aug 25 By end of Aug 25 By end of Aug 25 Aug 25	
	Medium term: 4. Develop additional guidance relating to application of policy in practice, specifically in relation to Equality Act.	Victoria B	Start April 2026	

	Longer term: 5. Ensure all new teaching, assessment and supervision policies use Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) and specifically consider disability. Utilise existing training on how to complete EqIAs.	Victoria B Academic Standards & Quality ISG Disability Team	Sept 27/28	
Key Area B	**Define and Review Competence Standards [EHRC points 20, 21, 25 and UoE Legal Point: 4]**	**Action Lead Owner(s)**	**Timeline**	**Other required people/ resources**
EHRC guidance stated: 6. Review course criteria to check that competence standards are clearly defined, explained, and justified, and that methods of assessment are not wrongly described as competence standards. 7. Where competence standards are appropriate, review them to ensure that they are not indirectly discriminatory.	**Short term:** 6. Create text to confirm we are adopting the legal definition of competence standard from section 54 (6) and Schedule 13 of the Equality Act 2010 "A competence standard is an academic, medical or other standard applied for the purpose of determining whether or not a person has a particular level of competence or ability." 7. Provide accompanying guidance including examples, to aid clear understanding of competence standards. 8. For programmes and courses with Professional Regulatory and Statutory Bodies (PRSBs), Cathy to contact colleagues in 3 pilot Schools/ Deaneries in all 3 Colleges and have initial discussion re: (i) Mapping out where and how competence standards are used within programmes. (ii) Ensuring programme staff provide accurate and easily accessible information for prospective and current students.	Cathy B Cathy B Cathy B Reps from Social Work Engineering Vet School	By end of Aug 25 By end of Aug 25 Contact by end of Aug 25 Mapping and pilot work completed by end of July 26	Input from: Programme Directors, HoS, Boards of Studies, College, Governance and QA teams, CAM

	(iii) Clarify where assessment methods to achieve a CS may be adjustable for students who need adjustments. 9. Cathy to link with College colleagues re this process.	Cathy B	By end of Sept 25	
	Medium term: 10. Work with colleagues from 3 programmes who are engaged (Social Work, Engineering, Vets) and start conversation to extend this out to other relevant programmes. 11. Investigate if mapping tool used in CMVM ('Command'), could be used/adapted centrally to help review of programmes and courses. **12.** Schools to review DRPS and web entries for all progs and courses to check where 'competence standard' is used (this may be aligned with routine annual updates and editing to minimise impact). Examine CS use at different stages e.g. end of course, year, or degree, to ensure reasonable adjustments are in place to support learning and assessments and clear info available to students. Consider building this into annual QA cycle within Schools.	Cathy B Cathy B College Governance groups (tbc) and Academic Quality and Standards	Start July 2026, implement July 27 July 2026 Start Sept 2026	

Key Area C	Staff Training [EHRC Points 11, 12, 17, 22, 24 and UoE Legal Point: 1, 2, 4]			
EHRC guidance stated: Staff should be trained on: • duty to make reasonable adjustments; • that adjustments must be made even where a student has not engaged with the Disability and Learning Support Service if there is urgency / severity • know what to do next to obtain support for the student and remove additional stressors • Ensure that academic staff and teaching teams are clear what competence standards are (which must be met), and which are the methods of assessing CS,	Recognising that training 'all staff' would be logistically very difficult, the recommendation is to provide awareness-raising communication to a large staff group, and more targeted specialised training to a smaller staff group of key roles. **Short-term:** 13. Establish what relevant training already exists within the University. 14. Cathy to work with colleagues and Lucy E to identify resourcing for student intern to develop online course. 15. Develop awareness-raising communication e.g. web-based guidance plus email comms to wider staff audience, covering Equality Act duty to make reasonable adjustments. 16. Deliver specific training on Competence Standards alongside developing succinct online resources for colleagues. Initially prioritising the following staff: Boards of Studies Convenors and Administrators, Board of Examiner/Course Board chairs and Regulations Experts; Appeals staff and Complaints Team, Directors of Teaching, Co-ordinators of Adjustments, Academic	Cathy B and Victoria B Cathy B and Lucy E Cathy B and Victoria B Cathy B and Victoria B with Academic Developmentand DLSS colleagues	By Aug 25 By end of Aug 25 By Nov 25 By Dec 26	Contributors: Coordinators of Adjustments, Heads of School, Course Organisers, Colleges, CAM, ISG, Academic Quality and Standards

(which may be reasonably adjusted). • Ensure that academic appeals and complaints staff are trained to distinguish between a competence standard and a method of assessment and challenge the application of the competence standard defence where appropriate.	Development IS, and learning technologists in Schools supporting programme and course design, Heads of School, Programme Directors and Course Organisers. 17. Provide examples of assessment adjustments made for disabled students as guide for staff to understand some relevant possible adjustments.	Cathy B and Victoria B	By end of Oct 25	
	Medium-term: 18. Develop more in-depth training to be delivered online or in-person, smaller audience of specific staff identified as in appropriate decision-making roles within Schools - to ensure knowledge of and confidence in both DLSS and School-level means of putting in place reasonable adjustments. 19. Ongoing training and availability of resources for all teaching teams on competence standards and reasonable adjustments.	DLSS Academic Development and DLSS	By July 26 By July 27	HR will need to be involved. James Saville/ Jo Roger

	Longer-term: **20.** Online / bookable training available for new-entry staff to be classified as 'essential' as part of induction.	Victoria B and Cathy B	For Sept 27/28	
Key Area D	**School Level Processes** **[EHRC Point 14, 15, 16 and UoE Legal Point: 1, 2, 4]**			
EHRC guidance stated: Staff should: • take steps to determine whether to put reasonable adjustments in place; • ensure that a list of common reasonable adjustments is available to academic staff as well as Disability Services; • put in place escalation procedures where staff fail to put in place reasonable adjustments and an assessment is imminent.	While the standard procedure of referring students to DLSS is appropriate in the vast majority of cases, there needs to be consistent School-level processes in place to allow for agile response to urgent cases requiring reasonable adjustments.			Contributors also include: Teaching Office Managers Schools: CoAs, Student Support Managers
	Short-term: **21.** Develop and agree in principle a process to pilot a School-level process for implementation of local-level reasonable adjustments in urgent/acute or severe/serious situations and **22.** Design guidance (similar to and cross-referencing Helping Distressed Students guide) including what is meant by 'urgent' or 'severe' using examples. **23.** Ensure clear channels of communication to DLSS in order to support this process and close the loop via recording of local adjustments. Build this into existing training programmes. **24.** Ensure this is aligned with suite of training and resources outlined above in action plan.	Victoria B Victoria B Victoria B Victoria B and Cathy B	By end of Aug 25 By end of Aug 25 By end of Aug 25 By end of Aug 25	

	Medium-term: 25. Monitor and review process. Provide drop-in / bookable training workshops with DLSS for relevant School staff. This will become standard process.	Victoria B DLSS CoAs	July 2026	
Key Area E	**Assessment Design** **[EHRC Point 23 and UoE Legal Point: 1, 4]**			
EHRC guidance stated: • Consider how methods of [summative] assessment can be adjusted to test the relevant competence standards while accommodating disabilities; • Ideally, compile a list of replacement types of assessment to accommodate specific disabilities.	**Short term:** 26. Create a time limited cross-University project to develop decision tree/ guidance to help staff understand relevant possible adjustments and maintain quality and consistency of approach. 27. Ensure assessment design is part of staff training in section C.	Cathy B and Victoria B with Key College & School contacts Cathy B	Semester 2, 25/26 By Dec 26	Contributions from Academic Quality and Standards
	Medium term: 28. Explore with colleagues (in CSE) where any PRSBs are requesting courses be removed from credit on aggregate – implies passing these courses is equivalent to competence standards. Ensure courses ineligible for credit on aggregate made clear for students and staff.	Cathy B	By end of Aug 26 July 26	

	29. Create a central resource capturing what kinds of adjustments to assessments have been made for particular disabilities and competence standards. 30. Develop some additional example alternative assessments that can be used as reasonable adjustments to support students to meet competence standards.	DLSS and Academic Development DLSS and Academic Development	July 26	
Key Area F	**Ongoing governance**			
• Ensure ongoing governance processes are in place for ensuring good practice in competence standards and reasonable adjustments in assessments. • Explore whether existing programme and school QA reports could be used to audit expected practices. And ensure governance is built into Business as Usual.	**Short term:** 31. Discuss with Stuart Nicol (ISG), Academic Developmentcolleagues, and other School-based key colleagues (e.g. learning technologists) to ensure existing and future programme and course design support and training (e.g. ELDeRs and other workshops) cover accurate guidance on competence standards and reasonable adjustments in assessments. Include reminders to colleagues of available training on Equality Impact Assessments	Cathy B	By Oct 25	Contributors: Practice Leads Co-ordinators of Adjustments
	Medium term: 32. In phase 1 of training roll-out, ensure Programme Directors and Course Organisers are aware of the need to embed awareness of competence standards and reasonable adjustments amongst staff who teach on their courses.	Cathy B School Programme Directors and Course Organisers Cathy B, Registry,	July 26 July 26	HoS, Boards of Studies Convenors, Registry and Academic

	33. Ensure existing programme and course approval mechanisms via Boards of Studies include checks on competence standards. 34. Cathy B to speak with Nichola K (Registry) about this. 35. Ensure existing checks on course and programme information for students includes checks on competence standards information. 36. Embed guidance on competence standards and reasonable adjustments to assessments within course and programme design frameworks, to ensure practice is compliant.	Programme Directors Cathy B, EDE Team (IS) and Academic Development	July 26	Developmentcolleagues running BoS training
	Longer term: 37. Embed regular checks on competence standards information and reasonable adjustments to assessments as part of quality review cycle- Cathy B to link with Nichola Kett.	Cathy B, Registry, Academic Quality and Standards	Sept 27	
Key Area G	**Coordinator of Adjustments Role and Disability Contacts Role**			
The roles of co-ordinator of Adjustments (CoA) and Disability Contact (DC) exist in all Schools but are inconsistent in terms of the substantive role the CoA and DC hold, the amount of time they have available to perform their CoA	38. Victoria to revisit the 2017 work on this and to lead a review of the CoA and DC roles across UoE with the aim of providing visibility, recognition, clarity and consistency of practice. 39. Victoria to set up a short life working group: DLSS, CoAs, DCs, Head of Student Support (Schools)	Victoria B	Begin this work by Sept 2025	

and DC duties, and the responsibilities held by CoAs and DCs in different Schools.				
Key Area H	**Retrospective Exceptional Circumstances**			
Exceptional Circumstances can be applied retrospectively, and are used by some Schools to cover situations where reasonable adjustments have not been in place in time for assessments. However, this practice is inconsistent across Schools and the main EC guidance is very brief on this point.	40. **Recommendation:** conduct a review of how Schools are applying retrospective ECs with the aim of improved consistency and improved guidance. (Lucy to pick this work up as part of Board of Examiners review).	Lucy E	By Sept 2025	

Notes:

- This work is likely to overlap with and need to connect with the Board of Examiners review group, Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group, and possibly APRC.
- Timescales have been adjusted to respond to concerns from Colleges and Schools about the substantial work involved on top of other work.
- All suggested owners and collaborators have not yet been consulted. These are suggested owners and collaborators at this stage.

Current UoE Policies

Policy Name	Guidance on relevance
Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy	Anticipatory reasonable adjustments: - Baseline standards - Guidance on universal design
Lecture Recording Policy	Accessible learning, anticipatory adjustment
Programme and Course Approval and Management Policy	Accessibility - Design courses to be accessible / avoid barriers for protected characteristics
Programme and Course Handbook Policy	Information to students know - key information on their programmes and courses including mode of assessment - signposting to
Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities	Inclusive practice - Inclusive equitable and fair assessment (3.0) - design assessment to minimise need for reasonable adjustments (3.2)
Student Support Framework	Interlinking student support - approach to, and expectations for, the provision of student support
Support for Study Policy	Outcome of Support for Study meetings may require provision of reasonable adjustments.
CMVM Fitness to Practice • GMC Graduate Outcomes • RCVS Day One Competencies	Clarity for CMVM programmes on where competencies need to be considered in relation to reasonable adjustments.
Taught Assessment Regulations	Regulation 14: Statement of assessment - Information to students in advance of how and when they will be assessed Regulation 19: Reasonable adjustments - Adjustments will be made to assessments for disabled students Regulation 23: Oral assessment - Guidance on oral performance as mode of assessment
Exceptional Circumstances Policy	Where adjustments are not possible / reasonable (e.g. in timeframe), students should be referred to Exceptional Circumstances

Appendix B

The University of Edinburgh
Bristol Case Short-Life Working Group
Terms of Reference

1. Purpose and Remit

1.1 The purpose of this group is to identify key recommendations and actions that the University of Edinburgh needs to implement in order to ensure it is compliant with the Equality Act (2010) within the context of the outcomes of the legal case of University of Bristol vs Abrahart ("The Bristol Case").

1.2 The remit of this group is to ensure the University has taken into consideration all outcomes of The Bristol Case.

1.3 This group will write an action plan which provides comprehensive information on the actions which need to be implemented, with clear timelines and responsibilities and communications to staff.

2. Governance

2.1 This group will report on progress and outcomes to the Student Lifecycle Management Group.

2.2 This will be done through a short initial report by March 2025, and then three-monthly update reports through to the conclusion of the work and the production of the action plan.

2.3 Ongoing monitoring of the delivery of the action plan will be through the Student Lifecycle Management Group.

2.4 Periodic advice on the work of the group will be provided by the University's Legal Services as and when required.

2.5 The action plan with recommendations will need to be agreed through appropriate University governance, including Senate Education Committee and University Executive.

3. Operation

3.1 The short-life working group will meet first in December 2024, and will then meet monthly for an initial period of up to 9 months (until August 2025).

3.2 Further meetings will be scheduled if required.

3.2 A note of each meeting will be provided for all members, with clear actions identified.

3.3 The group will also communicate electronically between meetings to discuss relevant issues and progress actions. An MS Teams site will be created for discussion and sharing of documents.

3.4 Secretarial support for the group will be provided by Student Experience Services.

4. Composition

4.1 The group will be chaired and convened by Andy Shanks, Director of Student Wellbeing.

4.2 Other group members will be:

- College Heads/ Director of Academic Administration
- Director of Internal Communications
- Senior Policy and Projects Adviser, Students
- Director of the Institute for Academic Development
- Director of the Disability and Learning Support Service
- College Deans of Learning and Teaching

5. Responsibilities and Expectations of Implementation Group Members

All members of the short-life working group:

5.1 Are expected to be collegial and constructive in approach.

5.2 Should attend regularly and participate fully in the work of the group. This will involve looking ahead and consulting/gathering input in order to provide the broad spectrum of thoughts and opinions which are necessary for proper consideration of the areas being discussed.

5.3 Will need to take collective and individual ownership for the issues under the group's remit and for the discussion and resolution of these issues. In taking ownership of the work of the group, members should take steps to ensure that they are empowered to take decisions on behalf of academic and managerial colleagues.

5.4 Are expected to be committed to communicating the work of the group to the wider University community.

November 2024

Senate Education Committee

5 March 2026

Learning and Teaching Workstream Update

Description of paper

1. The purpose of this paper is to provide the members of Senate Education Committee (SEC) with an update on the work of the Learning and Teaching Workstream. One of five workstreams established to consider project activity that enable cost reduction and achieve wider benefits for the organisation aligned to our strategic objectives.

2. Specifically, to provide an update on strategically-led initiatives and university-wide changes designed to enhance the educational experience of students and learners that are within the portfolio of the Learning and Teaching Workstream link to Senate Education Committee.

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

3. Senate Education Committee is asked to note the content of the paper and provide comment on what would be usefully provided as regular updates for future meetings.

Background and context

4. The University has a series of strategic initiatives that bring together colleagues from across the organisation to work on projects that help achieve the goals set out in Strategy 2030.These are supported by the University Initiatives Portfolio Board, five Workstream Boards and other governance structures, including Senate and its sub committees.

5. The Learning and Teaching Workstream Leadership comprises of Lucy Evans and Matthias Schwannauer as Sponsor and Lead respectively and with membership including all College Deans of Education, Deputy Vice Principal Students, three Heads of Schools, Deputy Head of CAHSS and EUSA President and VP Education. The Workstream headline states ‘Our student experience is not yet equal to the reputation of our world-leading research. Through changes to our curriculum, teaching, assessment, feedback, and administrative structures, we intend to ensure our students thrive at Edinburgh, mitigate risk to student recruitment, and improve our rankings’.

6. The remit of the Learning and Teaching Workstream Board has evolved since its initial inception in April 2025, as the overall University needs have been identified and activities prioritised by UIPB and University Executive.

7. A summary of Workstreams and associated projects is included as Appendix 1.

8. The current remit is:
   a) Projects L&T Workstream directly accountable for: The workstream holds direct accountability for: ability for Timetabling and Course Selection, Boards of Examiners, Tuition Fee Improvements, Student Record System Replacement and the Student Administration Review (Phase 2), each requiring structured reporting and escalation routes.
   b) Projects L&T workstream receives reports on for oversight:
      - Student Administration (Phase 1) – primary report Professional Services Group of Staff Workstream
      - Academic Size and Shape – primary report Staff Workstream.
      - Curriculum Development – primary report L&T Strategy Implementation Group and Senate Education Committee (SEC)
      - Assessment and Feedback – primary report Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group and SEC
      - Future Students e.g., Market Insight – primary report Future Students Committee and Uni Executive.
      - LOUISA ISG – primary report Learning, Teaching and Student Sub Committee of the Strategic IT Committee and SEC.
   c) Future pipeline planning of projects identified to enable effective delivery, especially of Academic Size and Shape and Student Administration Review to maximise strategic and financial outcomes.

9. The Workstream Board regularly reviews project updates, budgets, risks and cross-project dependencies.

Discussion

10. The majority of members of SEC have responsibilities relating to workstream governance, projects, the leadership coalition and/or people manager responsibilities. The ongoing engagement and contribution of the members of SEC to deliver the outcomes of the Learning and Teaching workstream will be of significance.

11. **Senate Education Committee is asked to consider what would be usefully provided as regular updates in addition to those already provided** via dedicated papers to Sente and its Sub-Committees, including Senate Education Committee and via engagement opportunities, for example the Timetabling and Course Selection Project recently held three Roadshows, College Committees and via Project SharePoint sites, accessible via this link.

    For this update a short summary is provided for each project as follows:

12. **Board of Examiners**.
    - Will improve board of examiners processes to reduce pressure on staff and provide more consistent outcomes for students.
    - Training for pilot Schools has been completed; team providing ongoing support. Pilot evaluation has been undertaken with Colleges, Pilot User Group and Critical Friends with feedback being reviewed. APRC have endorsed the Late EC process changes. Communications have been made to External Examiners about planned changes. The team are modelling proposed Programme Decision Tree thresholds.

13. Teaching Timetabling and Course Selection.
    - Will provide students with a stable, detailed, accurate timetable for the whole academic year ahead of their start date. To make sure students are offered a suite of courses that are actually available to them, and that the parameters of their choice is transparent and well explained. Improve working practices for staff.
    - Evaluation and Monitoring of early stages of solution design with working assumptions is to be tested with user groups, critical friends, covering: academic planning policy and principles, standardised academic planning processes, teaching availability across the teaching week, Path future development.

14. **Tuition Fee Improvements.**
    - Will implement a more effective approach to collecting tuition fees, with clearer guidance and experience for students. To improve the University's cash flow and our students' experience by collecting fees earlier, with fewer errors.
    - Focused on developments for scholarships and application deposits.

15. **Student Records System replacement scoping.**
    - Discovery phase which will define the objectives and approach for developing an Options Appraisal for the future Student Record System.
    - High-level business process mapping underway across functions and evaluate the business processes within the student life cycle. To evaluate our readiness for Cloud adoption and provide informed insights into costs and options. To understand and inform key strengths and weaknesses of our systems and data flows, and opportunities to enhance staff efficiencies and streamline processes to present options that can be considered for strategic alignment.
    - Future stages of this project will likely require set up of full University-wide project governance with wide reporting.

16. **Curriculum Development, including Assessment and Feedback.** (Primary report L&T Strategy Implementation and Assessment Strategy Groups and Senate Education Committee)
    - Will be part of the implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030. Currently focused on the implementation of the Skills for Success

Framework, Challenge Courses and AI for teaching introduced in some areas, with further roll out in 2026/27.

- As part of the implementation of the strategy, we will continue to prioritise implementation of the Assessment and Feedback (A&F) Principles and Priorities. Continuing our priority to improve feedback turnaround times, marking rubrics and ensure that our digital systems (e.g. our VLE – see LOUISA Project) supports and enables us to deliver on our ambitions for assessment and feedback.
- The first meeting of Curriculum Development & Innovation Group has taken place. The Project Initiation Document is in development. The A&F Policy is being finalised.
- Engagement activity via Roadshows with all staff invited and dedicated sessions with Trade Unions ongoing.

17. **LOUISA (Learn Optimised for In-course Submission and Assessments).** (Primary report Learning, Teaching and Student Sub Committee of the Strategic IT Committee and Senate Education Committee).
    - Will continue improvements to the VLE, Learn, streamlining common assessment types, removing unnecessary complexities and creating a more user-friendly experience for all. To improve our staff and student experience by allowing coursework and assignments to be uploaded and accessed easily, with consistent high-quality, timely feedback provided.
    - Now directly linking with strategy-led work of SEC on Assessment and Feedback to assess project deliverables to achieve strategic intentions.

18. **Market Insights.** (Primary report Future Students Committee and Uni Executive)
    - Will better use market insights to understand what prospective students are looking for so we can consider adapting our education portfolio to their needs. This will feed into programme design and review, portfolio management and student recruitment.
    - Project Initiation Document discussed and approved by Workstream Board. Work to be discussed at Future Students Committee (25 February 2026).

19. **Academic Size and Shape.** (Primary report: Staff Workstream).
    - Will change how we plan and resource teaching, research and innovation to make sure our portfolio remains sustainable while delivering a high-quality experience.
    - The work has three elements: Principles, Design, and Implementation. The Principles were established first to provide a coherent basis that can support work in Schools in all Colleges to address our current financial situation. The Implementation phase oversees how Schools apply these Principles to shape local structures. The Design phase constructs the evidence base and modelling tools for the long-term Framework.
    - Engagement activity includes upcoming discussion at Senate and dedicated sessions with Trade Unions ongoing.
    - As the work on the Framework develops, we expect any specific education-related policy to be the responsibility of Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee.

20. **Student Administration Review.** (Phase 1) – primary report into Professional Services Group of Staff Workstream).
    - Will reshape our student administration across the University to realise an exceptional and efficient service for our staff and students, including reducing duplication and delivering consistency through improved policies and processes.
    - Focused on key stage deliverables: As-Is analytics, benefit profiles, Project administration, Subject Matter Experts onboarding, stakeholder engagement, including with Trade Unions and governance assurance.
    - Phase 2 focused on policy, process and systems will be fully accountable to the Learning and Teaching Workstream.

Resource implications

21. No resource implications as information sharing only.

Risk management

22. The sharing of information and subsequent discussion at the meeting aims to mitigate any risk of misalignment or duplication of governance responsibilities between Senate Education Committee and the Learning and Teaching Workstream.
23. The Learning and Teaching Workstream and each project has its own risk assessment.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

24. The overall workstream portfolio objectives are aligned to ensuring the University has a financially sustainable academic future and that we optimise the use of our human, physical and digital assets in support of this. This aligns to SGD04 Quality Education and SGD08 Decent Work and Economic Growth.

Equality & diversity

25. Each project under the oversight of the Learning and Teaching Workstream has its own EQIA, where appropriate.

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

26. We will provide regular updates to the University community on the various activities of the Workstream as the work develops, with consultation through University governance, as appropriate.

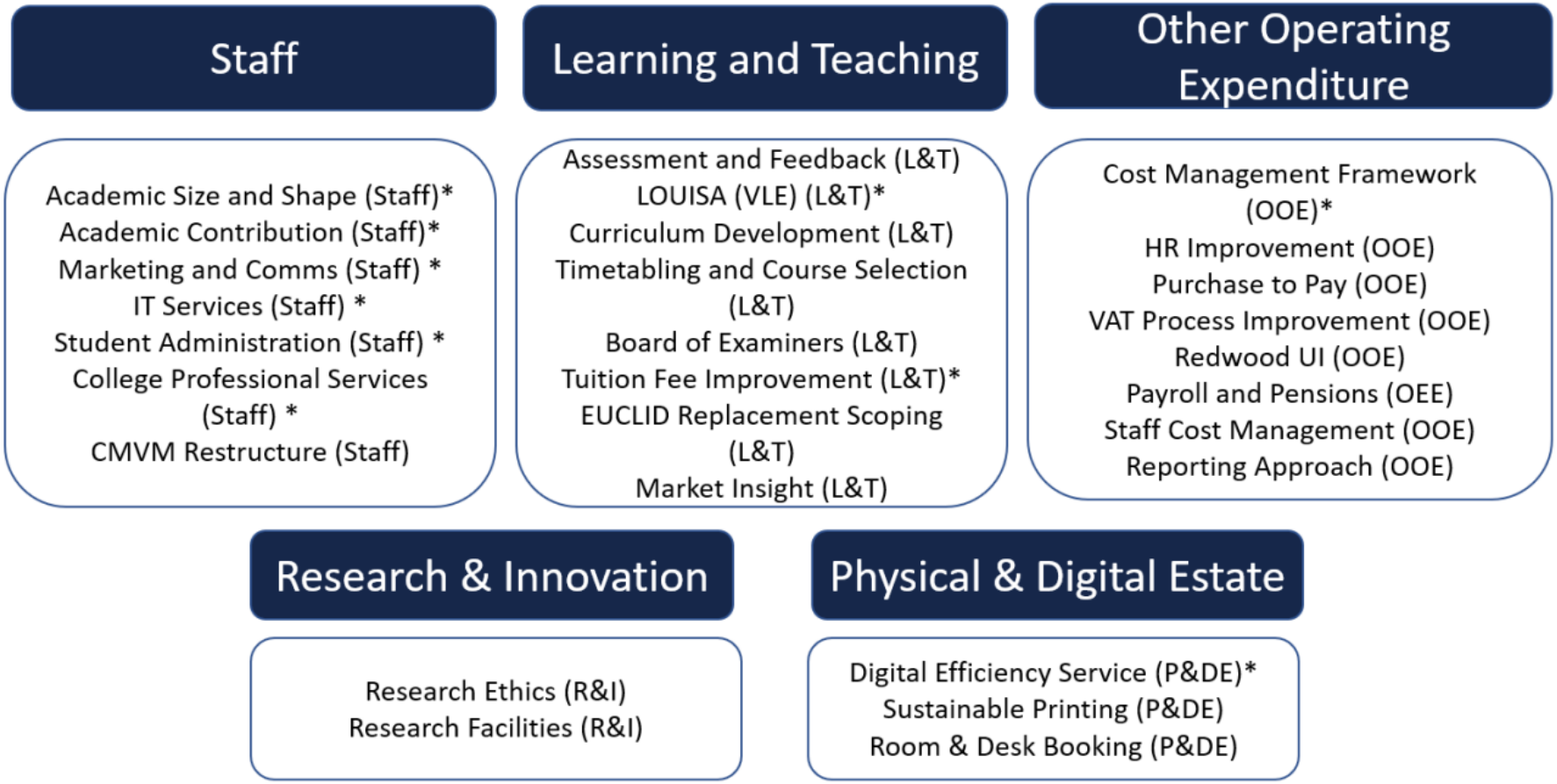
Author
Lucy Evans, Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary Students;
Sponsor of Learning and Teaching Workstream

Presenter
Lucy Evans

Freedom of Information: *The paper is open.*

If you require this document in an alternative format, such as large print or a coloured background, please contact academic.quality@ed.ac.uk or Academic Quality and Standards, Old College, South Bridge, Edinburgh, EH8 9YL.

Appendix 1 – UIPB Portfolio of projects



*Priority One Projects (noting Digital Efficiency Service is subject to further review following initial planning stage)

Senate Education Committee

5 March 2026

Learning Materials Accessibility Review: changes since last year

Description of paper

1. This paper provides the Senate Education Committee (SEC) with an update on the annual Accessibility Reviews conducted via the Learn Service. SEC reviewed the 2023/24 AY accessibility results in March 2025. This paper for February 2026 highlights school improvements, challenges and changes in practice identified from the 2025 review.

2. This paper contributes to the Strategy 2030 by supporting colleagues to make their online course instances accessible:

    a. We will have more user-friendly processes and efficient systems to support our work.

    b. We will widen participation so that students from any background can come to study with us. We will offer accessible, responsive and efficient educational services as well as personal, pastoral and professional support.

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**
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

3. This paper is **for noting** only.

Background and context

4. In 2019, Learning, Teaching and Web (LTW) introduced an annual internship (the Learn Foundations Internship), employing student interns each summer to help with course preparations.

5. As part of the interns' work, each year, a random selection of courses are reviewed against an accessibility matrix (Appendix One) to provide an indication of the accessibility of course materials within the Learn Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

6. An overview of the individual School Accessibility Reviews can be found in the All Schools and Deaneries Intern Audit Data. A shorter overview containing just overall percentage and comparison with previous year scores is available in Appendix Three .

7. Each School (via Head of School and local Learning Technologist) received an accessibility report based on the analysis undertaken, which highlights areas where the School performed well and areas for improvement. These reviews are available whenever required via the sharepoint site.

8. The accessibility matrix has been designed to enable the accessibility reviews against the WCAG 2.2 guidelines.

9. It is important to note that only a snapshot selection of content is reviewed within the selected courses, providing an accessibility overview. No courses have 100% of content reviewed.

10. At the 2025 SEC meeting, the Director of LTW provided an update on the 23/24 AY accessibility reviews, including an overview of which schools had gained good results and highlighting training needs in areas of poorer performance.

11. This paper follows on from the March 2025 paper presented, providing an overview of the 24/25 AY accessibility reviews conducted via the summer Learn Foundations Interns working June-August 2025.

12. 394 courses from across each of the 25 Schools and Deaneries were reviewed against a defined selection of accessibility criteria. This review surveyed a random selection of materials uploaded, URLs, images, audio files, and more. Around 3,000 documents, URLs, audio, text, and image files were reviewed.

13. As part of the Learn Upgrade in 2023, an integrated accessibility tool (Ally) was made available to support colleagues to create accessible content within courses. A separate report, based solely on Ally information (Appendix Two), was disseminated alongside the intern created accessibility reports. Ally data complements the intern audit by providing a macro level view whereas the intern data provides more specific insights.

14. An important note for the 2025 audit data: We have reconfigured audit criteria this year to align better with evolving expectations for course materials and to reflect changes to the technology which improve accessibility. For example, we no longer check for blocks of capital or italic text, but we have added criteria for

accurate file and folder descriptions, which impact users' ability to easily navigate course materials. As a result, most Schools will see a lower accessibility score this year, but one more reflective of course functionality. We are confident these changes will help more effectively identify and support less accessible content.

15. For the first time this year all reviews were made available across the institution, at any time, through the Learn Accessibility Review Sharepoint. This provides a single source for all reports, advice and support, it was designed, created and populated by our Learn Foundations Interns under the supervision of the Learn Service.

Discussion

16. The review is based on the key criteria detailed within Appendix One, specifically those of greatest benefit as per government guidance. This includes the following criteria:
    a. Course compliance with the accessibility regulations (WCAG 2.2 AA compliant);
    b. Naming convention of documents, folders, and links for consistency and predictability;
    c. Availability of alternative format tagline in content and alternative text for images;
    d. Subtitles and/or transcripts available for video/audio content.

17. All Schools and deaneries are now included in the review.

18. 7% of courses from each School and Deanery were analysed as part of the accessibility review in 2025. This follows advice from the data and equality officer to ensure this was a statistically valid and representative data set.

19. Accessibility review 2025 headlines:
    a. From the courses reviewed, the University of Edinburgh was found to be 62% compliant, a decrease of 17% from 2024 (this was due to the change in auditing explained above but will provide a more realistic and useful measure going forward):
        i. **Documents:** 58% compliance – a decrease of 13% from 2024.
        ii. **URLs:** 88% compliance – remains constant.
        iii. **Audio/Video:** 59% compliance – a decrease of 7% from 2024.
    b. Key challenges identified:
        i. **Naming convention:** 11% of documents reviewed were found to be named inappropriately – therefore not allowing students to understand what would be contained within the document before being opened.
        ii. **Alternative Format Statement:** Only 1% of all documents reviewed contained an alternative format statement to make students aware of who they should contact should they wish to request the document in an alternative format. (This could be mitigated by the easy availability of alternative formats through Ally)
        iii. **Subtitles:** 59% of audio and video files provided subtitles.
        iv. **Transcripts:**38% of audio and video files provided a transcript to support the file. (increase from 13% in 2024).
        v. **Alternative Text:** 41% of images provided alternative text to support screen readers in identifying the purpose of the image.

c. Changes in Practice:
   The Ally tool provides colleagues with the opportunity to review their accessibility as they create their courses each year. This supports colleagues in creating accessible courses and provides students with an easy way to obtain alternative formats of content without the need to ask their course team.

20. Details on all the accessibility reviews, insights, and recommended guidance can be viewed in the Learn Accessibility Review Sharepoint.

Resource implications

21. There is potentially a resource requirement for any colleague who may need to amend content within their course to make this accessible, and this should be assessed at school level.
22. We give a prioritised and tailored list of three recommendations for each school along with the specific instructions on how to address them within the reports. Specific recommendations for each School and Deanery have been summarised in Appendix Four.
23. We recommend that to maintain and improve accessibility of content every School should, where it does not already exist, put in place accessibility training for staff. Useful resources include:

Increasing accessibility of your teaching using learning technology (Self-led course)
Increasing the accessibility of your teaching using Learning Technology (Synchronous session)

Risk management

24. By having inaccessible content within the VLE, this can impact:
    a. Risk of not supporting the University to reach its goals to widen participation, improve the student and staff experience and progress strategic projects focussed on reviewing the curriculum.
    b. Risk to student and staff experience around accessibility of content within the VLE.
    c. Risk that the University does not meet the current government accessibility requirements for public sector websites and apps.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

25. UNSDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Equality & diversity

26. Use of the VLE supports the Accessible and Inclusive Learning policy in a variety of ways, enhancing the student experience at the University of Edinburgh:
    a. Enhanced accessibility with Learn being built with Universal Design in mind.

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

27. All communication, implementation and evaluation activities are being actively managed via the Learn service and have been detailed throughout this paper.
28. The specific school actions outlined in Appendix 4 should be discussed within each school, with relevant training proposed to meet these needs and any additional training requirements reviewed.

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February 2025

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Appendix One

Documents (Doc, Excel, PPT, PDF)
Clear folder name
Folder description
Clear file name
File description
Sans-serif font
Left or right justification
Information is **not** conveyed by colour alone
Alternative format statement present
Video/Audio
Clear folder name
Folder description
Clear file name
File description
Audio/video duration indicated
Subtitles (or 'no audio' indicator)
Subtitles meaningful
Transcript available
Images
Alt text present
Alt text meaningful
Hyperlinks
Contextualised with clear destination

Appendix Two

The document contains images without a description
The document has contrast issues
The document's heading structure goes beyond six levels
The document does not have any headings
The document does not have a sequential heading structure
The document heading structure does not start at one
The HTML content contains broken links
The HTML content has videos without captions or with automated captions
The HTML content contains text with insufficient contrast
The HTML content has definition lists with issues
The HTML content has empty headings
The HTML content has table headers that don't have any content
The HTML content does not have a language set
The HTML content does not have an appropriate heading structure
The HTML content does not have any headings
The HTML heading structure does not start at the right level
The HTML content contains images without a description
The HTML content has links or buttons with redundant text
The HTML content has form elements without a label
The HTML content contains links without discernible text
The HTML content has malformed lists
The HTML content has embedded objects without alternative descriptions
The HTML content has tables that don't have any headers
The HTML content is missing a title
The image has contrast issues
Image desription and caption are redundant
The image does not have a description
The image has text that is not part of the alternative description
The image can induce seizures
The document language is not set correctly
The document does not have a language set
The document has issues with a library reference?
The document is scanned and OCRed
This doccument is corrupted and cannot be opened
The document is scanned but not OCRed
The document is encrypted
The document has tables that don't have any headers
The document is untagged
The document is missing a title

Appendix Three

School/Deanery	2025	2024	Change
Edinburgh Medical School	73%	70%	3%
Edinburgh Law School	72%	83%	-11%
School of Divinity	71%	74%	-3%
Royal (Dick) Vet School	68%	84%	-16%
School of Physics & Astronomy	67%	88%	-21%
School of Health in Social Sciences	67%	77%	-10%
School of History, Classics and Archaeology	66%	73%	-7%
Usher Institute	66%	84%	-18%
Moray House School of Education and Sport	66%	80%	-14%
School of Engineering	66%	85%	-19%
Business School	65%	86%	-21%
School of Informatics	65%	80%	-15%
Deanery of Biomedical Sciences	63%	72%	-9%
Deanery of Clinical Sciences	62%	70%	-8%
School of Social and Political Science	61%	85%	-24%
Edinburgh College of Art	60%	78%	-18%
School of Biological Sciences	59%	84%	-25%
School of GeoSciences	59%	76%	-17%
School of Chemistry	57%	77%	-20%
School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures	56%	76%	-20%
Centre for Open Learning	56%	78%	-22%
School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences	55%	81%	-26%
Edinburgh Futures Institute	50%	85%	-35%
School of Mathematics	49%	80%	-31%
School of Economics	43%	74%	-31%

Appendix Four

The school report contains recommendations for improving accessibility in Learn. The prioritised recommendations for each school are:

School/Deanery	1	2	3
Edinburgh Medical School	Ensure Information is Not Conveyed by Colour Alone	Add Audio/Video File Duration to the Title of Audio/Video Files	Add Descriptions to Files and Folders
Edinburgh Law School	Add Transcripts to Audio/Video Files - see guidance on uploading to MediaHopper	Add Descriptions to Files and Folders	Add Alternative Format Statements Within Files
School of Divinity	Add Descriptions to Files and Folders	Add Audio/Video File Duration to the Title of Audio/Video Files	Add Alternative Format Statements Within Files
Royal (Dick) Vet School	Add Meaningful Alternative Text to Images	Add Audio/Video File Duration to the Title of Audio/Video Files	Add Descriptions to Files and Folders
School of Physics & Astronomy	Add Transcripts and Subtitles to Audio/Video Files - see guidance on uploading to MediaHopper	Add Audio/Video File Duration to the Title of Audio/Video Files	Add Descriptions to Files and Folders
School of Health in Social Sciences	Add Transcripts to Audio/Video Files - see guidance on uploading to MediaHopper	Add Audio/Video File Duration to the Title of Audio/Video Files	Add Descriptions to Files and Folders
School of History, Classics and Archaeology	Add Transcripts to Audio/Video Files - see guidance on uploading to MediaHopper	Add Meaningful Alternative Text to Images	Add Audio/Video File Duration to the Title of Audio/Video Files
Usher Institute	Add Meaningful Alternative Text to Images	Add Descriptions to Files and Folders	Add Alternative Statements Within Files
Moray House School of Education and Sport	Add Transcripts and Subtitles to Audio/Video Files - see guidance on uploading to MediaHopper	Add Descriptions to Files and Folders	Add Audio/Video File Duration to the Title of Audio/Video Files
School of Engineering	Add Subtitles to Audio/Video Files - see guidance on uploading to MediaHopper	Add Audio/Video File Duration to the Title of Audio/Video Files	Add Descriptions to Files and Folders
Business School	Add Transcripts to Audio/Video Files - see guidance on uploading to MediaHopper	Add Descriptions to Files and Folder	Add Audio/Video Duration to the Title of Audio/Video Files

School of Informatics	Add Transcripts to Audio/Video Files - see guidance on uploading to MediaHopper	Add Descriptions to Files and Folders	Add Audio/Video File Duration to the Title of Audio/Video Files
Deanery of Biomedical Sciences	Add Transcripts to Audio/Video Files - see guidance on uploading to MediaHopper	Add Meaningful Alternative Text to Images	Add Descriptions to Files and Folders
Deanery of Clinical Sciences	Add Transcripts to Audio/Video Files - see guidance on uploading to MediaHopper	Add Meaningful Alternative Text to Images	Add Descriptions to Files and Folders
School of Social and Political Science	Add Meaningful Alternative Text to Images	Add Audio/Video File Duration to the Title of Audio/Video Files	Add Descriptions to Files and Folders
Edinburgh College of Art	Add Transcripts and Subtitles to Audio/Video Files - see guidance on uploading to MediaHopper	Add Meaningful Alternative Text to Images	Add Descriptions to Files and Folders
School of Biological Sciences	Add Meaningful Alternative Text to Images	Add Audio/Video File Duration to the Title of Audio/Video Files	Add Descriptions to Files and Folders
School of GeoSciences	Add Transcripts to Audio/Video Files - see guidance on uploading to MediaHopper	Add Meaningful Alternative Text to Images	Add Descriptions to Files and Folders
School of Chemistry	Add Transcripts and Subtitles to Audio/Video Files - see guidance on uploading to MediaHopper	Ensure Information is Not Conveyed by Colour Alone	Add Descriptions to Files and Folders
School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures	Add Transcripts to Audio/Video Files - see guidance on uploading to MediaHopper	Add Descriptions to Files and Folders	Add Audio/Video File Duration to the Title of Audio/Video Files
Centre for Open Learning	Add Transcripts and Subtitles to Audio/Video Files - see guidance on uploading to MediaHopper	Add Descriptions to Files and Folders	Add Alternative Format Statements Within Files
School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences	Add Meaningful Alternative Text to Images	Add Audio/Video File Duration to the Title of Audio/Video Files	Add Descriptions to Files and Folders
Edinburgh Futures Institute	Add Transcripts to Audio/Video Files - see guidance on uploading to MediaHopper	Add Meaningful Alternative Text to Images	Add Audio/Video File Duration to the Title of Audio/Video Files

School of Mathematics	Ensure the Usage of Accessible Fonts (Sans Serif Fonts)	Ensure Left/Right Justification is Used Within Files	Add Descriptions to Files and Folders
School of Economics	Add Descriptions to Files and Folders	Add Audio/Video File Duration to the Title of Audio/Video Files	Add Alternative Format Statements Within Files

Senate Education Committee

5 March 2026

Committee Priorities: Mid-Year Reflection

Description of paper

1. The paper provides an update on progress with the priorities of Senate Education Committee for 2025/26.

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 **note** the paper and **comment** on progress with the Committee priorities for 2025/26 in order to inform area(s) of focus and/or actions/outcomes for the remainder of the academic year, as appropriate.

Background and context

3. The Committee agreed its priorities for 2025/26 at its meeting in May 2025 and these were presented to Senate in May 2025.

Discussion

Committee Priorities 2025/26

Curriculum Development

4. While it was noted that the Curriculum Transformation Programme (CTP) Board is no longer operational, a verbal update was provided to the Committee in **September 2025** to highlight 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. A verbal overview of the wider Learning and Teaching workstream was provided to the Committee at its **November 2025** meeting. Members were additionally directed to the workstream's SharePoint hub which provides further details around specific projects taking place as part of the wider workstream. Further substantive updates on specific L&T workstream projects will be brought to future meetings of SEC, while remaining cognisant of the Committee's remit.

6. At its **November 2025** meeting, the Committee endorsed the proposal to establish the Curriculum Development and Innovation Group (CDIG). CDIG will provide 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.

7. In **November 2025**, the Edinburgh Futures Institute (EFI) Challenge Courses Lead provided an update on the suite of pilot Challenge Courses developed as part of the Curriculum Transformation Programme (CTP) since 2023. The Committee endorsed the proposal for the Challenge Course Lead and the relevant oversight group to continue work on exploring options for defining what Business As Usual will look like in practice, prior to returning to SEC with a formal proposal for approval later in 2025/26.

Learning and Teaching Strategy implementation and evaluation

8. In **September 2025**, the Committee received a verbal update on the progress of the Learning and Teaching Strategy's implementation. Members noted that discussions were 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.

9. At its **November 2025** meeting, the Committee noted that, given the formal launch of the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030 in June 2025, governance arrangements are now required to be established in order to support the effective implementation of the Strategy. The Committee endorsed proposals to establish the Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Group (LTSIG) as a sub-group of SEC. LTSIG will 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.

Assessment and Feedback

10. A verbal update was provided to the Committee in **September 2025**, noting 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.

11. The Committee received an update during its **November 2025** meeting on the development of the new Assessment and Feedback Policy. Members were informed that the Assessment and Feedback and Strategy Group met in October 2025, where an initial policy draft was reviewed. The Strategy Group agreed that the policy should seek to incorporate a position on assessment across a number of thematic areas based on developments within the University and across the Higher Education sector.

12. A workshop involving members of APRC, SEC and the Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group was held in **December 2025** to further consider the draft policy. The workshop considered the following thematic areas: implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy; generative AI; recommendations from the Bristol Case Working Group.

13. The Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group met in **February 2026** to review and finalise the draft Assessment and Feedback policy, prior to it coming to SEC for discussion at its March 2026 meeting.

Student support model – support for ongoing implementation

14. In **September 2025**, the Committee noted the University's 2025 results across the National Student Survey (NSS), Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES). As part of the University's response to these results, members noted that the University will

continue to focus on significant areas of work that are long-term fundamental changes to our student experience. This includes: ensuring fidelity to the Student Support Model; student wellbeing as a triage to our services for more complex needs; cohort activities to build communities; fostering a greater sense of students and their experiences being the University's highest priority.

15. The Committee will consider the proposal to establish a short-life working group focusing on Postgraduate Research (PGR) School-level pastoral student support at its March 2026 meeting.

Resource implications

16. This paper does not propose any new actions. The resource implications of any additional actions which arise from the discussion would need to be outlined and considered.

Risk management

17. The paper raises no additional risks. Failure to fulfil remit raises potential risks associated with the University's framework of academic policy and regulations and the student experience.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

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

Equality & diversity

19. This paper does not propose any actions. The equality and diversity implications any actions which arise from the discussion would need to be outlined and considered.

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

20. Senate received a mid-year reflection on progress toward the 2025/26 standing committee priorities at its March meeting and receives information on committee business through the routine upcoming business paper. Additionally, the Senate Committees' Newsletter provides information on standing committee business.

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Academic Quality and Standards Manager
Academic Quality and Standards

Presenter

Professor Tina Harrison
Deputy Vice-Principal Students (Enhancement)

February 2026

Freedom of Information: *Open*

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Senate Education Committee

5th March 2026

Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation: Terms of Reference

Description of paper

1. The paper outlines the finalised Terms of Reference for the Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Group (LTSIG) and the Curriculum Development and Innovation Group (CDIG). Both groups will help support the effective implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030.

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 note the finalised Terms of Reference documents.

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"*

6. At its November 2025 meeting, SEC endorsed the proposal to establish LTSIG and CDIG, subject to their remits and memberships being finalised in reflection of the Committee's discussion of this item. It was agreed that the Deputy Vice Principal Students (Enhancement) would seek to finalise the Terms of Reference for LTSIG and CDIG, and subsequently circulate these documents to the SEC membership.

Discussion

7. 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.

8. The first meeting of LTSIG took place in February 2025, with discussions focussing on the LTS 2030 implementation plan and the Curriculum Development project. The first meeting of CDIG also took place in February 2025.

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.

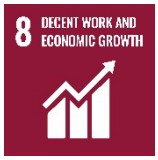
Risk management

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. LTSIG and CDIG will routinely report into SEC. Formal updates and recommendations will be communicated to SEC.

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February 2026

Freedom of Information: *Open*

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Appendix A:

Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Group

Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

The Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Group (LTSIG) is 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 Group[1], and Schools.
   c. Produce progress and assurance reports for Senate Education 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 Senate Education 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.

Name	Title/Role	School/Unit	Representing
Professor Tina Harrison	Deputy Vice Principal Students (Chair)	Business School	Senate Education Committee
Lucy Evans	Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary Students	University Secretary's Group	University Secretary's Group
Lauren Harrison	Senior Project Officer	Academic Quality and Standards	Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation
Sinead Docherty	Academic Policy Manager	Academic Quality and Standards	Academic Quality
Professor Cathy Bovill	Head of Academic Development	Academic Development	Academic Development
Professor Mary Brennan	Dean of Education (CAHSS)	CAHSS/Business School	CAHSS
Professor Linda Kirstein	Dean of Education (CSE)	CSE/Geosciences	CSE
Professor Gill Aitken	Dean of Education (CMVM)	CMVM/Edinburgh Medical School	CMVM
Dr Lisa Kendall	Director of Academic & Student Administration, CAHSS	CAHSS	CAHSS

Name	Title/Role	School/Unit	Representing
Alex Laidlaw	Head of Strategic Education – Operations, CMVM	CMVM	CMVM
Lorna Halliday	Head of Student Lifecycle, CSE	CSE	CSE
Katya Amott	Vice President Education, Edinburgh University Students' Association	Edinburgh University Students' Association	Student interests
Patience Mulungi	Postgraduate Research Student Representative	Edinburgh University Students' Association	Student interests
Heather Innes	Academic Engagement and Policy Coordinator	Edinburgh University Students' Association	Student interests
Professor Sian Bayne	Assistant Principal Education Futures	Moray House School of Education and Sport	Digital Education
Dr Paul Norris	Senior Lecturer Social Policy	School of Social and Political Sciences (CAHSS)/Academic Quality and Standards secondee (curriculum, policy and regulations)	Chair of Curriculum Development and Innovation Group
Shelagh Green	Head of Careers Service and Lead for Skills for Success Framework	Careers Service	Skills for Success Framework
Dr Ben Bateman	Director of Teaching (UG and PGT)	School of Literature, Languages and Cultures	CAHSS Director of Teaching perspective
Professor Dave Laurenson	Director of Teaching (UG and PGT)	School of Engineering	CSE Director of Teaching perspective
Alex Corbishley	Director of Teaching	Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies	CMVM Director of Teaching perspective
Professor Juan Cruz	Head of School	Edinburgh College of Art	CAHSS Head of School perspective
Professor Bernd Schroers	Head of School	School of Mathematics	CSE Head of School perspective
Professor David Kluth	Head of School	Edinburgh Medical School	CMVM Head of School perspective

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 (LTSIG). 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 specifically 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.
- **Support the embedding of climate and sustainability in the curriculum**, aligning with the University's Regenerative Sustainability Strategy learning and teaching commitment.
- **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 and identify policy and regulations implications.
- **Advise on stakeholder engagement and communications** to promote understanding, participation, and visibility of the above-mentioned 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 LTSIG, with formal updates and recommendations submitted to Senate Education Committee.

3. Meetings

The Group will meet roughly 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.

Name	Title	School/College/Unit	Role/Representing
Paul Norris	Senior Lecturer Social Policy	School of Social and Political Sciences (CAHSS)/Academic Quality and Standards secondee (curriculum, policy and regulations)	Chair of CDIG
Rhona McMorland	Senior Project Manager	Strategic Change Service	Supporting Group
Tina Harrison	Professor of Financial Services Marketing and Consumption and Deputy Vice Principal Students (Enhancement)	Business School/USG (CAHSS)	Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Group, Senate Education Committee
Lauren Harrison	Senior Project Officer	Academic Quality and Standards	Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation
Katya Amott	EUSA VP Education	Students' Association	Student interests
Sabine Rolle	Professor of Student Learning (Interdisciplinary Education) and Challenge Course lead	Department of European Languages and Cultures (CAHSS)	Challenge Courses

Name	Title	School/College/Unit	Role/Representing
Andrea English	Professor, Philosophy of Education and Community of Practice Lead	Moray House School of Education and Sport (CAHSS)	Community of Practice for Challenge Courses and Experiential Learning
Lorna Devlin	Senior Design Lead, Skills for Success Framework	Careers Service	Skills for Success Framework
Hannah Chalmers	Personal Chair of Sustainable Energy Systems and Academic Lead, Skills for Success Framework	School of Engineering	Skills for Success Framework
Andy Cross	Deputy Director, Edinburgh Climate Change Institute (CSE)	School of Geosciences (CSE)	Experiential Learning
John Harries	Senior Lecturer and Director of Learning and Teaching	School of Social and Political Science (CAHSS)	Experiential Learning
Emma McAllister	Learning Technology and Design Lead, EFI	Edinburgh Futures Institute (CAHSS)	AI in Teaching Innovation Project
Lucy Patterson	Climate and Sustainability in the Curriculum Coordinator	Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability	Climate and Sustainability in the Curriculum
Mary Brennan	Professor of Food Marketing and Society and Dean of Education (CAHSS)	Business School (CAHSS)	CAHSS
Marie Craft	Head of Teaching and Student Administration	School of Social and Political Sciences (CAHSS)	CAHSS
Sarah Harvey	EFI Head of Education Development and Delivery	Edinburgh Futures Institute (CAHSS)	CAHSS
Jane Taylor	Senior Lecturer in Biomedical Sciences	Edinburgh Medical School (CMVM)	CMVM
Patrick Hadoke	Personal Chair of Arterial Modelling	Centre for Cardiovascular Science (CMVM)	CMVM
James Hopgood	Dean of Quality and Enhancement and Personal Chair of Signal Processing	School of Engineering (CSE)	CSE
Dan Swanton	Personal Chair of Geography and Education	School of Geosciences (CSE)	CSE

Senate Education Committee

5 March 2026

Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression
Key Principles for Learning and Teaching

Description of paper

1. This paper is intended to highlight the Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression: Key Principles for Learning and Teaching. The Principles provide clear academic articulation of lawful expression within educational contexts and strengthen the conditions for open enquiry, intellectual challenge, and inclusive participation. They directly support Strategy 2030 commitments to breadth of curriculum, development of critical thinking, and an Edinburgh learning experience grounded in integrity and respect.

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**
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**

2. The Key Principles for Learning and Teaching provide a clear academic articulation of expectations within educational settings, and more broadly, and seek to strengthen the conditions for open enquiry, critical thinking, and respectful engagement. The Principles explicitly situate academic freedom and freedom of expression within Scots law, including equality legislation. They clarify the distinction between lawful expression and unlawful conduct, thereby strengthening compliance awareness in learning and teaching contexts.

Action requested / recommendation

3. To Committee is asked to note the paper and to support the promotion of the Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression, Key Principles for Learning and Teaching, across learning and teaching environments.

Background and context

4. The University has sought to strengthen and clarify its articulation of academic freedom and freedom of expression within educational contexts. Recognising that these principles are foundational to academic purpose, the Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression Working Group was reconfigured to build structured institutional stewardship.

5. As part of this development, a Curriculum and Education Workstream was established with defined Terms of Reference to:

- articulate the implications of academic freedom and freedom of expression for learning and teaching;
- develop clear guidance for staff and students within educational settings;
- ensure alignment between academic freedom, equality obligations and education practice;
- strengthen staff confidence in facilitating intellectually challenging and contested discussion; and
- embed academic freedom within core academic governance processes and everyday academic practice.

6. The attached Key Principles for Learning and Teaching represent the formal educational articulation of that remit. They translate University-wide commitments into guidance specifically tailored to teaching, learning and classroom engagement, ensuring that academic freedom is embedded proactively within the educational experience, rather than addressed only in moments of tension.

Discussion

7. The Principles clarify the distinction between academic freedom (relating to employment, teaching and research functions) and freedom of expression (a broader right applicable to all members of the University community). They reaffirm the University's legal duties under Scots law to protect lawful expression, including expression that may offend, shock, or disturb.
8. Crucially, the document makes clear that rights are qualified. Unlawful conduct — including harassment, discrimination, threats or incitement to violence — is not protected. This clarity is intended to strengthen staff confidence and to reduce ambiguity in educational settings.

9. Within learning and teaching contexts, the Principles:
   - protect space for rigorous intellectual challenge;
   - clarify expectations for respectful disagreement;
   - support staff in facilitating contested discussions;
   - provide students with a clear articulation of rights and responsibilities;
   - embed academic freedom within everyday academic practice, rather than positioning it solely as a compliance issue.

10. Support with the promotion and embedding of the Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression Key Principles for Learning and Teaching is being sought.

Resource implications

11. No additional recurring resource requirement is anticipated. Implementation will be achieved through integration into existing educational guidance, staff development provision, and governance processes.

Risk management

12. Ambiguity in the scope and practice of academic freedom does not only create compliance or reputational risk; it risks eroding the conditions necessary for

genuine scholarly enquiry, education, and research practice. Where boundaries are unclear, uncertainty can give rise to self-censorship, defensive teaching practices, and a reluctance to engage difficult or controversial material. Over time, this can narrow the range of permissible enquiry and weaken the University's intellectual vitality.

13. The Principles mitigate these risks by clarifying legal and normative boundaries, articulating shared expectations, and strengthening confidence in the legitimacy of rigorous disagreement. By doing so, they protect the space for robust academic challenge while ensuring that such challenge operates within the law and with respect for the dignity of others. In this sense, the approach safeguards not only compliance but the integrity of academic endeavour itself.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

14. This paper contributes to SDG 4 (Quality Education) by strengthening inclusive and equitable educational practice and fostering critical thinking. It has no direct implications for climate policy.

Equality & diversity

15. Equality and diversity considerations have informed the development of the Principles. The Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression Working Group's EDI Workstream provided feedback on the draft Principles.

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

16. The Principles will be communicated via a digital campaign and embedded into College and School education governance channels and within relevant guidance. Impact will be monitored through longitudinal qualitative feedback

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Presenter
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February 2026

Freedom of Information: *Open*

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Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression

Key Principles for Learning and Teaching

What are Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression?

Academic freedom and freedom of expression are often used interchangeably, but they are distinct principles that apply in different ways to different groups within our University community. Together, they foster a culture of open inquiry, critical thinking, and meaningful dialogue. These values are fundamental to our core purpose, the pursuit of knowledge, and to the civic life of our University.

Academic Freedom primarily protects the rights of staff engaging in teaching, or the provision of learning or research (including students who are employed in such a capacity). It enables them to explore, develop, and communicate ideas or findings without fear of censorship or discipline, within the standards of scholarly enquiry. It is rooted specifically in the pursuit of knowledge through research and teaching within an academic context.

Freedom of expression, on the other hand, applies more broadly to all members of our University community, including staff, students, and visitors. It protects the rights of all individuals to express lawful views in speech, writing, or artistic expression. Freedom of expression is one of the 'essential foundations of a democratic society because it guarantees people's right to exchange information, debate ideas and express opinions' (The European Court of Human Rights).

In Scotland, universities have a legal duty to protect academic freedom and freedom of expression, even when the views expressed may be controversial or unpopular, and may offend, shock, or disturb others.

Living and working well together in our diverse University community means listening with respect, engaging thoughtfully, and recognising the dignity of others, even when we disagree. Academic freedom and freedom of expression support open debate and the exchange of ideas, but they are accompanied by a shared responsibility to foster a respectful and inclusive environment where everyone can participate fully.

Key Principles for Learning and Teaching

Our University is a place of intellectual challenge; to help our staff and students think, question, and grow. At the heart of our University community is a commitment to Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression. In practice, this means we uphold the following fundamental principles:

1. Championing Diversity of Thought

We welcome and encourage diverse views, beliefs, and experiences — they are fundamental to who we are as a University.

Our University recognises the importance of fostering an environment in which diverse opinions can be expressed, debated, heard and challenged. This principle lies at the heart of what it means to be a university and is central to our

intellectual and educational mission. It underpins how we operate as an academic community of researchers, teachers, and learners.

We value not only the freedom to express ideas, but also the shared processes of discussion, dialogue, and deliberation through which knowledge is shared, tested, refined, and advanced. These processes may take different forms – from critical debate and peer review; to more collaborative, participatory, and democratic models of enquiry that recognise different ways of knowing and the value of inclusive knowledge-making.

Through the open and respectful exchange of ideas, we are able to question conventional wisdom, challenge inequality, and generate new thinking - all of which are essential to a liberal democratic society in which all of us can thrive. Without such openness, advancement stalls. It is the responsibility of every member of our University community to uphold this fundamental and shared commitment to openness, dialogue, and tolerance in the pursuit of knowledge, wisdom, and truth.

2. Empowering Lawful Expression
We support everyone's right to lawfully express opinions, debate openly, and explore complex or controversial issues.

The expression of diverse views, within the law, is fundamental to both academic freedom and freedom of expression. Both are protected rights enshrined in Scots law. Our University has a legal duty to uphold these freedoms in practice, meaning that all our staff and students are entitled to teach, learn, and research in an environment that values vigorous debate and challenge in which their views can be expressed openly and lawfully.

No individual's view – whether expressed in teaching, research, or in classroom discussion - should be suppressed simply because it diverges from or challenges prevailing social or ideological norms. Equally, no individual or group within the University has the authority to determine the boundaries of legitimate debate, or to silence those with whom they disagree.

Academic freedom and freedom of expression includes lawful speech that some may find offensive or even hurtful. Both academic freedom and freedom of expression must be exercised in a manner which respects others to challenge, to question, and to contribute to the vibrant exchange of ideas that is essential to both education and democracy, and to the strengthening of our academic community.

3. Freedom within Boundaries
Academic freedom and freedom of expression have limits. Abuse, harassment, threats, or incitement to violence have no place in our University.

While academic freedom and freedom of expression are fundamental rights in the UK, these rights are qualified, not absolute. Both are protected by law, but their

protection does not extend to unlawful forms of expression, such as abuse, harassment, discrimination, threats, or incitement to violence and extremism. These behaviours are not protected forms of expression; they are unlawful and have no place at our University or in wider society.

Respectful and lawful expression is central to life at our University. While no one is required to agree with the views of others, everyone has the right to express lawful opinions and to be treated with dignity.

Equally, academic freedom and freedom of expression do not guarantee freedom from offence. It is not uncommon in academic and civil life to encounter views that are challenging, uncomfortable, or strongly expressed. Conflating disagreement or offence with harm risks undermining open discussion and may, at times, constitute an attempt to suppress debate for political or ideological reasons.

Within the law, we all are free to question, debate, and explore - even when the topics are difficult or controversial. Beyond the law, the expectation is that we engage in good faith, with a commitment to open, dignified, and respectful discussion. We all have a responsibility to recognise the limits of lawful expression and to operate within them.

4. Learning through Difference
Engaging with a range of perspectives broadens understanding and fosters intellectual and personal growth.

We grow, as individuals and as a University community, when we embrace the richness of difference and create the space for learning through difference.

Learning happens not only through structured teaching, but also through experiences, relationships, critical reflection, and collaborative exploration. At the heart of this is a recognition that people encounter the world in varied ways, shaped by identity, culture, history, and lived experience.

Universities are pluralistic spaces where a diversity of perspectives is not just welcomed, but essential. While engaging with a range of perspectives can be difficult and testing, it can also be inspiring.

By seriously engaging with difference, whether through dialogue, storytelling, or collaborative inquiry, we expand our understanding of others and of ourselves. It also deepens empathy, fosters curiosity, and cultivates the courage to question authority and confront injustice.

A culture of open inquiry depends on a shared commitment to both the right to be heard and civility in disagreement. Protecting the space for difference is a foundational responsibility of academic life that we all must uphold.

5. Developing Critical Thinking through Open Discourse
Engaging with different perspectives is key to developing critical thinking and to forming a shared understanding of others' experiences and worldviews.

Critical thinking is not instinctive; it is developed through questioning, analysis, and structured debate. It demands that we test our assumptions, weigh evidence, and consider opposing viewpoints in good faith. Open discourse, the ability to state, defend, and revise ideas in conversation with others, is essential to this process.

We often hold our beliefs with deep conviction. Yet, to think critically, we must be willing to listen, respond to challenge, and sometimes even change our minds. Engaging in open, respectful dialogue, discussion and debate, even when it is uncomfortable, helps us distinguish between opinion and argument, between assertion and evidence. This fosters a deeper understanding and intellectual honesty.

Without such openness, we risk falling into groupthink, where ideas go untested and critical inquiry gives way to conformity. That is not the academic culture we strive for at our University. It is the responsibility of every member of our community to uphold an environment where ideas can be explored, debated, and refined freely, and where disagreement is seen not as a threat, but as a vital part of the pursuit of knowledge and the strengthening of our democratic life.

6. Challenging and Disagreeing Respectfully
Challenge must be civil and respectful. This is essential to an environment where everyone feels safe to express their views and feel included.

Disagreement is a natural and often necessary part of intellectual and civic life. Conversations on matters we care deeply about, whether in seminars, forums, or informal settings, can at times become impassioned or emotionally charged. We may use strong language to convey conviction or urgency. But the way we communicate matters.

Our ideas are far more likely to be heard, understood, and seriously considered when shared in a spirit of respect and grounded in evidence-based reasoning.

Attempts to intimidate, ridicule, or silence others, whether through aggression, mockery, or coercion, rarely changes minds. More often, they alienate listeners and undermine the credibility of our position and negatively impact our community.

A respectful culture of dialogue, discussion, and debate is essential to an environment in which everyone feels able to contribute without fear of personal harm, exclusion, or retaliation.

True inclusion means creating space for multiple voices and modes of expression, within the law. No one should be compelled to endorse or express

values and beliefs, or to participate in activities, that conflict with their right to lawful expression or academic freedom.

7. Navigating Tension Thoughtfully
Genuine differences of opinion may cause discomfort or tension. Our role is not to shield each other, students and staff, from ideas which may be unwelcome, disagreeable, or even offensive, but to help each other to navigate them thoughtfully, critically and respectfully.

Through the course of learning, teaching, and research, we may encounter ideas, texts, or viewpoints that we fundamentally disagree with, even find offensive or emotionally challenging. This is not unusual; it reflects the complexity of the world we seek to understand. Issues worthy of academic inquiry are often complex and contested, and it is precisely the difficult or controversial ones that most demand open, rigorous and thoughtful discussion.

Avoiding such topics for fear of causing offence, even when well-intentioned, risks eroding the principles of academic freedom and freedom of expression, as well as the core purpose of university life.

We do not have to respect or agree with every view we encounter, but we must engage with difference in a spirit of open-mindedness, tolerance, and respectful dialogue. Upholding this principle is the shared responsibility of all members of our University community; it is vital to sustaining a culture of free and critical inquiry.