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.