

The University of Edinburgh

**Senate Education Committee**

**Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2026 2-5pm**

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

**A G E N D A**

\* Standing item      + Committee priority

<b>1.</b>	<b>Welcome and Apologies</b>	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Minutes of the previous meeting</b> To approve <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 27<sup>th</sup> November 2025</li></ul>	SEC 25/26 4A
<b>3.</b>	<b>Matters Arising</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Convener's Communications</li><li>• Action Log</li></ul>	
<b>4.</b>	<b>SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS</b>	
4.1	<b>Assessment and Feedback Policy +</b> For approval	SEC 25/26 4B
4.2	<b>Future Operation of Challenge Courses – Options Appraisal</b> For discussion	SEC 25/26 4C
<b>5.</b>	<b>ITEMS FOR UPDATE</b>	
5.1	<b>Learning and Teaching Workstream Update *</b> For noting	Verbal Update
5.2	<b>Standing Committees Annual Internal Effectiveness Review and Review of progress toward External Effectiveness Review Recommendations</b> For noting	SEC 25/26 4D
5.3	<b>Committee Membership 2026/27</b> For noting	SEC 25/26 4E
<b>6.</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b>	
<b>7.</b>	<b>Date of next meeting</b> TBC Hybrid meeting: TBC & Microsoft Teams	

**The University of Edinburgh  
Senate Education Committee**

**Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2026, 2-5pm  
Hybrid meeting: Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House  
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**1. Attendance**

<b>Present:</b>	<b>Position:</b>
Professor Tina Harrison	Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) (Vice-Convener)
Professor Gill Aitken	Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching)
Katya Amott	Vice President (Education), Students' Association
Professor Ruth Andrew	Representative of CMVM (Postgraduate Research)
Professor Sian Bayne	Assistant Principal Education Futures
Professor Lisa Boden	Head of School, CMVM
Professor Cathy Bovill	Head of Academic Development, Academic Quality and Standards
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
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
Professor Willem Hollmann	Head of School, CAHSS
Heather Innes	EUSA Academic Engagement and Policy Coordinator
Dr Lisa Kendall	Representative of CAHSS (Learning and Teaching)
Nichola Kett	Head of Academic Quality and Standards
Professor Linda Kirstein	Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching)
Alex Laidlaw	Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching)
Professor Jason Love	Head of School, CSE
Professor Jamie Pearce	Representative of CSE (Postgraduate Research)
Professor Patrick Walsh	Senate Representative
Patrick Jack	Committee Secretary, Academic Quality and Standards
<b>Apologies:</b>	
Professor Antonis Giannopoulos	Senate Representative
Patience Mulungi	Postgraduate Research Student Representative
<b>In attendance:</b>	
Isabell Majewsky Anderson	Head of Service, Study and Work Away
Lauren Harrison	Academic Quality and Standards

Matthew Lawson	Senior Learning, Teaching and Reporting Manager, Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability
Lucy Patterson	Climate and Sustainability in the Curriculum Manager, Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability
Andy Shanks	Director of Student Wellbeing
Professor David Smith	Convener, University of Edinburgh Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression Working Group

The Vice-Convener welcomed Professor Cathy Bovill to Senate Education Committee (SEC), who has joined as an Ex Officio member in her role as Head of Academic Development within Academic Quality and Standards. Members noted that Senate has been notified of this update in membership.

## **2. Minutes of meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2025**

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2025.

## **3. Matters Arising**

### **Convener's Communications**

- **QAA Targeted Peer Review of the University of Glasgow**

The Vice-Convener informed members that, following the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Targeted Peer Review of the University of Glasgow report being published, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) has published the scope of a review which will consider the arrangements for the awarding of qualifications across Scottish universities. The review will be carried out by the QAA with a view to providing assurance to SFC, beyond that provided by existing quality assurance mechanisms, that arrangements for the awarding of qualifications are being applied consistently, effectively and transparently; and that academic standards are being maintained. To allow a comprehensive and robust process to take place, it is envisaged that the review will take place over a number of months and is anticipated to conclude by the end of 2026.

- **Programme Closure Guidance**

The Vice-Convener noted the commitment to keep SEC updated on the development of programme closure guidance. Members noted that work to develop the guidance has been ongoing, with input received from College Deans and professional services leads. Feedback and learning from the implementation of the guidance will inform the wider review of the Programme and Course Approval and Management (PCAM) Policy, which is currently being undertaken. The revised PCAM Policy will be taken to Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) for approval later in semester two, with SQAC having first discussed potential revisions at its meeting in February 2026.

## 4. Substantive Items

### 4.1 Assessment and Feedback Policy

The Vice-Convenor introduced the paper for discussion, noting that the latest version of the draft policy had been reviewed by the Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group in February 2026. Members noted the intention to bring the finalised policy to SEC for approval at its May 2026 meeting, prior to its implementation from 2026/27. Members were informed that it has been decided at this stage not to amalgamate the supplementary guidance into the policy document in order to maintain focus on the mandatory policy. Instead, it is proposed that supplementary guidance will be produced for each section of the policy following its approval and subsequent implementation.

In considering the proposed policy, members raised the following comments:

- It was requested that the supplementary guidance be circulated as simultaneously as possible with the final policy in order to provide colleagues with a sufficient steer in effectively implementing the policy, as well as to provide greater clarity to students. SEC should be consulted on the draft guidance.
- College Education Committees should be provided with the opportunity to formally review the draft policy.
- From CMVM's perspective, it was requested that "assessment of learning" and "assessment for learning" be specified within the policy.
- It was noted that the policy could be used to help drive the implementation of the Skills for Success Framework. The language around this within the policy is embedded throughout.
- How will the policy align with the review and revalidation of courses and programmes? There is a need to distinguish what sits in this policy as opposed to other policies such as the PCAM policy.
- Knowledge of approved adjustments should be mainstreamed.
- In terms of programmatic assessment, what do we want the policy to permit and to eradicate? Guidance here would be helpful to support colleagues in undertaking the mapping of learning outcomes.
- Consideration should be taken to ensure that mandatory policy elements are workable for staff. For example, section 4.3 notes, "time must be set aside during the course for the discussion of assessment tasks", however there are instances where this is delivered via clear written documentation rather than verbally during class time. It was clarified that students must not be expected to identify what is expected of them in terms of assessment without it being scaffolded into the course and having opportunity to discuss assessment tasks in addition to written information that students can access outwith class time.
- Clarity is required around how the mapping of course and programme level outcomes will work in practice.
- The guidance will need to clarify expectations around Board of Studies and their ability to consider moderation requirements. What should be moderated and when?

- A member noted concern in relation section 7.2 with regard to the use of platforms and tools supported by Schools/Colleges with approval of IS, as this could be seen as problematic within Schools and prevent innovations in this area.
- A member voiced concern in relation to section 8.7 regarding Board of Studies approval being required for the use of AI by staff for any part of the assessment, marking and feedback process. As this involves fast-moving tech which influences pedagogies, at times there is a need to be reactive and Board of Studies approval may create a barrier to this.
- In terms of section 3.5 and the requirement for Boards of Studies to approve competency standards, greater consideration is required around who is best placed to approve proposed competency standards. Competency standards are clearer when required by PSRBs, but can be more ambiguous within programmes without PSRB accreditation. While Board of Studies involvement is appropriate, there is a need for greater oversight of this approval process and training would need to be provided for Boards of Studies around examining competence standards to help ensure consistency of practice.
- A stronger connection should be made between sections 2 and 3. Referencing universal design and providing students with a choice in assessment aligns with inclusive practice.
- In reference to assessment timing under section 2.7, this should incorporate joint programmes.
- Section 6 should not allow for a loophole whereby generic feedback is permitted without the provision of individualised feedback. Written exam papers cannot be moderated without feedback. It was suggested that section 6.6 could be clearer in relation to the extent to which students can expect feedback on their academic performance.
- CSE's Quality Assurance Committee recently received two presentations on feedback projects which have engaged staff and students with regard to feedback quality. There is a lot that could be learned from existing practice within Schools which could be replicated across the University.
- Holding a workshop would be helpful to discuss the draft guidance. The areas of guidance which will be most valuable in the implementation of the policy should be prioritised.

The Committee was thanked for their valuable input and feedback will be taken into consideration moving forward. Members were informed of the timeline in bringing the Policy back to SEC for approval at its May 2026 meeting, most notably the 23<sup>rd</sup> April deadline for paper submissions. While final consultation is important, it was noted that considerable consultation has already taken place and that remaining consultative activity should focus on making minor refinements to the policy ahead of the April deadline. Members were reassured that a record will be kept of areas that require further interrogation beyond the current academic year, however it was noted that it is important to have the Policy in place for 2026-27 in order to enhance student experience and to fulfil the related QAA recommendations from the recent ELIR and QESR reviews.

**Action:** Deputy Vice Principal Students (Enhancement) and Head of Academic Development to discuss the approval process for competency standards further.

**Action:** Academic Quality and Standards to circulate a copy of the current draft policy and a note of the draft minutes of this item to Colleges for the purpose of their internal consultation.

**4.2 School-Level Pastoral Support for Postgraduate Research Students**

The paper was introduced to the Committee by the University's Director of Student Wellbeing, who outlined the proposal to establish a short-life working group that will formally report into SEC, and its associated goals. It was noted that the proposed working group would align with the University's Student Administration review and would help support achieving greater equality, diversity and inclusion for postgraduate research (PGR) students.

In discussing the proposal, members noted the following comments:

- In terms of the connection with the Student Administration review, it was noted that establishing a working group at this stage could be premature, given the current lack of clarity around the future structure of graduate schools and their administrative structures. What would the implications be if graduate schools moved to Doctoral Colleges?
- It was noted that the whole ecosystem of PGR student experience requires to be examined holistically and that current capacity for staff to be able to do this effectively is extremely limited. Existing resources would need to be repurposed from elsewhere in order to develop this support provision.
- A member recommended utilising findings from the Student Administration review to review and finesse PGR considerations.
- CMVM has drafted a PGR Student Advisor job descriptor. The College will share with the Director of Student Wellbeing.
- There is a need to separate pastoral support from advisory teams. Is there scope to pilot pastoral support initiatives for PGR students within Colleges?
- The proposed membership of the working group lacks any colleagues involved in supervising PGR students.
- Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland (SPARQS) is actively undertaking work around enhancing PGR student support across the sector.
- As EUSA is in the process of handover for both sabbaticals and PGR representatives, could EUSA's Academic Engagement and Policy Coordinator be added to the working group membership to help ensure consistent representation from EUSA?
- The welfare of PGR students is an issue that is raised consistently. Ensuring support that is consistent across the University is key.
- The support needs for PGR students vary between being on-programme, the post-submission stage and during the corrections phase. How do existing support services across the University better publicise themselves to the PGR student community?
- The paper flags the importance of the relationship between a PGR student and their supervisor. This should be highlighted more explicitly in the Group's terms of reference, particularly around the role of the supervisor and the related training/support available.
- Academic Development offer training provision aimed at supervisors, as well as tutors and demonstrators. Members noted that if there is any key messaging that should be communicated to either staff cohort via this training provision, they should contact the Head of Academic Development to discuss this further.

The Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary, Students highlighted the need for further discussions around the development of a student support model for PGR students, as well as

the considerations noted by members above. The Vice-Convenor noted the existing gap in understanding the support needs of PGR students and how this might be delivered across the University, as well as how this aligns with the University's Student Administration review.

The Committee agreed to provide additional time for colleagues to hold discussions around how the working group could be reframed in terms of resource requirements and alignment with the Student Administration review. The Committee further agreed that this proposal should return to the next meeting of SEC, following discussions between the Doctoral College and the Director of Student Wellbeing.

**Action:** Deputy Vice Principal Students (Enhancement) to share the details of relevant SPARQS activity with the Director of Student Wellbeing.

**Action:** The Director of Student Wellbeing to liaise with relevant colleagues within the Doctoral College, prior to submitting a reframed proposal to the next meeting of SEC.

### 4.3 Regenerative Sustainability Strategy

Colleagues within the Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability introduced the paper, noting there is a strong existing provision of climate and nature within the University's curriculum. With the University's Regenerative Sustainability Strategy launching in March 2026, members were requested to recommend how to progress the learning and teaching commitments within the Strategy, in alignment with both the Learning and Teaching Workstream, and the implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy. Members were also invited to consider how best the Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability can help support Schools and Colleges engage with this work. The Committee was informed that the Department's Climate and Sustainability in the Curriculum Manager has joined the Curriculum Development and Innovation Group (CDIG) to help strengthen connections between these strategies.

In discussing the paper, members subsequently highlighted a range of points including: requirements from research funders for researchers and students to record relevant sustainability activity within databases; the scope in identifying how much of a course is relevant to the sustainability agenda and how this could be mapped in order to identify themes; tagging within the Path tool to help better articulate sustainability content within courses; the possibility of incorporating relevant fields within course and programme approval documentation to enhance relevant data collection.

Colleagues within the Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability noted the points raised by members and highlighted that they are working with Student Systems to better evidence and quantify climate and sustainability across the University's curriculum. Members were advised that the Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability would be happy to respond to requests for further support around this work from Schools and Colleges.

#### **4.4 Open Educational Resources Policy**

The Assistant Principal Online and Open Learning presented the proposal to implement minor updates to the Open Educational Resources (OER) Policy following routine review. In considering the proposed revisions to the policy, members raised the following points:

- In terms of guidance point 4, given that AI models can influence pedagogy, a member suggested that it should be further considered whether content generated by AI models shall not be published.
- With regard to guidance point 11, it appears difficult to substantiate that reusing existing OERs is more sustainable than generating new resources via AI models. Does this need to be included within the guidance?
- It is not often practical to distinguish whether content has been generated by AI and is therefore difficult to enforce.
- Academic journals often use a process whereby there is a requirement to document how AI has been used. Could a similar process be adopted in this context?
- There are ethical considerations around AI material as it can be unknown where content has been sourced from. AI cannot hold copyright over material it produces.
- It was suggested that guidance point 2 should include reference to AI generated content.

The Committee subsequently approved the revised policy, subject to the College Deans of Education working with the Assistant Principal Online and Open Learning to finalise the wording of guidance point 4 regarding content generated by AI models.

#### **4.5 Erasmus+ Re-association: Next Steps**

The Head of Service, Study and Work Away (SWAY) introduced the paper to members, highlighting that the UK Government has confirmed that the UK will re-join the Erasmus+ programme from 2027. Members noted the substantial opportunities that re-entry to the programme will bring around staff and student mobility, as well as the next steps involved in taking the University's Erasmus+ Re-association Action Plan forward.

In discussing the paper, members raised a range of comments including: the impact on existing collaborative agreements and the requirement to retransition them back to Erasmus+ where relevant; the impact of re-association on incoming student numbers and staff resource; how to develop shorter-term opportunities for students who are unable to undertake a full semester or year abroad; enhancing the input of SEC and College Deans of Education into the University's strategic considerations around international mobility; whether there is scope to explore co-teaching with other institutions, particularly on smaller programmes; integration with the fully digitalised Erasmus+ Without Paper (EWP) system being managed by SWAY.

The Committee was informed that, in terms of next steps, priority in March 2026 will be allocated to Turing Scheme activity and the University's application for the Erasmus+ Charter for Higher Education. SWAY are confident that there is sufficient time to consult with relevant, multiple stakeholders with regard to strategic engagement around participation in Erasmus+. Members noted that the University expects to learn the outcome of the Charter application

by June 2026. The requirement to consider international mobility more strategically in an education-led way was noted and it was agreed that this item should return to SEC for further discussion in autumn 2026. It was suggested that a working group of SEC could be established to help steer this work prior to this item returning to SEC in autumn 2026. The Committee was informed that the Global Partnerships Group is supportive of SEC leading on this particular work strand.

**Action:** Deputy Vice Principal Students (Enhancement) to liaise with relevant members with regard to exploring the creation of an Erasmus+ re-association working group to report into SEC.

**Action:** Committee Secretary to include Erasmus+ re-association on the forward agenda for autumn 2026.

## 5. Items for Update

### 5.1 Bristol Case Working Group Action Plan

The University's Director of Student Wellbeing presented the paper, sharing information on the development of the University's Bristol Case Working Group Action Plan, and noting the request for the Committee's support regarding the proposed actions to help ensure that the University is compliant with the Equality Act (2010).

In discussing the paper, members subsequently highlighted a range of points including: the criticality of implementing guidance around severe, urgent cases relating to adjustments and planned communication around this to College Education Committees; the review of the co-ordinator of adjustments role; the level of seniority for those responsible for adjustments within Schools and whether Directors of Teaching or Directors of Students should obtain responsibility over this; the scope of producing a University-wide Director of Teaching role descriptor; the ability to identify and map competency standards, and the provision of training to complement this; whether Schools report on the review of competency standards as part of annual monitoring activity.

**Action:** Deputy Vice Principal Students (Enhancement) to liaise with Academic Quality and Standards with regard to incorporating competency standards within the Annual Monitoring templates for 2025/26.

### 5.2 Learning and Teaching Workstream Update

The Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary, Students introduced the paper, updating the Committee on strategically-led initiatives and University-wide changes designed to enhance the educational experience of students and learners. It was recognised that many members of SEC are involved in specific projects across the Learning and Teaching workstream.

In discussing the paper, the following comments were raised by members: work is ongoing with regard to curriculum architecture, with a report to be provided to SEC and to Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC) in due course; an outline of what is not

in scope of the workstream would be helpful; critical questions that the Committee can discuss in addition to the updates would be helpful for future meetings.

The Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary, Students noted the feedback raised and encouraged members to make direct contact should they wish to provide any additional comments in writing.

### **5.3 Academic Development Update**

The Head of Academic Development provided the Committee with a verbal update on the Academic Development team following its transition into Academic Quality and Standards in February 2026. Members were informed of the various areas that the Academic Development team work across, current staff members and the team's priorities for the next six months. It was noted that Academic Development will be involved in supporting the implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy.

**Action:** Committee Secretary to circulate the Academic Development update presentation slides.

### **5.4 Learning Materials Accessibility Review**

The Assistant Principal Online and Open Learning introduced the paper, updating members on the annual Accessibility Reviews conducted via the Learn Service. It was noted that this year all reviews were made available across the institution, at any time, through the Learn Accessibility Review SharePoint. The Vice-Convenor noted that it is an anticipatory responsibility to ensure course materials are as inclusive and accessible as possible, however compliance rates have experienced a decrease. While the change in methodology was recognised, it was suggested whether additional time could be devoted to this matter at a future meeting of the Committee.

### **5.5 Committee Priorities 2025/26: Mid-Year Reflection**

Members noted the contents of the paper with regard to the report on progress against the priorities of SEC for 2025/26. The Committee further noted the proposal being taken to Senate for approval at its next meeting in May 2026 that standing committee priorities are disbanded moving forward.

### **5.6 Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation - Terms of Reference**

The Committee noted the finalised Terms of Reference for the Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Group (LTSIG) and the Curriculum Development and Innovation Group (CDIG). Members were informed that the first meeting of LTSIG took place in February 2026, during which it was agreed to organise a workshop to focus on activity and good practice underway in Schools and Colleges relating to implementation of the Strategy. Members noted that benchmarking of relevant activity within other institutions is also taking place.

**5.7 Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression**

The Convener of the University's Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression Working Group introduced the paper, which outlined the Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression: Key Principles for Learning and Teaching. The Principles clarify the distinction between academic freedom and freedom of expression, seeking greater balance between principle and practice. It was noted that the Principles will be communicated across the University via a digital campaign.

A member subsequently queried the status of supplementary guidance, highlighting that the Principles could go further in supporting staff around difficult conversations in the classroom and what constitutes lawful expression. It was noted that the development of the guidance, in alignment with the University's EDI workstream, is still at an early stage however it is hoped that this will be finalised by June 2026. Members were informed that the guidance will incorporate a case study approach, outlining how to manage specific scenarios. It was suggested that the guidance also take a normative position on specific matters. Members wishing to learn more about this work were encouraged to contact the Convener of the Working Group.

**6. Any Other Business**

- **Revised AI Guidelines for Students**

The Assistant Principal Education Futures referred the Committee to the final version of the revised AI guidelines for students document which had been circulated to members. Members were informed that the updates primarily relate to agentic AI and the use of live translation apps. It was suggested that enhanced relevant training provision for staff and students around the use of AI should be prioritised moving forward. The Committee was supportive of the same updates being incorporated into the guidelines for PGR students. Members agreed to introduce AI as a standing item of committee business to allow capture of any ongoing developments relevant to the AI guidelines.

**7. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> May 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**

**7 May 2026**

**Assessment and Feedback Policy**

**Description of paper**

1. This paper presents the finalised Assessment and Feedback Policy, the development of which was agreed at the Senate Education Committee (SEC) meeting in May 2025.

**Fit with remit**

<b>Education Committee</b>	<b>Y/N</b>
Promote strategically-led initiatives and university-wide changes designed to enhance the educational experience of students and learners.	<b>Y</b>
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.	<b>Y</b>
Oversee policy relating to students' academic experience and proactively engage with high-level issues and themes arising from student feedback.	<b>Y</b>
Anticipate and prepare for new opportunities and likely future developments in learning and teaching for all cohorts of students and learners.	<b>Y</b>
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.	<b>Y</b>

**Action requested / recommendation**

2. The Committee is asked to **approve** the proposed policy.

**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 Vice-Principal Students (Enhancement) 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.
9. A further iteration of the draft policy was brought to Senate Education Committee for discussion at its meeting on 5 March 2026 (SEC 25/26 3B). The Committee agreed that the draft policy would be circulated to Colleges following the meeting to enable internal consultation.
10. Within the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS), the draft policy was discussed at the College's Education Committee and Director of Teaching Network. Written feedback was received from Schools across CAHSS and the College of Science and Engineering (CSE). College Learning and Teaching representatives on SEC were invited to a meeting in April 2026, where feedback from Colleges and Schools was discussed in greater detail and taken into consideration prior to finalising the draft Policy.

### **Discussion**

11. 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.

12. To address this, SEC approved the development of a clear and consolidated **Assessment and Feedback Policy**. This policy formally sets out all mandatory elements/minimum expectations which are part of the current Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities, as well as additional thematic areas based on relevant developments within the University and across the Higher Education sector.

13. Notable amendments made to the finalised draft of the Policy from its previous iteration include:

- Adding an opening section that outlines the overarching principles that guide our approach to assessment and feedback – responding to positive comments about the previous Principles and Priorities document.
- Reconsideration of authentic assessment as a principle for assessment to be meaningful and relevant, rather than a compulsory aspect of the policy.
- Removing the requirement to explicitly map learning outcomes, recognising there is currently no mechanism to record this mapping, but instead noting the requirement to ‘align with’ learning outcomes.
- Removing the responsibility of Boards of Studies to monitor assessments at the programme level, as this is within the specified responsibilities of Programme Directors and Directors of Teaching.
- Clarifying that final approval of competence standards are the responsibility of the relevant College Committee, in alignment with the Programme and Course Approval and Management Policy.
- Removing the stipulation that students must not be expected to be responsible for identifying information relating to assessment tasks.
- Reviewing the definition of moderation, to separate it from the peer review of assessment design, although the moderation guidance clarifies that the assessment setting must be subject to peer review.
- Clarification regarding where holistic or group feedback may be appropriate.
- Amending the requirement for systems, platforms and tools used for the purpose of managing assessment, marking and the provision of feedback, to be approved by Colleges and supported by Information Services, rather than approved by Information Services.
- Removing the requirement that Boards of Studies approve uses of AI, recognising that Boards of Studies already have a key role to play in approving changes to assessment, which also captures this.
- Addition of the roles and responsibilities of Internal Moderators, and clarified wording for responsibilities of Course Organisers and Programme Directors / Directors of Teaching.

- Further embedding the Skills for Success Framework throughout the Policy.

14. During consultation activity, it was recognised that some elements of the Policy may represent a substantial culture shift from current practice within particular Schools and subject areas. In order to support these transitions in practice, the Policy will be supplemented by an **implementation plan** following approval of the Policy, to support effective implementation in practice and to clarify expected prioritisations and timescales. Once finalised, the supplementary guidance will be presented to SEC for noting at a future meeting in 2026/27.

### Resource implications

15. An implementation plan to support the roll out of the Policy for 2026/27 will be provided by Academic Quality and Standards. This support will continue to be prioritised by the department as assessment and feedback is an institutional priority.
16. 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.
17. There may be some additional work for Boards of Studies and College Committees to consider and endorse/approve competence standards. However, the assessment of competence standards should be the exception, rather than the norm, so this increase in workload should be small.

### Risk management

18. 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.
19. 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 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).
20. 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, and support innovation while embedding the skills students need to engage critically and responsibly with AI.

### **Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals**

21. 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**

22. An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken, with particular focus on any new mandatory expectations within the Assessment and Feedback Policy. 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**

23. If approved, the Policy would be introduced for the beginning of the 2026/27 academic year. An implementation and communication plan will be developed, including supplementary guidance to support the implementation of the Policy.

24. Academic Quality and Standards will publish the final version of the Policy alongside other updated policies for 2026/27. Information about the new policy would be communicated to staff via the annual new and updated policies email, sent from Academic Quality and Standards prior to the start of each academic year, as well as through briefing sessions to Colleges and Schools at the start of the academic year.

25. The Committee will be required to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Policy – including determining measures of success, and deciding the mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation.

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**Freedom of Information:** Open

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## Appendix A: Assessment and Feedback Policy

### Summary

This policy sets out the principles which underpin assessment and feedback practices at the University. The policy presents 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

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

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Academic Quality and Standards

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## Document control

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<b>Approving authority</b>	Senate Education Committee				
<b>Related policies</b>	<a href="#">Skills for Success Framework</a> <a href="#">Student Voice Policy</a> <a href="#">Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy</a> <a href="#">Programme and Course Approval and Management Policy</a> <a href="#">Learning and Teaching Strategy (login required)</a> Moderation Guidance ( <a href="#">link to be added once published</a> )				
<b>Alternative format</b>	If you require this document in an alternative format please email <a href="mailto:academicpolicy@ed.ac.uk">academicpolicy@ed.ac.uk</a>				
<b>Keywords</b>	Assessment, feedback, course assessment, programme assessment, marking, moderation, assessment criteria, marking criteria, learning outcomes				

## Principles Underpinning Assessment and Feedback Practice

This Policy sets out the minimum expectations for assessment and feedback practice. It is underpinned by the following key principles, which both inform these expectations and are intended to encourage the development of high-quality assessment and feedback practice beyond them.

- **Alignment and Coherence:** assessment aligns with learning outcomes and supports coherent progression across the student journey.
- **Standards and Integrity:** assessment evidences learning while upholding academic integrity and standards.
- **Consistency and Fairness:** assessment and marking are applied consistently and fairly for all students.
- **Inclusivity and Equity:** assessment is inclusive by design, enabling all students to demonstrate their learning equitably.
- **Clarity and Transparency:** assessment expectations, criteria, and processes are clearly communicated to students, enabling them to understand what is required of them.
- **Learning and Development:** assessment and feedback support reflection, improvement and ongoing learning.
- **Meaningful and Relevant:** prioritising assessment tasks that are meaningful, realistic and connected to real-world or professional contexts.
- **Manageable and Sustainable:** assessment and feedback practices are effective and manageable for both students and staff.
- **Evaluation and Enhancement:** practices are regularly reviewed and improved using evidence and feedback.

### 1. Assessment Purpose

- 1.1 Assessment may have one or more purposes (of, for and as learning). The purpose(s) of each assessment must be made clear, and communicated to students.
- 1.2 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), and provide opportunities for feedback, reflection and improvement.  
[Skills for Success Framework](#)
- 1.3 Assessment must reflect the **Edinburgh Student Vision**, supporting:
  - the development of (inter)disciplinary depth and expertise
  - the development of students as learners ready to thrive in a changing world
  - students' ability to translate their learning into future success

### 2. Assessment Design

- 2.1 Staff involved in designing assessments must ensure that course assessments are coherently aligned with the course learning outcomes.

- 2.2 The 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 to align with 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.  
[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 the total 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 must be developed and monitored at the programme level to ensure that across a programme of study:
  - there is alignment with programme learning outcomes, the Skills for Success Framework and the Edinburgh Student Vision
  - there is variety in assessment methods, including an appropriate balance of formative and summative assessment
  - there is appropriate challenge for the level of study, enabling students to develop and improve during their degrees
  - assessment timing is suitably coordinated and sufficiently distributed, affording students appropriate time to undertake each assessment, and enough time for feedback to be provided by staff and used by students
  - there is 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 assessment methods are designed with regard to the above, and are academically appropriate, fair and proportionate.

### **3. Equitability and Fairness of Assessment and Feedback**

- 3.1 Staff involved in teaching and assessment 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, upholding the principle of universal design.  
[Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy](#)
- 3.3 There may be programmes which require competence standards to be met. The Equality Act 2010 defines a competence standard as any academic, medical, or similar requirement used to evaluate if someone possesses a certain level of skill or ability. These are usually set by Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB). Competence standards are non-negotiable skills or knowledge standards that all students studying for the degree must meet. Legally, there is no requirement to modify a competence standard. However, the assessment methods and practices used to measure the standard remain subject to reasonable adjustments.
- 3.4 In accordance with the Programme and Course Approval and Management policy, all competence standards must be endorsed by a Board of Studies, and approved by the relevant College Committee.  
[Programme and Course Approval and Management Policy](#)
- 3.5 All competence standards for any programme or course delivered by the University must be clearly identified and communicated to prospective and current students.

#### **4. Assessment and Feedback Engagement with Students**

- 4.1 In line with the Student Voice Policy, and the Learning and Teaching Strategy, assessment and feedback practices must provide students with opportunities to be active participants in their own learning over the course of the programme.  
[Student Voice Policy](#)  
[Learning and Teaching Strategy \(login required\)](#)
- 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; whether and how co-creation with students forms any part of the assessment; when and how feedback will be returned to students.
- 4.3 Time must be embedded into the course for the discussion of assessment tasks, enabling students to understand the expectations of assessment and the criteria by which they will be assessed.
- 4.4 Unless stated otherwise, students should be able to make use of generative AI in their learning in line with the University's guidelines for students on the use of generative AI. The assessment task must make clear to students whether, and in what way, the use of generative AI is permitted for a particular assessment. If the use of generative AI is not permitted, or is permitted with restrictions, this must be clearly stated and explained alongside the assessment task. Further information regarding the use of generative AI is included in *8. Working with Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)*.

[Using generative AI in your studies: guidelines for students](#)

## **5. Peer Review of Assessment and Moderation of Marking**

- 5.1 Peer review should form part of the design and setting of assessment tasks, supporting their appropriateness, accuracy, clarity and overall quality.
- 5.2 Moderation of summative assessment and feedback must be carried out in accordance with Taught Assessment Regulation 31, ensuring consistency in standards and feedback quality.
- 5.3 Schools must align their moderation practices with the moderation guidance: **Moderation guidance (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 identifying how to improve. Where an assessment builds on prior formative assessment, feedback should be timely so that students can use it in their next assessment.
- 6.3 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.
- 6.4 Feedback may take a variety of forms, including individual, group, or whole-class (holistic) feedback, as appropriate to the nature of the assessment.
- 6.5 Holistic feedback may be appropriate for examinations where common strengths and areas for improvement can be identified across a cohort, but must not be used as the only form of feedback. Students must also have access to comments on their individual examination script which, together with any holistic feedback, enable them to understand how their mark was determined and how they can improve.
- 6.6 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 coursework 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 their agreed date of submission to receive feedback.
- 6.7 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 with interconnected elements that are in total equivalent to 40 credits or more (typically theses, dissertations and capstones), where independent double-marking is required
- 6.8 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, and to enable the feedback to be formally reviewed as part of internal moderation and External Examination processes.
- 7.2 Only systems, platforms and tools that are approved by Colleges and supported as necessary by Information Services, 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 (EIA), 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.

### **8. Working with Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)**

- 8.1 Assessment practices should support the responsible, critical and sustainable use of AI and, where appropriate, enable innovation.
- 8.2 Assessment practices must prioritise academic standards and the integrity of awards.
- 8.3 Staff must make students aware of the specific AI instructions for the particular assessment, and should remind them to familiarise themselves with the University's AI guidelines for students. Staff must also make students aware that (where permitted) they are responsible for using AI with integrity, and that their use must 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 wholly 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.
- 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 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage appropriately with assessment tasks, briefings and marking criteria.</li> <li>• Proactively seek support if unclear on what is required in an assessment.</li> <li>• Read, reflect on and act in future assessments upon the feedback provided.</li> <li>• Engage with assessments honestly and fairly, upholding academic integrity and principles on the use of AI.</li> </ul>
Course Organisers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design and manage assessment and feedback in accordance with this policy.</li> <li>• Engage in continuous professional development to enhance assessment and feedback practice.</li> <li>• Oversee and respond to actions and priorities for assessment and feedback as identified by Internal Moderators and/or External Examiners and via student voice mechanisms (e.g. SSLCs, course evaluation, NSS, PTES).</li> <li>• Ensure teaching teams (including tutors and demonstrators) are appropriately supported and trained to undertake the assessment responsibilities assigned to them.</li> </ul>

<p>Programme Directors/Directors of Teaching</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oversee and regularly review assessments within their programmes, ensuring continued alignment with this policy.</li> <li>• Provide leadership and direction to staff involved in teaching on the programme on assessment design and innovation.</li> <li>• Oversee programme-level assessments.</li> <li>• Oversee and respond to actions and priorities for assessment and feedback development identified by External Examiners or via student voice mechanisms (e.g. SSLCs, course evaluation, NSS, PTES).</li> </ul>
<p>Heads of School / Directors of Teaching/Directors of Quality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure adherence to this policy.</li> <li>• Undertake review of School assessment and feedback practices against the policy and wider guidance, identifying gaps and developing action plans for development.</li> <li>• Oversee and respond to actions and priorities for assessment and feedback development identified by External Examiners or via student voice mechanisms (e.g. SSLCs, course evaluation, NSS, PTES).</li> </ul>
<p>Internal Moderators</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake peer review of assessment and feedback.</li> <li>• Conduct moderation of assessed work, to ensure the consistency, fairness and reliability of marking and feedback.</li> <li>• Act as a critical friend, providing independent and constructive challenge on assessment and feedback practices, supporting continuous improvement.</li> </ul>
<p>Boards of Studies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure adherence to this policy.</li> <li>• Ensure that assessment methods and practices within courses and programmes in the School are academically appropriate, including learning outcomes, assessment tasks and assessment weightings</li> <li>• Ensure that assessments are proportionate to the SCQF credit level and volume, and that they align with the Edinburgh Student Vision and the Skills for Success Framework.</li> </ul>
<p>Boards of Examiners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>

Heads of Subject Area/Directors of Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure appropriate allocation of teaching expertise to assessment processes.</li><li>• 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.</li><li>• Ensure support and time is available for ongoing development of professional practice, CPD, in assessment and feedback.</li></ul>
College Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide fora for sharing best practice in assessment and feedback.</li><li>• Advise on areas of priority or development within the College.</li><li>• Oversee and respond to actions and priorities for College-wide assessment and feedback development identified by External Examiners or via student voice mechanisms (e.g. SSLCs, course evaluation, NSS, PTES).</li></ul>
Senate Education Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Oversee and maintain this policy.</li><li>• Advise on areas of priority and development at institution level.</li><li>• Prioritise training and development needs.</li><li>• Oversee and monitor progress against institution-level actions and priorities for assessment and feedback, such as those arising from external reviews (e.g. TQER).</li></ul>

## Senate Education Committee

7 May 2026

## The Future Operation of Challenge Courses – Options Appraisal

**Description of paper**

1. This paper sets out options for the continued operation of Challenge Courses (CCs) as the three-year pilot phase concludes, outlining how they could be sustained within a steady-state business-as-usual model, and assessing the strengths and limitations of each approach. The efficient and sustainable operation of CCs will contribute to meeting the aims of our Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030, particularly the core purpose of developing a future ready curriculum that offers students the opportunity to engage in research-led and challenge-based, reflective learning across disciplines.

**Fit with remit**

<b>Education Committee</b>	<b>Y/N</b>
Promote strategically-led initiatives and university-wide changes designed to enhance the educational experience of students and learners.	<b>Y</b>
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.	<b>Y</b>
Oversee policy relating to students' academic experience and proactively engage with high-level issues and themes arising from student feedback.	<b>Y</b>
Anticipate and prepare for new opportunities and likely future developments in learning and teaching for all cohorts of students and learners.	<b>Y</b>
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.	<b>Y</b>

**Action requested / recommendation**

2. SEC is requested to comment on and suggest a preferred approach for the ongoing operation of CCs following the pilot phase, allowing for the detailed work to proceed to establish the necessary arrangements to make the transition possible.
3. While a range of options has been considered, it is the view of the Curriculum Development and Innovation Group (CDIG) that sustaining an institution-wide portfolio of CCs requires coordinated oversight and scrutiny to ensure that courses: continue to operate in line with their distinctive design criteria; maintain

a clear and consistent identity across the University; and continue to be recognisable as a distinctive component of the University's educational offering.

4. The CDIG considers Options B and C presented below are best positioned to provide such institution level oversight and recommends that SEC gives consideration to these specific options, indicating any preference for a particular option.

### **Background and context**

5. At its meeting on 25 November 2025, SEC expressed support for the continuation of CCs, originally developed and piloted as part of the Curriculum Transformation Programme, and invited a paper outlining options for their continuation beyond the current pilot. SEC agreed that the current process for development, delivery and oversight of the suite of CCs should remain in place until a framework for their future operation as Business as Usual (BAU) has been agreed and is ready to be implemented (see SEC 25/26 2E).
6. This paper provides the committee with potential options for a “framework for approval processes, delivery and oversight of Challenge Courses as Business as Usual (steady state) in future” as promised in SEC 25/26 2E, point 15b. The paper has three main parts:
  - a. discussion of the current approach, including the processes and arrangements deemed necessary to design, deliver, assess and evaluate CCs, both at the level of the individual course and at the level of the overall portfolio, with particular focus on where these processes differ from or add to those in place for all other credit-bearing taught courses (paragraphs 7-12).
  - b. an outline of four different approaches, and their characteristics, that would enable continued CC operation as BAU (paragraphs 13-29).
  - c. a comparison of three of the four options (one option being ruled out due to resource implications) against the strategic vision for CCs, plus other evaluation criteria, including the feasibility of each option within our existing structures, processes and systems, with an appraisal of the respective advantages/disadvantages (paragraphs 30-39).

### **Discussion**

#### **Current Approach**

7. The current approach to the approval and oversight of CCs comprises two key stages, involving School Boards of Studies and a cross-University oversight group (CDIG). This structure reflects the need to: (1) adhere to existing processes for the approval of new courses, in line with the PCAM policy; and (2) ensure that approved courses additionally meet the specific criteria required for designation as a CC.

8. To be designated as a CC, a course must demonstrate that it adheres to a set of agreed design criteria, including interdisciplinarity in focus and teaching team delivery, a focus on a complex problem, alignment with at least one of four thematic categories (aligned with the University's research missions), there are no pre-requisites, there is opportunity for students to collaborate across programme/School boundaries. For the full set of design criteria for CCs <https://uoe.sharepoint.com/sites/TeachingLearningStrategy2030/SitePages/Challenge-Courses.aspx>.
9. The adherence to the agreed CC criteria is currently assessed by CDIG which serves to ensure consistency and balance across the portfolio of CCs in respect of the number of CCs, the spread and variety of courses, and the range of contributing Schools involved.
10. CDIG also oversees ongoing quality assurance and enhancement at the CC portfolio level, monitoring the ongoing fit of individual courses with the overall aims and taking into account enrolment figures as well as feedback from students, staff and external examiners. Courses in the pilot are currently approved as CCs for one year at a time, with re-approval by CDIG based on continued alignment. CDIG may decide that a course is removed from the CC portfolio where such alignment no longer exists.
11. CDIG may also encourage or invite the development of CCs where gaps in the portfolio exist, ensuring the portfolio remains agile and aligned with strategic priorities (including any future changes to research themes). CDIG further provides a mechanism and channel for ongoing dialogue with CC teams to escalate problems that may arise in the design and delivery of CCs that cannot be resolved at course or School level.
12. CC teams are currently supported by an academic lead, a professional services lead, and a community of practice that provide support for design and development of CCs and sharing of practice across course teams.

### Potential future operating models for Challenge Courses

13. CDIG has identified four possible models that could support the future delivery of CCs, each differing in the extent to which it supports the aim of maintaining a coherent portfolio of CCs, and also differing in the level of resource required (e.g. utilising existing structures and processes versus creating new ones). These are:
  - a. **New Single Unit Model** – involving the creation of a new dedicated, University-level unit, separate to any of the existing Schools/departments in existence. The unit, in effect would operate like a School having full responsibility for the ownership, approval, delivery, and governance of all CCs, but relying on teaching contributions from across Schools.
  - b. **Existing Single Unit Model** – utilising an existing structure (e.g. EFI) that already has all the necessary academic governance in place to manage the approval, delivery and oversight processes. CCs would be owned and

delivered by this unit on behalf of the University, with oversight and scrutiny provided through that unit's existing governance structures, with teaching contributions provided by contributing Schools.

- c. **Hybrid Model (Centrally coordinated, School-delivered)** – similar to the current operating approach where courses are owned and delivered by Schools, while the CC portfolio is governed, coordinated, and strategically managed at University-level by a specially constituted cross-University group.
  - d. **Fully distributed model** – course ownership and oversight sit entirely with Schools, with no University-level coordination or governance at the portfolio level.
14. Option A has been discounted at this stage due to its substantial resource requirements. In the current University context, this model is not considered a realistic or feasible option. The remainder of this discussion therefore focuses on a comparison of Options B, C, and D, as options that utilise existing structures and processes, setting out their respective strengths and limitations in relation to the University's strategic ambitions for CCs, and their effectiveness in supporting the delivery of a coherent and high-quality portfolio.
15. The successful ongoing delivery of a portfolio of CCs as part of BAU provision depends on maintaining robust processes for oversight and scrutiny to ensure that courses continue to operate in line with their distinctive design criteria, retain a clear and consistent identity across the University, and can be recognised as a distinctive component of the University's educational offering.

### **Option B – Existing Single Unit Model**

16. In this model, all CCs are delivered by a single existing unit (e.g. EFI) on behalf of the whole University. The unit is responsible for the approval of all CCs, using its existing Board of Studies processes to support the development of new CCs from design to publication in the DRPS.
17. The same single unit is also responsible for the support of teaching delivery (e.g., timetabling, staff/tutor recruitment & training, technical support, set up and maintenance of VLEs/Learn sites, processes around delivery of assessment) and QA processes, external examiner appointment, collection of feedback from students, course teams and EE to inform quality monitoring and enhancement).
18. The single unit would be responsible for resourcing both academic leadership for the portfolio of CCs (in a similar way to a Programme Director role) and provide administrative support from within its teaching office. The resourcing of this would be determined from the resource allocation sharing between the single unit and the Schools providing the teaching contributions.
19. The single unit would be responsible for regular evaluation of the portfolio of CCs as a whole, to ensure continued alignment with the aims and strategic priorities and continued alignment with the CC design principles.

20. Teaching teams involved in designing and delivering the courses and in assessing students work would continue to be drawn from across the University to maintain the distinctive inter-disciplinary nature of the courses, with fees income from the delivery of the CCs distributed to those Schools, as within our current model for income attribution.

### **Option C – Hybrid Model (Centrally coordinated, School-delivered)**

21. This model is closely aligned with the current structures and processes for the operation of CCs via the CDIG.
22. In this option, CCs are owned by Schools and several Schools are involved in the initial approval of courses based on their local Board of Studies processes (e.g., forms, timelines, etc.). Several Schools are also responsible for the support of teaching delivery (e.g., timetabling, staff/tutor recruitment & training, technical support, set up and maintenance of VLEs/Learn sites, processes around delivery of assessment etc.) as well as QA processes (external examiner appointment, collecting feedback from students and staff etc.). Academic staff within the course teams are located across several Schools, with fees income from the delivery of the CCs distributed to those Schools as within our current model for income attribution.
23. Oversight of the portfolio of CCs would rest with a University-level body within our governance structures and endowed with the power to make decisions about the inclusion of courses in the overall CC portfolio, to ensure ongoing alignment with the aims and design criteria (including potential future development of research themes, relevant elements of learning & teaching strategies or similar).
24. This body would require specifically created Terms of Reference (as the CDIG does) and a membership that facilitates expert scrutiny of all aspects relevant for the successful maintenance and delivery of the portfolio (e.g., pedagogy; resource needs including staff – both academic and professional services – and physical/digital estate; alignment with strategic priorities etc).
25. This body may be a sub group of SEC (as it currently is) to ensure balanced cross-University scrutiny and responsibility for CCs within our existing governance framework. A chair of the portfolio governance group would be required, and consideration would need to be given to academic leadership of the CC portfolio and professional services support. The role of the academic lead would be to guide and co-ordinate the work at portfolio level (somewhat similar to the responsibilities of a Programme Director) and act as conduit between the course teams and the portfolio governance group, and to support the necessary administrative processes required for the successful maintenance of the portfolio. A decision would need to be taken as to where these responsibilities are best placed and how they would be resourced.

**Option D – Fully distributed option**

26. In this approach, Schools are individually and separately responsible for their own CCs. There would be no additional central oversight of the CC portfolio.
27. Schools would be provided with the CC criteria and would make decisions through their own Boards of Studies regarding which courses should be determined as CCs.
28. Each School would utilise its own Board of Examiners and be responsible for securing a relevant External Examiner.
29. Schools would use their usual processes to oversee quality assurance and enhancements of CCs.

**Options Appraisal**

30. The Appendix provides further details on the key characteristics, advantages and disadvantages of each approach. Following is a high-level summary of the key pros and cons of each:
31. The **Single Unit model** offers the greatest potential for efficiency in the delivery and oversight of a coherent portfolio of CCs, as well as in ensuring a consistent student experience. Its effectiveness, however, depends on whether a single unit has the breadth of expertise and capacity required to oversee a diverse, interdisciplinary portfolio, and the extent to which such a portfolio fits with the wider remit of that unit. EFI would be a natural fit. Implementation would require the unit to commit to administering and managing the processes for CCs contributing an additional workload, which may require some upfront investment. As such, it is unlikely in the current context that any single unit might be in a position to assume these additional responsibilities in the short-term, but this option may be a medium to longer-term goal.
32. The **Fully Distributed model**, while making use of existing School-level processes, lacks mechanisms for portfolio-level oversight. This creates a risk that CCs lose their distinctiveness and coherence as a collective offering, and is likely to result in greater variation in the student experience. In particular, the absence of coordinated quality assurance arrangements may lead to inconsistency in approaches and delivery such that CCs are no longer a coherent portfolio.
33. The **Hybrid approach with central portfolio governance** combines key strengths of both approaches, enabling School-level ownership and delivery while maintaining oversight of the portfolio as a whole. However, its effectiveness depends on the continued operation of a clear and appropriately empowered oversight group, academic leadership and professional services support to ensure coherence, quality, and strategic alignment across the portfolio.

**Resource implications**

34. The resource implications depend on the approach taken.
35. Under the **Single Unit model**, key resource requirements include teaching office support to administer and deliver the courses, dedicated academic leadership (e.g. a fractional Programme Director role) to provide strategic and academic direction across the CC portfolio (c.15 courses), alongside professional services resource to support teaching operations and administration. While income would derive from student fees, this would need to be shared between the central unit and the Schools contributing teaching. The model therefore requires both upfront investment and ongoing coordination of resource flows.
36. The **Fully Distributed model** has the lowest additional resource requirement, as it relies on existing School-level processes and resourcing approaches. Courses are supported and delivered within current structures, with income distributed in line with established attribution models. As many CCs are adaptations of existing provision, resource implications are limited; where courses scale up, increased student numbers would be expected to generate corresponding income to support delivery.
37. The **Hybrid approach** also builds on existing School processes and therefore has relatively modest additional resource requirements at the point of delivery. The primary additional resource relates to portfolio-level oversight and coordination, including both academic leadership and professional services support. Some efficiencies may be realised by aligning this function with existing governance structures (e.g. SEC and related committees).
38. The precise resourcing implications will vary depending on the preferred model and implementation approach. The current pilot approach is supported by a 0.3 FTE academic lead and 0.3 FTE professional services role, with the chair and membership of the oversight group contributing within their roles/workloads. This approach is not BAU and so funding would need to be invested as core resource rather than the current project model.
39. Further work will therefore be required to determine the most appropriate configuration of roles, responsibilities, and resources, taking into account existing structures and institutional priorities.

**Risk management**

40. The development and delivery of pilot CCs was one of the successful outcomes from the Curriculum Transformation Programme. The collection of pilot CCs has been added to about 150 undergraduate DPTs and students are aware of them, selecting them as part of their outside electives. Not establishing a future framework of operating CCs as BAU (steady state), risks our ability to realise our aims for CCs and to realise their benefits in an efficient way, which will impact on our ability to meet the aims of our Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030,

particularly the core purpose of developing a future ready curriculum that offers students the opportunity to engage in research-led and challenge-based, reflective learning across disciplines.

### **Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals**

41. The continued offering of CCs responds to the SDGs
- 4 (Quality Education),  
with some of them specifically responding to
  - 3 (Good Health and Well-being)
  - 13 (Climate Action)
  - 15 (Life on Land)
  - 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions)
- including by aiming to equip students for taking action and working towards positive change in these areas

### **Equality & diversity**

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

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

43. Following agreement of a preferred model, a phased implementation plan will be developed across AY 26/27 to enable transition to the preferred approach. This will include clear communication to Schools, Colleges, and relevant professional services, setting out expectations, timelines, and any changes to roles and responsibilities.
44. Implementation will be supported through existing governance and operational structures, with appropriate oversight to ensure consistency and alignment with the agreed approach.
45. The impact of the chosen model will be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis, drawing on student, staff, and external examiner feedback, as well as portfolio-level data, to ensure that CCs continue to meet their intended aims and deliver a coherent and high-quality student experience.

### **Authors**

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20<sup>th</sup> April 2026

**Presenter**

Professor Sabine Rolle

**Freedom of Information:** Open

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Appendix 1: Comparison of Options for Continued Challenge Course Operation

Criterion	Single Unit Model (e.g. EFI)	Hybrid Model	Distributed Model
<b>Course ownership</b>	All Challenge Courses are owned and delivered by a single unit, ensuring full consistency of ownership and design.	Ownership of courses sits with several Schools involved, likely leading to greater commitment from School involvement. Challenge Course designation sits with University oversight group with coordination at the portfolio level.	Full ownership sits with Schools, with complete autonomy and no University-level coordination.
<b>Teaching contributions</b>	Teaching delivered by discipline experts drawn from across Schools but centrally coordinated and scheduled within the unit. Requires negotiation with Schools to secure staff time and ensure capacity, with potential tension between central demand and School priorities.	Teaching delivered by discipline experts within and across Schools, with contributions agreed through established workload planning processes in Schools. Other School contributions are confirmed via HoS sign-off and central oversight.	Teaching delivered by discipline experts within Schools, fully determined at local level with no central coordination; maximises local autonomy but may lose impact of interdisciplinarity/cross-School involvement.
<b>BoS / approval</b>	Single, unified approval route through the unit's governance structures, using its existing Board of Studies processes to support the development of new CCs from design to publication in the DRPS, ensuring consistency and streamlined decision-making.	School Boards of Studies approve courses using local processes, with additional portfolio-level oversight to designate courses as Challenge Courses to ensure alignment with overall aims, and production of Challenge Course catalogue.	Approval is entirely at School level, using local BoS processes only, with no cross-institutional alignment mechanism. Risk of losing oversight of distinctive Challenge Course criteria.
<b>Teaching administration</b>	Single unified approach to administration (timetabling, staff/tutor recruitment, VLE, assessment systems), enabling standardised processes and economies of scale.	Administration is distributed across Schools, using existing systems and support structures. However, there may be potential for coordination at the portfolio level in terms of timetabling, consistent agreed templates for operation.	Fully decentralised administration, with each School independently managing delivery processes, negotiating between Schools.
<b>Quality assurance</b>	Standardised QA processes embedded within the unit, enabling consistent monitoring and continuous improvement, maintaining clear oversight of courses and the overall portfolio.	QA remains School-based for courses, but is complemented by University-level portfolio oversight to ensure coherence and comparability. There is potential for greater coordination of QA at the portfolio level (e.g. standard course review forms that would allow for consistent reporting and comparison).	QA is entirely School-based, leading to potential variability in approach and losing sight of student voice/evaluation at the portfolio level.
<b>External examining</b>	Coordinated at the unit level with portfolio-wide oversight and consistency across all Challenge Courses. A single external examiner with interdisciplinary expertise able to look across courses.	External examining aligned to School disciplinary norms, with potential for portfolio-level thematic oversight through analysis and insight from external examiner reports.	External examining entirely managed at School level, with no portfolio-wide consistency or coordination.
<b>Resource allocation</b>	Resources allocation managed at the unit level, ensuring income from delivery is distributed to contributing Schools, removing effort from Schools.	Staff and income distributed across Schools, aligned to existing attribution models, with support from attribution model.	Resources allocated and managed entirely within and between Schools. Duplication of effort between Schools.

Criterion	Single Unit Model (e.g. EFI)	Hybrid Model	Distributed Model
<b>Portfolio management</b>	Integrated within the single unit, enabling direct alignment between delivery, governance, and strategic direction. Responsible for ongoing review and evaluation of the portfolio and its evolution.	A dedicated University-level body provides portfolio governance, ensuring strategic alignment, coherence, and oversight of Challenge Courses. Separation of portfolio oversight from individual course management may be beneficial to ensure a coherent, distinctive programme.	No portfolio-level governance; courses evolve independently with no mechanism for ensuring strategic alignment or coordination.
<b>Strategic coherence of portfolio</b>	High – full integration enables strong alignment with institutional priorities and consistent design principles, ensuring ongoing alignment with Challenge Course design principles.	Medium–High – coherence maintained through central portfolio governance, though delivery remains distributed.	Low – limited ability to ensure coherence or alignment across courses.
<b>Efficiency / duplication</b>	High efficiency through standardisation and reduced duplication of procedures and processes.	Moderate – some duplication remains due to dual School (Bos) and central processes in approving courses as Challenge Courses	Low efficiency due to duplication of effort and fragmented systems across Schools.
<b>Key Advantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operationally efficient</li> <li>Single BoS and External Examining processes.</li> <li>Whole portfolio can be assigned the same external examiner with expertise in interdisciplinary, challenge-based and experiential learning.</li> <li>Strategic coherence in terms of oversight and management of the portfolio</li> <li>A more consistent and coherent student experience likely with delivery through a single unit (e.g. communication, standard VLE use, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greater sense of ownership and participation from Schools if they have a greater stake in the process</li> <li>Opportunity for sharing and learning across Schools, building expertise in interdisciplinarity</li> <li>Student experience can be managed through oversight at the portfolio level, but variation in administrative processes likely to be experienced from multiple Schools involved (although with agreement some aspects could be standardised for all Challenge Courses).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greater sense of ownership and participation from Schools if they have a greater stake in the process</li> <li>Single approval process, each School uses its own BoS to approve courses as Challenge Courses.</li> </ul>
<b>Key Disadvantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools may feel less ownership and commitment and securing buy-in may be difficult</li> <li>The effectiveness of the approach depends on the fit and alignment between the unit's overall focus and interdisciplinary expertise.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requires an oversight group at University-level, although this could be embedded in existing University-level committees, such as SEC.</li> <li>Involves two approval levels – one School BoS to approve the course and one to approve designation as a Challenge Course</li> <li>Relies on School-based BoE processes.</li> <li>Challenges in finding several external examiners across multiple School exam board processes with sufficient experience/expertise in interdisciplinary and challenge-based learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No oversight of Challenge Courses as a coherent portfolio, leading to lack of distinctiveness and visibility.</li> <li>Benefits of sharing learning and building University-wide expertise in interdisciplinarity are lost due to lack of coordination at the portfolio level.</li> <li>Risk of drift over time in terms of alignment with the distinctive criteria of Challenge Courses</li> <li>Difficulty in ensuring the collection of Challenge Courses is coherent, aligned with research missions and</li> </ul>

Criterion	Single Unit Model (e.g. EFI)	Hybrid Model	Distributed Model
			<p>avoids unnecessary duplication or gaps across Challenges Courses collection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Danger that Schools are not incentivised to work with other Schools to deliver truly interdisciplinary courses.</li> <li>• Likely to lead to greatest variation in the student experience, from Schools operating in different ways and students having to operate across different School operating processes.</li> </ul>

**Senate Education Committee**

**7 May 2026**

**Standing Committees Annual Internal Effectiveness Review and Review of progress toward External Effectiveness Review Recommendations**

**Description of paper**

1. This paper informs the Senate Education Committee of the plans for the internal review of Senate and its Standing Committees’ effectiveness for 2025/26. Senate will be invited to approve the plans at its 19 May meeting.
  
2. This paper informs the Senate Education Committee of the plans to review the progress towards the recommendations of the External Effectiveness Review undertaken in 2022/23, ahead of the next external review expected to take place in 2027/28.

**Fit with remit**

<b>Education Committee</b>	<b>Y/N</b>
Promote strategically-led initiatives and university-wide changes designed to enhance the educational experience of students and learners.	<b>Y</b>
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.	<b>Y</b>
Oversee policy relating to students’ academic experience and proactively engage with high-level issues and themes arising from student feedback.	<b>Y</b>
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.	<b>Y</b>
Anticipate and prepare for new opportunities and likely future developments in learning and teaching for all cohorts of students and learners.	<b>Y</b>
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.	<b>Y</b>

**Action requested / recommendation**

3. The Senate Education Committee is invited to note the plans for the internal effectiveness review and is asked to engage with opportunities to provide feedback on Senate and the Senate Education Committee’s effectiveness.

4. The Committee is invited to note the plans to review the progress toward the recommendations of the external effectiveness review and the planned

### **Background and context**

5. The Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance 2023 (64) states:  
*“The governing body is expected to review its own effectiveness each year and to undertake an externally facilitated evaluation of its own effectiveness and that of its committees, including size and composition of membership, at least every five years. As part of these processes or separately, the effectiveness of the academic board (also known as Senate, Senatus Academicus or academic council) is expected to be reviewed similarly. These reviews should be reported upon appropriately within the institution and outside. Externally facilitated reviews should be held following any period of exceptional change or upheaval (allowing suitable time to see the effects of changes made), the usual timetable for externally facilitated review being brought forward, if necessary in these circumstances.”*
6. Prior to 2024/25, an annual internal effectiveness review survey of Senate members was undertaken. This survey had low engagement with approximately 16% of the membership responding to the survey.
7. The internal effectiveness process for Senate Standing Committees has also involved a self-reflective survey of members undertaken over the summer. The Committees have typically had a higher response rate than Senate, though are not consistently high. A survey of Senate Standing Committees is not a requirement for internal effectiveness activities.
8. In 2024/25, a post-meeting survey was introduced for Senate. This survey is circulated to Senate members after each ordinary meeting an analysis of the feedback and meeting metrics are published on the [Senate Members' Portal](#) alongside points of learning.
9. At its 1 October 2025 meeting, Senate received the [final report of the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group](#) (Paper S 25/26 1J) which provided an update on the completion of recommendations arising from the external review.

### **Discussion**

#### **Internal Effectiveness Review of Senate Standing Committees**

10. The plan for the internal effectiveness review for the Senate Standing Committees is to undertake a survey of Committee members focussed on the Committee's effectiveness. The survey will include targeted questions on actions taken in response to the external review recommendations. These will be on the following topics:
  - a. Recruitment and Induction
  - b. Senate Standing Committees and their relationship to Senate
11. The outcome of the survey will be reported to Senate alongside the annual report from the Standing Committees to Senate. These will be presented to the first Ordinary Senate meeting of 2026/27. The outcomes will also be reported back to each Standing Committee.

12. Senate will receive a paper at its 19 May meeting inviting it to approve the plans for the internal effectiveness of Senate and its Standing Committees. The Committee will receive an update on the internal effectiveness review following Senate's 19 May meeting.

### **Resource implications**

13. There are no additional resource implications as a result of the plans for internal effectiveness and these activities are undertaken as part of the annual review and enhancement activities for Senate and its Committees by Academic Quality and Standards.
14. If any actions are proposed, either in terms of the internal effectiveness review processes themselves or as a result of the review, the resource implications of these will be considered ahead of being recommended.
15. The review of progress toward external review recommendations has modest resource implications for Academic Quality and Standards. This is considered a priority to review progress and consider effectiveness of actions ahead of the next external review of Senate expected to take place in 2027-28.

### **Risk management**

16. The annual effectiveness review process assists the University in ensuring that its academic governance arrangements are effective.
17. The review of progress toward external review recommendations ensures that the University is making progress toward the agreed recommendations ahead of the next external review.

### **Equality & diversity**

18. Equality and diversity implications of committee work are considered on an ongoing basis. Consideration will be given to ensuring that enhanced internal effectiveness review processes are equitable and inclusive.
19. The University Lead for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is progressing actions in response to the EDI-focused recommendations arising from the external review of Senate. A survey on the effectiveness of these actions will be undertaken as part of annual effectiveness activities in the future.

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

20. Senate will also receive the annual report of Senate Standing Committees and this will include the results of the survey of Senate Committee members. This report will be presented to the first Ordinary meeting in 2026/27. The outcomes will also be reported back to each Standing Committee.

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Academic Quality and Standards

**Presenter**

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Deputy Vice-Principal Students  
(Enhancement)

April 2026

**Freedom of Information: Open**

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**Senate Education Committee**

**7 May 2026**

**Committee Membership 2026/27**

**Description of paper:**

1. This paper invites the Committee to note the membership of the Senate Education Committee for 2026/27.
2. This paper notifies the Senate Education Committee of the plans for an election of the Senate Education Committee Convener.

**Fit with remit**

<b>Education Committee</b>	<b>Y/N</b>
Promote strategically-led initiatives and university-wide changes designed to enhance the educational experience of students and learners.	<b>Y</b>
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.	<b>Y</b>
Oversee policy relating to students' academic experience and proactively engage with high-level issues and themes arising from student feedback.	<b>Y</b>
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.	<b>Y</b>
Anticipate and prepare for new opportunities and likely future developments in learning and teaching for all cohorts of students and learners.	<b>Y</b>
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.	<b>Y</b>

**Action requested / recommendation:**

3. The Committee is invited to note the membership and terms of reference and to advise of any further updates not already identified.
4. The Committee is invited to note the plans for the election of the Senate Education Committee Convener, including the proposed dates for an election.

**Background and context:**

5. The membership of the three Senate Standing Committees: Senate Education Committee (SEC), Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC), and Senate

Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC), are presented to Senate annually for approval.

6. Senate Standing Committees formally report to Senate annually, in addition to providing updates on upcoming business at each ordinary meeting of Senate. These committees feed into and out of College level committees (Undergraduate Education, Postgraduate Education, Quality Assurance) and specialist Support Services (Careers Service, Student Recruitment and Admissions, Registry Services) via committee membership. Therefore, some committee roles are ex officio to ensure that committee members have the appropriate knowledge, expertise, and accountability, to fulfil the committee remit, given their substantive roles and the responsibilities they carry in these positions.
7. The type of Standing Committee member and how and why they are appointed is as follows:

<b>Type of member</b>	<b>How and why they are appointed</b>
Ex-officio	By virtue of their position. For example, the College Deans of Quality are ex officio members of Quality Assurance Committee; Edinburgh University Students' Association Vice-President Education is an ex officio member of Education Committee.
Nominated	Nominated by Colleges with responsibility for and expertise in a particular, relevant area. For example, the Colleges shall each nominate two senior members of staff within the College with responsibility for learning and teaching.
Senate member	Elected by Senate to represent Senate Elected Members on standing committees. Elected academic staff members, Senate Assessors, and the Academic Staff Member of Court are eligible.
Co-opted members	Chosen by the convener for their expertise in a particular area, expected to serve for a time-limited period.
External member	Appointed from outwith the University due to their relevant skills, experience and external viewpoint. Only SQAC currently has an external member.

Source: [Senate Standing Committee members' guidance](#)

## **Discussion**

8. The membership for Senate Education Committee (SEC), will be presented to Senate for approval at its 19 May meeting. Changes to membership are marked in tracked changes and highlighted in yellow.
9. Members are asked to please confirm if there are any further amendments to membership. Any changes to membership will be presented to Senate at the next Ordinary meeting for noting.
10. All changes to membership will take place from 1 August 2026 unless otherwise stated.

11. The Committee term of reference remains unchanged and is published on the Academic Quality and Standards webpage:  
<https://registryservices.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/committees/education/terms-reference>

**Senate Education Committee Convener**

12. At the 10 December 2025 meeting, Senate approved an amendment to Paper S 25/26 21 as follows:  
*Senate agreed that an election by Single Transferable Vote (ranked choice) shall be held in a timely manner, process details to be decided by the Senate Clerk, to decide a Convener for SEC for the remainder of the academic year. All members of the Senate Education Committee shall be eligible to stand by self-nomination, and all members of Senate shall be eligible to vote.*
13. At its 4 March 2026 meeting, Senate was informed that Academic Quality and Standards were progressing the motion, however as this presents a significant change to practice, additional time was required to work through the implications of the approved amendment.
14. Due to the timing of the approved amendment, and the Education Committee meeting dates, it is considered to be a disproportionate use of staff time and resource to conduct an election to elect a Convener for the final meeting of the Education Committee to be held on 7 May 2026. Senate was informed at its 10 December meeting that the Deputy Convener would continue to convene the Committee in the interim. Therefore, it is proposed an election will be prepared to elect a Convener ahead of the 2026/27 academic year.
15. **Senate will be invited to confirm it still wishes to carry out an election by approving the proposed arrangements at its 19 May meeting.** The proposed dates for the elections are provided to the Committee for information:

Wednesday 20 May 2026	Nominations open
Wednesday 3 June 2026 (12 noon)	Nominations close
Wednesday 17 June 2026 (9am) to Wednesday 24 June 2026 (12 noon)	Voting open online
By Friday 3 July 2026	Results announced

16. The Senate Education Committee will receive an update on the election arrangements following Senate’s meeting on 19 May.
17. In the interim, the Deputy Convener of the Senate Education Committee will continue to act as Convener.
18. A review of the effectiveness of the Senate Education Committee will take place as part of the annual internal effectiveness review of Senate and its Committees. This will inform future arrangements for determining the Convener of the Education Committee beyond the 2026-27 academic year.

## **Resource implications**

19. There are workload implications for staff and students who become new members of Senate Standing Committees.
20. There are workload implications for the individual who is appointed to the role of Senate Education Committee Convener which equates to 0.2 FTE. This position has substantial responsibility across the University. The responsibilities for this position will be circulated to the members of the Committee once the details for the election are confirmed.
21. The School/College in which the individual is based will face significant workload implications, needing to release or make staff time available, potentially affecting its operational activities.

## **Risk management**

22. Appropriate membership of the Standing Committees supports effective academic governance and assists the University in managing risk associated with its academic activities.

## **Equality & diversity**

23. The composition of the Senate Standing Committees is largely determined according to defined role-holders (i.e. those with roles relevant to the work of the committee and therefore close relevant experience) or as nominees of particular stakeholders such as a College or the Students' Association and determined by the roles or positions held by those nominated. The membership is therefore largely set by appointment or election to relevant roles. Ensuring that appointment processes support a diverse staff body is part of the broader responsibility of the University and its employees in recruitment.

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

24. Details of the Senate Standing Committees' Membership and Terms of Reference are communicated via the [Academic Quality and Standards webpage](#).

### **Author**

Academic Quality and Standards  
April 2026

### **Presenter**

Professor Tina Harrison  
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Appendix 1: Senate Education Committee

Senate Education Committee - Composition

Role on SEC	Position	Name	Term	Member of Senate
Vacant – election to be held	Vacant – election to be held	(Convener)	Ex Officio	Ex Officio
Deputy Vice-Principal Students (Enhancement)	Deputy Vice-Principal Students (Enhancement)	Professor Tina Harrison (Deputy Convener)	Ex Officio	Ex Officio
2 x senior staff member from each College with responsibility for Learning and Teaching <b>(nominated by their College)</b>	Representative of CAHSS (Learning and Teaching)	TBC		Ex Officio
	Representative of CAHSS (Learning and Teaching)	Dr Lisa Kendall		No
	Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching)	Alexandra Laidlaw		No
	Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching)	Professor Gill Aitken		Ex Officio
	Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching)	Lorna Halliday		No
	Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching)	Professor Linda Kirstein		Ex Officio
1 x senior staff member from each College with responsibility for postgraduate research <b>(nominated by their College)</b>	Representative of CAHSS (Postgraduate Research)	Professor Laura Bradley		Ex Officio
	Representative of CMVM (Postgraduate Research)	Professor Ruth Andrew		Academic
	Representative of CSE (Postgraduate Research)	Professor Jamie Pearce		Ex Officio
1 x Edinburgh University Students'	Vice President Education,	Joana Mends	Ex Officio	Ex Officio

<b>Role on SEC</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Term</b>	<b>Member of Senate</b>
Association, Vice-President Education	Edinburgh University Students' Association			
1 x member of the Edinburgh University Students' Association permanent staff	Academic Engagement Coordinator, Edinburgh University Students' Association	Heather Innes	Ex Officio	No
1 x postgraduate research student representative	Postgraduate Research Student Representative	TBC		No
1 x Head of School from each College chosen by the Heads of College	Head of School, CSE	Professor Jason Love		Ex Officio
	Head of School, CAHSS	Professor Willem Hollman		Ex Officio
	Head of School, CMVM	Professor Lisa Boden		Ex Officio
3 x elected member of Senate	Representative of Senate	TBC	1 August 2026 - 31 July 2027	Academic
	Representative of Senate	TBC	1 August 2026 - 31 July 2027	Academic
	Representative of Senate	TBC	1 August 2026 - 31 July 2027	Academic
Head of Academic Quality and Standards or nominee	Head of Academic Quality and Standards	Nichola Kett	Ex Officio	No
1x member of staff from Academic Development or nominee	Head of Academic Development, Academic Quality and Standards.	Professor Cathy Bovill	Ex Officio	No
Director of Student Recruitment & Admissions, or nominee	Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions	Dr Shane Collins	Ex Officio	No
Director of Learning, Teaching and Web	Director of the Learning,	Dr Melissa Highton	Ex Officio	Ex Officio

<b>Role on SEC</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Term</b>	<b>Member of Senate</b>
Services Division of Information Services, or nominee	Teaching and Web Services Division of Information Services			
Director for Careers & Employability, or nominee	Director for Careers and Employability	Shelagh Green	Ex Officio	No
Up to 3 co-options chosen by the Convener <b>for their expertise</b>	Co-opted member (Head of Academic Planning – Registry Services)	Marianne Brown	1 August 2024 - 31 July 2027	No
	<b>Co-opted member TBC</b>	<b>TBC</b>	<b>TBC</b>	<b>TBC</b>
	Co-opted member (Student Experience)	Lucy Evans	1 August 2025 - 31 July 2028	No
Committee Secretary	Committee Secretary	Patrick Jack		No