

**The University of Edinburgh
Senate Education Committee**

**Thursday 5th March 2026, 2-5pm
Hybrid meeting: Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House
and via Microsoft Teams**

1. Attendance

Present:	Position:
Professor Tina Harrison	Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) (Vice-Convener)
Professor Gill Aitken	Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching)
Katya Amott	Vice President (Education), Students' Association
Professor Ruth Andrew	Representative of CMVM (Postgraduate Research)
Professor Sian Bayne	Assistant Principal Education Futures
Professor 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
Apologies:	
Professor Antonis Giannopoulos	Senate Representative
Patience Mulungi	Postgraduate Research Student Representative
In attendance:	
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 27th November 2025

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 27th 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 23rd 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 7th May 2026, 2-5pm. This will be a hybrid meeting, taking place in the Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House and via Microsoft Teams.