



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

Senate Education Committee
Thursday 15 October 2026 2-5pm
Room 0.10, Edinburgh Futures Institute / Microsoft Teams

Agenda

* Standing item

1.	Welcome and Apologies	
2.	Minutes of the previous meeting For approval • 7 May 2026 • Electronic meeting: 2 – 15 June 2026	SEC 26/27 1A SEC 26/27 1B
3.	Matters Arising • Convener's Communications • Action Log	
4.	SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS	
4.1	Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Plan* For discussion	SEC 26/27 1C
4.2	Student Surveys Update National Student Survey 2026; PTES Survey 2026: Results and Responses For noting and discussion <i>This paper is closed as it contains commercially sensitive information.</i>	SEC 26/27 1D CLOSED
4.3	Delivering improvements in student development opportunities and graduate outcomes For discussion <i>This paper is closed as it contains commercially sensitive information.</i>	SEC 26/27 1E CLOSED
4.4	University of Edinburgh Global Action Plan 2026-28 For discussion	SEC 26/27 1F
4.5	Students' Association Sabbatical Officer Priorities 2026/27 For discussion	SEC 26/27 1G

SEC 26/27 1

4.8	AI Update • Generative AI in Education: training development and guidelines update ○ Student training course – for information ○ Staff training approach – for discussion ○ AI student guidelines – for endorsement • Towards a University approach to AI in learning, teaching and assessment For discussion	SEC 26/27 1H SEC 26/27 1I
4.9	LEARN Template Updates For discussion	SEC 26/27 1J
4.10	Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) Institutional Questions For approval	SEC 26/27 1JJ
5.	ITEMS FOR UPDATE	
5.1	Assessment and Feedback Policy Implementation* For noting	SEC 26/27 1K
5.2	Learning and Teaching Workstream* For noting	Verbal update
5.3	Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group Update* For noting	SEC 26/27 1L
5.4	Student Success – Awarding Group Update For noting	SEC 26/27 1M
5.6	Internal Effectiveness Review of Senate Standing Committees 2025/26 For noting	SEC 26/27 1N
5.7	Committee Administration: • SEC Membership • SEC Terms of Reference For noting	
6.	Any Other Business	
7.	Date of next meeting Thursday 26 th November 2026, 2-5pm Hybrid meeting: Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House & Microsoft Teams	

The University of Edinburgh
Senate Education Committee

Thursday 7th May 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)
Professor Ruth Andrew	Representative of CMVM (Postgraduate Research)
Professor Sian Bayne	Assistant Principal Education Futures
Professor Lisa Boden	Head of School, CMVM
Professor Laura Bradley	Representative of CAHSS (Postgraduate Research)
Professor Mary Brennan	Representative of CAHSS (Learning and Teaching)
Marianne Brown	Head of Academic Planning, Registry Services
Professor Antonis Giannopoulos	Senate Representative
Shelagh Green	Director for Careers and Employability
Lorna Halliday	Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching)
Dr Melissa Highton	Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Services; Assistant Principal Online and Open Learning
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)
Professor Jamie Pearce	Representative of CSE (Postgraduate Research)
Professor Patrick Walsh	Senate Representative
Patrick Jack	Committee Secretary, Academic Quality and Standards
Apologies:	
Katya Amott	Vice President (Education), Students' Association
Professor Cathy Bovill	Head of Academic Development, Academic Quality and Standards
Dr Shane Collins	Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions
Dr Sam Coombes	Senate Representative
Lucy Evans	Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary, Students
Alex Laidlaw	Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching)
Professor Jason Love	Head of School, CSE
Patience Mulungi	Postgraduate Research Student Representative
In attendance:	
Cristina Matthews	Senior Academic Quality and Standards Manager (Projects), Academic Quality and Standards

Professor Sabine Rolle	Challenge Courses Lead, Edinburgh Futures Institute
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The Vice-Convenor 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 5th March 2026

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 5th March 2026 as a full and accurate record.

3. Matters Arising

Convenor's Communications

- **National Review of Awarding Arrangements**

The Vice-Convenor informed members that the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) has published the guide for institutions regarding the National Review of Awarding Arrangements in Scotland, including an overview of the review methodology and associated timelines. The Committee noted the deadline of 8 May 2026 for institutions to volunteer to be considered to be part of the sample. Members further noted the QAA's intention to notify institutions by 18 May 2026 as to whether or not they would be included within the review sample. All selected institutions will be required to complete a self-evaluation via a templated document.

- **Senate Standing Committees - Priorities Process**

The Vice-Convenor noted the proposal being taken to the May meeting of Senate to formally disband the process of Senate Standing Committees setting annual priorities. Members were informed that if Senate does not approve the disbanding of the priorities, then Academic Quality and Standards (AQS) will develop an alternative proposal to bring to the first SEC meeting of 2026/27.

Action Log

- **School-Level Pastoral Support for Postgraduate Research (PGR) Students**

Members were informed that moving forward, instead of establishing a short-life working group reporting to SEC, the Student Administration Review will take ownership of this area of work in partnership with College Heads of Academic Administration. The Director of Student Wellbeing is working with the Review's Project Leads in order to ensure that the development of this support provision is encapsulated within the wider Review. The Project Leads have indicated that they would be happy to provide an update on this work to a future meeting of SEC.

College PGR Deans are working with Communications and Marketing (CAM) around

developing communications to PGR students in order to better publicise existing support services. A member suggested that, in addition to relevant communications, a short-term focus on the implementation of adjustments would be beneficial.

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

The Committee was provided with an update on the meeting of 4 May 2026 between Study and Work Away (SWAY) and College colleagues. The meeting provided a helpful update for Colleges in terms of the current status of the University's Erasmus+ Re-association Action Plan, as well as key action being taken around the wider mobility strand. College colleagues used the meeting as an opportunity to discuss the Action Plan's strategic position in relation to the implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy, as well as the Academic Size and Shape project.

Members noted that the University has submitted its application for the Erasmus+ Charter for Higher Education, with a decision expected by 24 September 2026. Subject to approval, this will enable access to Erasmus+ funding for students, staff, and recent graduates from 2027/28 onwards. The University would subsequently submit its first post-Brexit Erasmus+ funding bid in early 2027. The Action Plan is currently being drafted and its development covers ten strands. Should any concerns emerge during this process relating to quality assurance, these will be directed to Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC). It was further noted that potential regulatory issues regarding mandatory exchanges may surface during this process; SWAY are liaising with AQS and the School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures regarding this matter.

It was highlighted that an update on Erasmus+ re-association has been included within the SEC forward agenda for autumn 2026.

4. Substantive Items

4.1 Assessment and Feedback Policy

The Vice-Convenor introduced the paper for approval, noting thanks to colleagues within Colleges and AQS for undertaking extensive consultation on the draft policy since the previous meeting of SEC. Members were provided with a summary of notable amendments made to the finalised draft of the policy from its previous iteration. It was noted that the policy now begins with a set of principles underpinning assessment and feedback practice. This is partially in recognition of the positive feedback received in relation to the Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities, and partly to recognise that some elements of the previous iteration of the policy were points of principle as opposed to mandatory policy. The Vice-Convenor highlighted that, since the previous meeting of SEC, the QAA had issued further information regarding expectations of assessment and therefore stronger wording around mapping assessment to course learning outcomes may be required.

Members noted that, if approved, information regarding the new policy would be communicated to staff via AQS's annual new and updated policies email prior to the start of the 2026/27 academic year, as well as through briefing sessions to Colleges and Schools.

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

- In terms of QAA requirements around intended learning outcomes being met when awarding credit, it was suggested that the wording in section 2 be reverted to the previous iteration of the draft policy in order to ensure that explicit mapping of assessments to course learning outcomes is undertaken. Timelines of this expectation would follow in the accompanying guidance document.
- Some accredited programmes use a matrix to map course learning outcomes to graduate attributes. These could be used as an example of good practice when developing an approach for mapping assessments to course learning outcomes.
- In relation to section 2.5, courses should be designed in accordance with the appropriate SCQF Level Descriptors in order to ensure QAA compliance. Colleagues can be guided around the amount of expected student effort required to complete individual assessments.
- It was suggested that 3.1 references “staff involved in the delivery and support of teaching and assessment”.
- Remove “or marks” from section 4.2.
- Change “should” to “must” in sections 5.1, 6.2, 7.2 and 7.3.
- Remove “feedback” from section 5.2.
- The moderation guidance referenced in section 5.3 is currently in development and will be taken to APRC for approval at its next meeting in May 2026.
- Section 6.5 mandates student access to feedback on individual exam scripts. A member commented that the provision of individualised feedback on exams risks significant impact on workload for some colleagues, particularly those delivering large courses. Workload allocations may potentially need revised within some Schools should individualised feedback on exams be mandated.
- Individualised feedback on exam scripts in order to better capture the rationale of the mark awarded would be beneficial for students, moderators and external examiners.
- Concern was noted from a member around the return of scripts for multiple choice question (MCQ) exams, as this would mean that questions could not be used again in future exams.
- Holistic, class-wide feedback should be provided for summative assessments. There are excellent examples of holistic feedback across the University which could be collated in order to share good practice.
- Comments received from Colleges regarding the exceptions listed in section 6.7 relating to 40-credit capstones are valid and a different form of wording is therefore required.
- In relation to section 7.2, approval of systems, platforms and tools at the College level helps mediate against risks to assessment processes and ensures that the software students are required to engage with is appropriately supported. However, a better way to work collectively across all levels of the institution should be sought in order to support innovations.
- Sections 7 and 8 relate to learning technology and generative AI, however this is not covered within the roles and responsibilities covered in section 9. Could this be included?
- Support was highlighted for changing relevant text to “generative AI” throughout the policy.

- It was suggested that sections 8.4 and 8.7 are combined. Members supported this suggestion.
- Section 9 outlines that Heads of Subject Area must ensure that feedback is returned to students within the expected feedback turnaround times. It was noted that this could be challenging within the current financial context and due to the impact of the Academic Size and Shape project.
- There is high overlap in accountability across the various roles listed in section 9, particularly for Directors of Teaching. Could this be clarified?
- The policy neither mandates nor prohibits programmatic assessment.

Members were thanked for their valuable input and the Vice Convener noted that the suggested minor changes to the policy raised by members would be taken into consideration. The Committee subsequently approved the policy in principle, subject to further policy revisions being made and a final iteration being circulated to members electronically for final approval.

Action: Deputy Vice Principal Students (Enhancement) and Academic Quality to finalise the policy and circulate to membership for electronic approval.

4.2 Future Operation of Challenge Courses – Options Appraisal

The Challenge Courses Lead introduced members to the paper, outlining the potential options for a future framework for steady state Business as Usual (BAU) approval processes, delivery and oversight of Challenge Courses (CCs). In identifying potential options, it was noted that staff and students were engaged with and benchmarking was undertaken across other institutions. The Committee was subsequently provided with a brief summary of the four potential approaches (options A-D) alongside their strengths and limitations, with it being highlighted that option A was no longer under consideration due to resource implications.

The Committee was requested to comment on a preferred approach in order to establish the necessary arrangements for transitioning from the pilot phase to BAU. Members were informed that the Curriculum Development and Innovation Group (CDIG) is of the view that sustaining an institution-wide portfolio of CCs requires coordinated oversight and scrutiny to ensure that courses operate consistently across the University, and that options B and C are best positioned to provide such institution level oversight. The Vice-Convener notified members that a project bid had been endorsed to receive funding for 2026/27 via the Learning and Teaching Workstream. The funding will enable this work to be taken forward next academic year.

In considering the proposed approaches, members raised a number of comments including: there is benefit in having a portfolio of CCs which is curated at the University-level rather than more localised areas in order to promote visibility; while interdisciplinarity is supported, creating additional layers of bureaucracy should be avoided; our current model of bought-in or seconded teaching from Schools is high cost and requires intensive administrative resourcing; option C would be beneficial if there was clear, defined information around resource and central stewardship; option D risks losing interdisciplinary elements; using course enrolment data to identify the spread of students taking CCs could help inform which

approach to pursue; taking into account curriculum review and curriculum framework development, a hybrid model would provide due consideration and oversight of pilot provision already in place and relevant evaluation criteria.

The Vice-Convenor noted the consistency of views across members that there is support for CCs generally, as well as support for oversight and management at the portfolio level in order to curate CCs and ensure that they successfully deliver what is required of them. The importance of evaluating current pilot courses and whether they ought to continue, as well as how new CCs can be introduced and how they align with relevant research missions was highlighted. The Committee subsequently noted its preference for option C in the short term. The Vice Convenor recommended that a standing group be established via the Learning and Teaching Workstream in the near future to provide oversight of CCs.

Members were thanked for their feedback and it was noted that future updates on this work would be provided to SEC throughout 2026/27.

5. Items for Update

5.1 Learning and Teaching Workstream Update

The Assistant Principal Education Futures provided a verbal update around generative AI. Members noted that a team led by Educational Design and Engagement is being established to provide generative AI training to students. It is hoped that this training provision will be in place by September 2026.

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

Members noted the content of the paper, which informed the Committee of the plans for the internal review of Senate and its Standing Committees' effectiveness for 2025/26. It was noted that Senate will be invited to approve the plans at its 19 May meeting.

The Committee further noted 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.

5.3 Membership and Terms of Reference 2026/27

The Committee noted the content of the paper, outlining SEC's membership and terms of reference for 2026/27, as well as noting the plans for the election of the Senate Education Committee Convenor.

The Vice Convenor thanked members who would no longer form part of the Committee's membership next academic year. It was highlighted that the term of one of the Committee's Co-opted members would end on 31 July 2026. The Committee subsequently approved the renewal of the Assistant Principal Education Futures' Co-opted membership.

Members noted that the process to appoint a new Convenor to SEC will be agreed by Senate in due course.

6. Any Other Business

No items of further business were raised by members.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 15th October 2026, 2-5pm. This will be a hybrid meeting, taking place in Room 0.10, Edinburgh Futures Institute, and via Microsoft Teams.

**The University of Edinburgh
Senate Education Committee**

**Minutes of the electronic meeting held between
Tuesday 2 June 2026 and Monday 15 June 2026**

1. Attendance

The following members were invited to participate in the electronic meeting:

Member:	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
Professor Antonis Giannopoulos	Senate Representative
Shelagh Green	Director for Careers and Employability
Lorna Halliday	Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching)
Dr Melissa Highton	Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Services; Assistant Principal Online and Open Learning
Professor Willem Hollmann	Head of School, CAHSS
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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
Patience Mulungi	Postgraduate Research Student Representative
Professor Jamie Pearce	Representative of CSE (Postgraduate Research)
Professor Patrick Walsh	Senate Representative
Patrick Jack	Committee Secretary, Academic Quality and Standards

2. Context

At its meeting in May, Senate Education Committee (SEC) approved the proposed new Assessment and Feedback policy, subject to the agreed amendments listed

below. The updated wording of the policy to reflect the agreed amendments was incorporated into a revised policy document circulated to the Committee via e-business. SEC was requested to approve the revised policy.

Main amendments

- Course assessments are mapped to the course learning outcomes (2.1).
- There is evidence of how programme learning outcomes will be achieved (2.7).
- Amendments of 'should' to 'must' on several points, as agreed during the meeting.
- Amendment to clarify that where there are competence standards, this must be included in the assessment information (4.2).
- Removed reference to feedback as TAR 31 refers to moderation of assessment (5.2).
- Amendment to reflect the fact that individual exam scripts may have comments, but this is not mandated for all exams (6.5).
- Amendment to clarify that staff cannot add further exceptions to the turnaround rule (6.7), unless these are approved by the relevant College Committee (6.9).
- Addition of a further example to 6.7 of capstone or final projects that have fewer than 40 credits, to account for such courses in CSE and CMVM.
- Section 7 on Learning Technologies has some amendments as confirmed by Melissa Highton.
- Section 8 on Working with Generative AI has an amended heading to include Agentic AI, as this is the approach taken with the AI Guidance for Students. References to AI in this section have been amended to 'generative AI'. 8.4 has been combined with 8.6.
- Amendment to note that where staff have used generative AI to support the assessment process, this must be made clear to students, and that ELM should be used where suitable (8.5).
- Section 9 has a new row to reflect roles and responsibilities of Learning Technologists and IS. Removed duplication of Directors of Teaching from row for Heads of School and Directors of Quality in order to avoid duplicating areas of responsibility.

3. Meeting

SEC held an electronic meeting via email correspondence between Tuesday 2 June 2026 and Monday 15 June 2026 to review the revised policy and approve the content after the amendments had been included. **All twenty-eight members of SEC** were invited to respond with their explicit agreement or disagreement that the revised Assessment and Feedback policy be approved.

It was previously noted that, if approved, the Policy would be introduced for the beginning of the 2026/27 academic year. Following approval, 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.

Five members of the Committee responded with their explicit approval for the revised policy. Non-responses were taken as assent.

Two members raised their discomfort with some of the wording within the policy and suggested alternative wording. The two members did not however explicitly disagree that the policy be approved. The Vice-Convenor responded to both members with further rationale relating to the wording in question, and noted that specific elements could be elaborated on within the forthcoming supplementary guidance.

As the decision to approve was the majority view of the Committee, the Assessment and Feedback policy was approved.

Patrick Jack
Secretary, Senate Education Committee
Academic Quality and Standards Manager
Academic Quality and Standards
Registry Services

July 2026

Senate Education Committee

15 October 2026

Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Plan

Description of paper

1. This paper presents the Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Plan for academic year 2026/27.

Fit with remit

Education Committee	Y/N
Promote strategically-led initiatives and university-wide changes designed to enhance the educational experience of students and learners.	Y
Promote innovations in learning, teaching and assessment, embrace new teaching methods and consider cross-cutting themes such as research-led and technology-enhanced learning, digital and information literacy, education for employability, internationalisation and lifelong learning. Consider and promote local developments or initiatives with substantial implications for University learning and teaching strategy, policy, services or operations.	Y
Oversee policy relating to students' academic experience and proactively engage with high-level issues and themes arising from student feedback.	Y
Anticipate and prepare for new opportunities and likely future developments in learning and teaching for all cohorts of students and learners.	Y

Action requested / recommendation

2. SEC is asked to discuss the Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Plan

Background and context

3. The Learning and Teaching Strategy (LTS) was approved by SEC in February 2025. Since then, work has been underway to develop an implementation plan for the Strategy.
4. During AY 2025/26, work on the LTS was taken forward through the Curriculum Development strand of the Learning and Teaching Workstream. This strand focused on progressing key elements developed through the Curriculum Transformation Programme (CTP), including the Skills for Success Framework (SFSF), experiential learning and challenge courses.
5. At the start of the current academic year, a new project was established within the Learning and Teaching Workstream to provide resource for academic year 2026/27 to support key elements of the Learning and Teaching Strategy. This includes work to support the SFSF and Challenge Courses; the AI Innovation in Teaching project; the development of AI training for students and staff; and work led by Academic Development to develop a framework for professional

development and CPD for teaching. Together, these activities provide the staff support, development opportunities and capacity needed to underpin and enable curriculum development.

6. The implementation plan (see Appendix) brings together the work captured within this project with other work already underway that supports the different pillars of the Learning and Teaching Strategy. It provides a coordinated and consolidated view of the activity planned for the current academic year, bringing together the key elements of the Strategy and providing greater clarity on priorities, the work required to take these forward, the individuals and teams responsible for delivery, and the areas where active involvement or action from Schools is required.
7. The implementation plan is supported by [guidance for Schools](#), alongside a [timeline setting out key expectations](#) that will have an impact on programme and course changes between now and 2030. This is intended to support Schools in planning and managing changes through Boards of Studies in a coordinated and coherent way, ensuring that changes are appropriately sequenced and aligned with ongoing portfolio and programme reviews. The aim is to provide greater clarity on the timing and interdependencies of changes, support effective planning, and reduce duplication of effort by enabling related changes to be considered and progressed together.
8. The guidance will evolve as necessary as implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy progresses.

Discussion

9. The development of the Learning and Teaching Strategy was partly in response to the recommendations arising from the QAA ELIR 2021 and QAA QESR 2023, but also reflected a need to provide greater clarity and strategic direction for learning and teaching across the University. Much has changed in the short time since the Strategy was first developed, but these changes reinforce the case for the direction it sets out.
10. The case for the Learning and Teaching Strategy, and its focus on a future-ready curriculum, empowering and engaging learners, and supporting colleagues to deliver this, is stronger than ever. The context in which our students learn, graduate and build their careers is changing rapidly. The graduate labour market is challenging and competitive, employers are placing increasing value on higher-order skills, and AI is reshaping both the nature of work and the skills required to succeed, as well as the learning and teaching environment. At the same time, our graduate outcomes data reinforces the importance of ensuring that students leave the University with the knowledge, skills, confidence and experience to navigate these changes successfully.
11. These developments reinforce the direction of the Strategy that emphasises the key foundations students need to navigate an uncertain and changing future. In particular, the Skills for Success Framework, experiential and challenge-based learning, and stronger connections between learning and the world beyond

university are increasingly important in preparing students not only for their first destination, but for sustained career development and adaptability.

12. The changing AI landscape also makes this work even more pressing. The response cannot simply be to make learning and assessment 'AI-proof'. Instead, we need to be clearer about the distinctive contribution of a University of Edinburgh education: one based on developing deep knowledge and understanding alongside the human capabilities that enable graduates to exercise judgement, think critically, interpret and evaluate information, communicate, collaborate, adapt and use technology responsibly. This points towards a stronger emphasis on skills development, supporting students to become confident practitioners in their fields through more experiential, authentic and engaging approaches to learning and assessment, where they can apply knowledge, solve problems, work collaboratively and reflect on their development.
13. The Academic Size and Shape work creates an important opportunity to translate the Learning and Teaching Strategy into the programmes we offer. As Schools consider the future shape and size of their portfolios, there is an opportunity to use the Learning and Teaching Strategy as a catalyst for curriculum renewal: developing programmes that are distinctive and attractive to students, connected to future skills and careers, and designed around the learning experiences that will best prepare students for a changing world.
14. Our Learning and Teaching Strategy provides the framework and shared direction for this work, while recognising that the detailed design choices remain with Schools and programme teams. Future-ready education will not look the same across disciplines, and the Strategy should be interpreted in ways that are meaningful for different subjects, disciplines and pedagogical traditions, while responding to the different career pathways and futures that students pursue. Schools and programme teams are best placed to determine for example how skills, experiential learning, challenge and authentic assessment should be embedded within their particular contexts.
15. Our Learning and Teaching Strategy provides both a distinctive vision and a practical framework for responding to the changing environment in which our students learn, graduate and build their careers. This context presents both challenges and opportunities. The opportunity is to accelerate implementation of the Strategy and ensure that our students develop the knowledge, skills and experiences they need to thrive in a changing world.

Resource implications

16. The implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy will have resource implications for Schools, particularly in relation to curriculum development and changes to programmes and courses. The guidance accompanying the implementation plan seeks to help Schools manage these implications by suggesting ways to coordinate changes in a coherent and planned way, aligned with ongoing portfolio and programme review activity. This should help Schools to

sequence related activity, reduce duplication and make effective use of existing programme review and approval processes.

17. Resource has been made available through the Learning and Teaching Workstream to support specified deliverables within the implementation plan. This includes support for Schools in embedding key elements of the Strategy, such as embedding the Skills for Success Framework (SFSF), alongside guidance, resources and other materials designed to support implementation. These resources and the support available are set out in the accompanying guidance.
18. Additional support will be available to assist Schools with the embedding of the SFSF through a limited amount of intern resource managed by the SFSF team. The intention is to provide practical support to Schools while building capacity and capability for longer-term implementation.
19. A key element of the Strategy is the development of a framework for professional development and CPD for teaching. This is intended to provide the support and development opportunities needed by colleagues involved in teaching, while building the ongoing capacity and capability for teaching development across the University. This work will therefore be an important enabler of the wider implementation of the Strategy and the curriculum developments it seeks to support.

Risk management

20. There are risks to learning and teaching and the student experience if the Learning and Teaching Strategy is not implemented effectively. Without a clear and coordinated Strategy, the University would lack a unified direction for its education goals, with a risk that progress towards the ambitions set out in Strategy 2030 is inconsistent or not achieved.
21. There are also risks for our students and graduates. If we do not continue to develop the curriculum, learning experiences and skills of our students in response to a changing labour market, there is a risk that graduates are less well equipped to compete for employment and adapt to changing career opportunities. This could, in turn, affect graduate outcomes and the University's reputation for the quality and relevance of its education.
22. Finally, there is a risk associated with not addressing the recommendations arising from the QESR. Failure to demonstrate sufficient progress with the Learning and Teaching Strategy could have implications for the University's next external review and its ability to evidence effective enhancement of learning and teaching.
23. The implementation plan, accompanying guidance and ongoing support through the Learning and Teaching Workstream are intended to mitigate these risks by providing clear priorities, coordinated activity, defined responsibilities and practical support for Schools in taking forward the Strategy.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

24. A key element of the Future Ready Curriculum strand of the Strategy includes a focus on learning for climate and nature. By 2030, all students will have a meaningful climate and nature learning experience in their programme. The Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030 is also contributing to the following SDGs:



Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all



Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all

Equality & diversity

25. Equity, diversity and inclusion have been, and continue to be, major considerations of the Learning and Teaching Strategy. EDI is a core value underpinning Strategy 2030 and the Learning and Teaching Strategy. An EqIA was conducted for the Strategy and can be seen here:

[Academic Registrars Office-Learning and Teaching Strategy 2025.pdf](#)

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

26. The implementation plan will be communicated to all Heads of School. College Education Committees will be asked to communicate and discuss the plan with Directors of Education/Teaching, raise awareness of the expectations for Schools, and support coordinated implementation across their areas.

27. Schools will be asked to report on progress in implementing the Strategy through their existing quality assurance reporting processes. An update on progress against the implementation plan will also be reported to SEC at the end of the academic year.

Author

*Professor Tina Harrison
1st October 2026*

Presenter

Professor Tina Harrison

Freedom of Information (*Is the paper 'open' or 'closed'*)

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

Appendix - Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Plan, 2026/27

<i>Developing a Future-Ready Curriculum</i>				
Priority	High-Level Vision	<i>Where do we want to be? By 2030</i>	<i>How will we achieve this? Specific Actions for 2026/27</i>	<i>Who will implement it? Action owners</i>
Explore Within and Across Disciplines	Disciplinary depth will remain an essential focus of our degree programmes. In addition, we will provide increased opportunities for transdisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary learning opportunities.	Curriculum Design and Development - By 2030, we will have a revised Framework for Curricula and Models for Degree Types, underpinning a future-ready curriculum that integrates disciplinary knowledge, skills development, experiential and challenge-based learning, enabling graduates to thrive in a rapidly changing world. Embedding Skills for Success Framework - By 2030, the Skills for Success Framework will be fully <u>embedded</u> within programme and course design, <u>surfaced</u> through teaching and learning, and	Curriculum Design and Development - Review and approve a revised Framework for Curricula and Models for Degree Types for implementation. Embedding Skills for Success Framework - All new and existing programmes and courses submitted to Boards of Studies from 2026/27 onwards will be expected to engage with the Skills for Success Framework, including where proposals are submitted for reasons not directly related to Skills for Success implementation, to ensure consistent integration of skills development across the curriculum. - Develop and implement Learn templates to support Schools in embedding and explicitly surfacing Skills for Success within courses and programmes. - Develop and pilot a PebblePad portfolio approach in collaboration with pilot Schools to support students to capture, reflect on,	- College Deans of Education, approval by APRC. Schools and Colleges (BoS and Curriculum Approval Committees)* - IS LTW with SFSF Team - IS LTW with SFSF Team and pilot Schools
Research-Led	As a research-intensive university, we will continue to ensure that our teaching benefits from our research.			
Challenge Based	We will position our curriculum to meaningfully			

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	embed discussions of global challenges and provide opportunities for our students to become immersed in real-world problems and addressing society's most pressing issues.	effectively <u>articulated</u> by students.	and articulate the skills developed through their learning.	
Experiential, Reflective, and Practice Based	We will increase opportunities for our students in experiential and practice-based learning in programmes.	Challenge-based and Experiential Learning - By 2030, experiential learning will be embedded across all programmes, supporting the development of work-related learning. - By 2030, challenge-based learning will be established as a distinctive feature of the curriculum through both in-programme opportunities and a portfolio of 12–15 University-wide interdisciplinary Challenge Courses, enabling students to engage with society's most pressing challenges, through collaborative, real-world problem-solving. Climate and Nature in the Curriculum - By 2030, all students will have access to climate and nature learning experiences that are meaningfully	Challenge and Experiential Learning - Develop and approve institutional definitions and principles for challenge-based and experiential learning, to support consistent implementation and future growth of in-programme learning opportunities. - All new programmes submitted to Boards of Studies for approval in 2026/27 will be expected to give consideration to challenge-based and experiential learning opportunities. - Expand the Challenge Courses pilot through the delivery of eight existing courses and the launch of three additional courses during 2026/27. - Develop and agree a business-as-usual operating approach for Challenge Courses, including governance, resourcing and delivery requirements, to support the sustainable delivery of Challenge Courses beyond 2026/27. Climate and Nature in the Curriculum - All new programmes submitted to Boards of Studies for approval in 2026/27 will be expected to give consideration to climate	- Experiential Learning and Challenge Course leads via Curriculum Development and Innovation Group, to be approved by SEC. Schools and Colleges (BoS and Curriculum Approval Committees)* - Challenge Course Lead - Challenge Course Lead, to be approved by SEC Schools and Colleges (BoS and Curriculum Approval Committees)*

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		embedded in their curriculum, with every student completing at least 20 credits of climate and nature learning within their degree programme Decolonising the Curriculum By 2030, every programme will have been reviewed through a decolonising lens and identified and implemented appropriate changes to curriculum content, teaching and assessment.	and nature learning experiences in the design of the programme. 10. Develop and agree institutional definitions and principles for meaningfully embedding climate and nature in the curriculum, reflecting differences across academic disciplines and schools. 11. Deliver a special sustainability call for PTAS in collaboration with Academic Development to support the implementation of school led initiatives. 12. Gain approval for a new climate and nature data field on Euclid to enable tagging of climate and nature in new courses to support long term monitoring and evaluation. 13. Design and share guidance and templates with schools to support staff to embed climate and nature in course and programme design and delivery. Decolonising the Curriculum 14. All new and existing programmes submitted to Boards of Studies for approval or change requests in 2026/27 will be expected to consider and address decolonisation in the design and delivery of the programme. 15. Design and share guidance and templates with schools to support staff to embed decolonisation in course and programme design and delivery.	Actions 10 – 13 to be taken forward by the Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability 14. Schools and Colleges (BoS and Curriculum Approval Committees)* 15. Race Review Implementation, Education Project Board Lead
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Assessment for Learning	We will increase our use of authentic forms of assessment (those aligned closely with real-world challenges and tasks). We will continue to ensure students receive timely and meaningful feedback on assessment.	Assessment and Feedback By 2030, we will embed a university-wide culture of assessment for learning, underpinned by transparent, meaningful and proportionate assessment practices. This will be reflected by an enhanced assessment experience, where students have clear expectations and receive timely, constructive feedback that supports their development.	Assessment and Feedback 16. Implement the new Assessment and Feedback Policy for Academic Year 2026/27, building on existing Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities to support high-quality, inclusive, authentic assessment and ensure timely, meaningful feedback that supports student learning and development. 17. Create an engaging student-focused guide to assessment to help students understand assessment processes. 18. Develop updated guidance to assist staff in the development of assessment rubrics. 19. Deliver a series of events/workshops in collaboration with Academic Development, AQS, to support innovation in assessment design/development	16. Schools and Colleges* monitored via AQS. 17. Deputy VP Students (Enhancement) via Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group 18. Deputy VP Students (Enhancement) via Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group 19. Deputy VP Students Enhancement with Academic Development
Working with Digital, Data, and AI	We will provide opportunities for our students to develop digital literacy, data fluency and AI proficiency, and educate them to make responsible use of AI.	AI in learning and teaching By 2030, digital, data and AI capability will be embedded across the University, enabling students and staff to develop digital literacy, data fluency and responsible AI proficiency, and supporting inclusive, AI-enhanced approaches to learning, teaching and assessment.	AI in learning and teaching 20. Develop and launch a short online AI training module for students to build confidence in the responsible and effective use of AI in learning. 21. Produce an engaging video/animation to enhance student understanding and uptake of institutional guidance on the responsible use of AI. 22. Develop and deliver a short online training module for staff to build capability and	20. Assistant Principal Education Futures with College AI leads 21. Assistant Principal Education Futures with College AI leads 22. Assistant Principal Education Futures with College AI leads

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			confidence in the use of AI in teaching, learning and assessment. 23. Continue the AI in Teaching Innovation project, developing, testing and evaluating a further eight applications of AI to enhance learning, teaching and assessment practice.	23. Assistant Principal Education Futures
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<i>Engaging and Empowering Learners</i>				
Priority	High-Level Ambition	<i>Where do we want to be? By 2030</i>	<i>How will we achieve this? Specific Actions for 2026/27</i>	<i>Who will implement it? Action owners</i>
Empowering Agency over the Learning Experience	We value student agency and will empower our students to take ownership of their learning through informed choice and autonomy.	- By 2030, students will be active partners in shaping and co-creating their learning experience, with their individual and collective voices meaningfully informing and improving learning and teaching across the University. - By 2030, every programme will have at least one opportunity per year to engage in meaningful co-creation of learning and teaching with students.	24. Align SSLCs with updated University SSLC Policy and expectations. 25. Strengthen action logging (via the Student Feedback Action Log) to ensure that all SSLCs produce action which are clear, meaningful and measurable with accountable action owners. 26. Enable student representatives to fulfil their roles effectively through tailored, School-level training and support to build on that provided by the Students' Association. 27. Strengthen the use of course evaluation and other student voice data by sharing results with student representatives and providing them and senior staff with School-level overviews to identify themes and opportunities for improvement. 28. Schools will identify at least one programme to pilot meaningful student co-creation in 2026/27 and share the resulting practice and impact as a case study, supporting dissemination of the Co-Creation Manifesto and informing wider adoption across programmes (see Action 43).	Actions 24 – 28 to be taken forward by Schools
Values Driven and Culturally Competent	We aim to cultivate values-driven and culturally competent learners	By 2030, our students will be able to articulate the skills, knowledge and values they	Addressed by actions 2 – 15.	

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	with a deep understanding of ethical principles, social responsibility, and cultural sensitivity.	have developed, enabling them to navigate complexity, engage positively with others and shape their futures with confidence.		
Developing knowledge, skills and mindsets	We will equip our students with the knowledge, skills, and tools to plan for and make effective transitions both through and beyond university, and support them to reflect on and connect their academic experiences to their futures.	• By 2030, all students will have access to experiential learning opportunities within their programme, supporting the development of work-related learning. • By 2030, all students will have access to challenge-based learning through either in-programme opportunities or a portfolio of 12–15 University-wide interdisciplinary Challenge Courses, enabling students to engage with society’s most pressing challenges, through collaborative, real-world problem-solving.		
Challenge Based	Through challenge-based learning, we will immerse our students in authentic, real-world problems or challenges that spark their curiosity, creativity, and problem-solving skills, empowering them	• By 2030, all students will have access to climate and nature learning experiences that are meaningfully embedded in their curriculum, with every student completing at least 20 credits of climate and nature learning within their degree programme		

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	to become proactive agents of innovation and change.	By 2030, all students will experience a curriculum informed by decolonisation, where diverse perspectives and ways of knowing are valued, represented and critically explored.		
Flexible and Inclusive Ways to Study	Where appropriate, we will expand our online and distance learning portfolio and develop and nurture forms of hybrid learning that are appropriate to the needs of our students and inclusive of lifelong learners.	By 2030, we will make effective use of digital approaches to learning, teaching and assessment offering increased flexibility, accessibility and inclusivity of learning appropriate to the needs of students.	29. Define the academic requirements and use cases for digital examinations to inform consideration of technical and operation considerations.	29. Deputy VP Students (Enhancement) via Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group.
Fostering Academic Communities	We will foster a strong sense of belonging and collaboration by actively engaging students in their learning, expanding opportunities for meaningful peer connection, and building supportive staff-student relationships that	Belonging, Connection and Community - By 2030, our students will experience an inclusive learning environment where they feel a strong sense of belonging, connection and community. - By 2030, all students will have access to peer support within their School.	30. Continue (via the Sense of Belonging Continuous Improvement Group) to deliver key events and activities that build connection and community. 31. Publish guidance for staff on fostering belonging in learning and teaching.	30. Sense of Belonging Continuous Improvement Group. 31. Sense of belonging Continuous Improvement Group. 32. Student Support Continuous

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	enable wellbeing and academic success.		32. Establish a baseline of peer support provision across Schools, mapping existing activity, identifying effective practice and gaps, and gathering data to inform future development.	Improvement Group
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Supporting Inspiring Teaching				
Priority	High-Level Ambition	<i>Where do we want to be? By 2030</i>	<i>How will we achieve this? Specific Actions for 2026/27</i>	<i>Who will implement it? Action owners</i>
Continuing Professional Development	We aim to ensure that everyone contributing to teaching and supervising students (including tutors and demonstrators) can access appropriate opportunities for continued personal and professional development and is supported to perform their roles effectively.	By 2030, we will have a University-wide CPD Framework for teaching and supervisory staff, with clear expectations and mandatory engagement at key career stages, underpinned by accurate data and reporting and providing targeted opportunities to enhance teaching and supervision, and leading to a higher proportion of teaching staff holding recognised Teaching Qualifications, including Fellowships of the HEA at all categories.	33. Map existing opportunities for teaching related CPD across the University. 34. Identify strengths and gaps of current teaching related CPD provision and benchmark with the sector. 35. Undertake work to enhance the accuracy and usability of the data we hold on staff (including tutors and demonstrators) with fellowships. 36. Create a proposed Framework for Teaching related CPD for approval by SEC in May 2027.	Actions 33 – 36 Academic Development

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Recognising and Celebrating Inspiring Teaching	We will build on our existing awards and recognition schemes to expand opportunities to identify, celebrate and share innovative and effective pedagogical approaches, inspiring teaching and supervising practices and commitment to student learning. We will continue to work in partnership with our students to identify exceptional educational experiences and educators and elevate their contributions to the academic community.	• By 2030, we will strengthen the recognition and sharing of teaching and supervisory excellence (celebrating new HEA Fellows, NTF/CATE nominees and winners, EUSA Teaching Award winners, and UKCGE recognised supervisors) and sharing of commendations and good practice from Internal Periodic Reviews across the University. • By 2030 we will ensure recruitment and promotion processes require, recognise and record Academic Teaching Qualifications appropriately. This includes, for teaching related posts, that essential and desirable recruitment criteria and grade profiles are appropriately aligned to ATQs and scholarly	37. Relaunch the Advance HE National Teaching Fellowship and Collaborative Awards for Teaching Excellence Scheme at the University of Edinburgh. 38. Ensure we more widely celebrate staff awarded Fellowships of the HEA (all categories), NTF/CATE nominees and winners, and UKCGE recognised supervisors. Ensure colleagues are recognised at the L&T Conference 2027, but also explore ideas for future further celebrations and recognition. 39. Invite EUSA teaching award winners to write Teaching Matters blogs and explore inviting them to speak about their teaching approach at University-wide events.	Actions 37 – 39 Academic Development
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		teaching. It also includes ensuring greater awareness of these requirements in recruitment processes and promotions committees.		
Support for Curriculum Development and Enhancement	We seek to empower and support colleagues to engage in curriculum development and enhancement and strengthen innovation in teaching and assessment. We encourage collaboration between subject experts and innovative pedagogical researchers, ensuring our curriculum development is informed by research and scholarship.	- By 2030 we will ensure staff have access to excellent CPD opportunities and resources for curriculum design and enhancing teaching and assessment informed by research and scholarship, supporting colleagues in developing a future-ready curriculum. - By 2030 we will reintroduce Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)/scholarly teaching into grade profiles. (See aims and actions in section above)	40. Develop resources and CPD opportunities explicitly connecting SoTL and curriculum enhancements as well as opportunities focusing on supporting assessment and co-creation innovations. 41. Create CPD workshop opportunities and resources for staff to promote challenge-based and experiential approaches to programme and course design, supporting Action 6.	40. Academic Development 41. CDIG Group and Academic Development
Explore within and across disciplines	We will continue to harness the disciplinary expertise of our staff contributing to teaching and supervising. By balancing disciplinary			

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	depth with interdisciplinary breadth, we increasingly equip our students with specialised expertise as well as broad perspectives.			
Fostering Academic Communities	We will continue to promote opportunities for student-student, staff-staff, and student-staff communities, fostering a culture of collaboration and cultivating an environment in which students and staff feel supported, valued and empowered to succeed. We encourage team approaches to the design and delivery of teaching and involving our students as partners in learning, teaching and assessment.	- By 2030, we will have a range of networks for staff to support them in their roles and in their engagement with different areas of teaching and supervision of students. - By 2030, every programme will have at least one opportunity per year to engage in meaningful co-creation of learning and teaching with students.	42. Create a resource to demonstrate a range of different collaboration approaches that can be/are being used in teaching, and disseminate widely. 43. Ensure further dissemination of the University's Co-Creation Manifesto, including gathering and sharing further examples of co-creation to support colleagues to embed co-creation in their teaching, supporting Action 28. 44. Review the networks we currently run for different groups such as Directors of Teaching, Boards of Studies, Research Supervisors etc, to ensure they are meeting needs. Consider if there is a need for any additional networks to support inspiring teaching aims.	42. Academic Development 43. Co-creation Manifesto Group 44. Academic Development

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Appendix

*[Guidance has been developed](#) to help Schools navigate all expectations relating to programme and course design and development, bringing these together in a clear, connected timeline from 2026/27 to 2029/30.

Senate Education Committee

15 October 2026

Global Action Plan

Description of paper

1. The Global Action Plan coordinates delivery of our international strategic priorities as outlined within our core missions of Learning and Teaching, Research and Innovation and Civic Mission.

Action requested

2. For information and discussion.

Background

3. The University's previous Global Plan concluded in 2020. Feedback from the informal international review last year was that it would be important to have a global action plan to take forward the University's international priorities across Learning and Teaching, Research and Innovation and Civic Mission. The Global Action Plan has been approved by the Global Partnerships Group and University Executive.

Discussion

4. The three main areas of the Global Action plan are as follows. These include international priorities of the respective University strategies for Learning and Teaching, Research and Innovation and Civic Mission. A copy of the Global Action plan is attached in the appendix for review.

5. Research and Innovation

5.1 Our Research and Innovation Strategy outlines the growing importance and value of international collaboration in addressing the world's complex challenges and the need for innovative models, partnerships and funding in response. Our partnerships will deliver new opportunities for scaling joint research, teaching, company creation, industry engagement and funding. These will be focused on our core missions in future health and care, tackling the climate and environmental crisis and harnessing data, digital and AI for public good. Our goals are to;

- Deliver a select portfolio of high impact city-region university partnerships in key locations focused on connecting industry ecosystems to our core missions and significantly boost our international industry partnerships and funding around our key innovation strengths.

- Develop new partnerships that provide opportunities for our researchers – early career to more established – to develop their global research connectivity and collaborations, learn new cutting-edge techniques and grow their impact and visibility.
- Develop responsible research cultures, providing the support, training and services to enable international collaboration and engagement in a changing and more complex international landscape - ensuring our staff and students are equipped and supported to engage with, exchange and work internationally whilst managing and mitigating the risks.

6. Learning and Teaching

6.1 Through our international exchange and partnership we will ensure the University of Edinburgh continues to excel as an inspiring place to be educated. We are committed to lifelong learning, providing a supportive environment for teaching and education and acting as a catalyst for empowering our graduates to thrive in an ever-changing world where they want to make meaningful contributions to their communities. Through our teaching and learning strategy our goals will be to;

- Increase the diversity of our international student community – both geographically and socio-economically – in support of widening participation, access and inclusion and delivering sustainable international student recruitment.
- Provide innovative opportunities for our students to work, study and learn across the world through transnational education partnerships and our leading global networks and alliances.
- Position our curriculum to meaningfully embed global challenges and issues and provide opportunities for our students to exchange with, and learn about, the world as part of internationalisation at home – delivering greater inclusion and access to global learning that is environmentally responsible.

7. Civic mission

7.1 As a global civic University, based in Scotland's capital city, we place special importance on engaging with our local communities to address shared global grand challenges which demand collaborative global solutions, founded in local action. Through our civic mission our goals will be to;

- Further develop our flagship Education Beyond Borders and MasterCard Foundation programmes providing new pathways, funding and opportunities for disadvantaged and forcibly displaced academics and students, both within and beyond our campus, supporting equitable access to higher education.

- Embed sustainability and climate action across our international mission through all of our collaborations and activities, enabled by alliances such as the Ocean Leaders Programme and Edinburgh Earth Initiative, and strong linkage with civic engagement, education and research to support our Climate Strategy commitments.
- Co-create initiatives with local partners and communities – celebrating and communicating our international impact and welcome – supporting international communities and engaging our alumni across the world as active partners in delivering our ambition through their volunteering, advocacy and philanthropy.

Resource implications

8. Resource commitment through existing strategies and with additional support as may be directed through the cross cutting strategic initiatives funding as approved by the Global Partnership Group for key priorities.

Risk Management

9. Global Partnerships Group will provide strategic oversight for the delivery and reporting on the Global Action Plan.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

10. The Global Action Plan supports the University's Climate Strategy and delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals across the Learning and Teaching, Research and Innovation and Civic Mission strategies.

Equality & Diversity

11. The Global Action Plan serves to support and enable equality and diversity across Learning and Teaching, Research and Innovation and Civic Mission.

Next steps

12. Update reports on the progress on specific priorities attached to the Global Action Plan will be presented annually to the Global Partnerships Group and University Executive.

Consultation

13.

- Global Partnerships Group
- University Executive

Further information

14. Alan Mackay, Deputy Vice-Principal International a.mackay@ed.ac.uk

Freedom of Information

15. Open



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH

Global Action Plan 2026–2028

The University's Global Action Plan coordinates delivery of our international strategic priorities as outlined within our core missions of Learning and Teaching, Research and Innovation and Civic Mission.

The international priorities for each strategic core mission area over the next two years are outlined here. Delivery of these priorities will be overseen by the Global Partnerships Group with reporting by the identified senior lead.



One.

Research and Innovation

- Forge and strengthen university partnerships positioning us for major strategic funding and impact across R&I missions
- Develop and test new innovation-focused partnerships unlocking significant translational and commercial opportunities
- Support next generation research and innovation leaders through outstanding international mobility, connectivity and partnerships
- Ensure equitable, rigorous, transparent and safe research collaboration in a changing global context

Two.

Learning and Teaching

- Increase the socio-economic and geographic diversity of our international student community
- Provide innovative opportunities for our students to learn and exchange with the world
- Deliver inclusive internationalisation across our curriculum for global learning – within and beyond Edinburgh

Three.

Civic Mission

- Increase access to education and research for displaced students and at-risk academics
- Embed sustainability and climate action across our partnerships, governance and decision making
- Communicate and celebrate our international impact and welcome to the world

One. Research and Innovation

Global Action Plan | 2026 to 2028

Action	Outcome	Indicator
1. Forge and strengthen university partnerships across the world that position us for major strategic funding and impact across our three research and innovation missions.	1.1 Prioritise and strengthen our most successful bilateral and multilateral partnerships, with a particular focus on developing collaborative bids across our mission areas.	1.2 New major collaborative funding applications and level of awards.
2. Develop and test new innovation-focused partnerships internationally that unlock translational and commercial opportunities.	2.1 Scope, develop and pilot a select number of international innovation partnerships, using the Framework for International Innovation Partnerships.	2.2 New strategic industry partnerships with industrial-translational funding from international sources.
3. Support the next generation of research and innovation leaders in forging outstanding international collaborations through mobility, connectivity and institutional partnerships.	3.1 Ensure clear and focused support for Early Career Researchers (ECR) in developing international collaborations, with a particular focus on attracting talent and unlocking international funding sources.	3.2 ECR engagement in major collaborative funding apps and awards. 3.3 Attract international ECRs into externally funded postdoctoral fellowships,
4. Work with our international partners to ensure equitable, rigorous, transparent and safe approaches to research collaboration in a changing global context.	4.1 Adopt National Protective Security Agency (NPSA) Trusted Research Evaluation Framework set within our responsible research cultures pillar of the Research and Innovation strategy and address research security risks. 4.2 Support staff with international mobility framework and guidance.	4.3 Establish shared models of ethical research collaboration with partners. 4.4 Consolidate the University's Trusted Research Framework.

Foundations for the future

India is one of the world's most dynamic centres of research and innovation and our partnership with Gujarat Biotechnology University (GBU) is a significant collaboration.

GBU is India's first dedicated biotechnology university and was established in collaboration with our School of Biological Sciences.

GBU offers research-focused postgraduate and doctoral programmes to students in a rapidly growing biotechnology sector. Edinburgh academics contribute to GBU's curriculum development, teaching, research mentorship and faculty development, while students benefit from research placements and exchange opportunities.

This collaboration enhances knowledge exchange, creates opportunities for Edinburgh staff to undertake joint research and innovation as well as positioning us to create shared solutions to global challenges in health, agriculture, and sustainability.



Amala Peri, a GBU student, who visited Edinburgh on a research placement in 2025.

Two. Learning and Teaching

Global Action Plan | 2026 to 2028

Action	Outcome	Indicator
1. Increase diversity of our international student community – both geographically and socio-economically – in support of widening participation, access and inclusion and sustainable international student recruitment.	1.1 A more diverse international student community – particularly at postgraduate level – aligned with the University's size and shape ambition.	1.2 Increase proportion of international student community from our top ten sending nations. This is a University-wide KPI. 1.3 Data tracking established on international students from low to middle income nations, low participation backgrounds and with humanitarian protection to measure success.
2. Provide innovative opportunities for our students to work, study and learn across the world through transnational education partnerships and our leading global networks and alliances.	2.1 Deliver new opportunities through our alliances (Una Europa, U21, U7+, LERU), key strategic partners and transnational education hubs for our students to work, connect with and study internationally.	2.2 Track new opportunities delivered through our international partnerships and secure external funding to support.
3. Develop our curriculum to meaningfully embed global challenges and inclusive internationalisation whilst providing opportunities for our students to exchange with, and learn about, the world within and beyond the curriculum.	3.1 Create opportunities through curriculum innovation that increase opportunities for global learning for all of our students – virtual, physical and hybrid.	3.2 Deliver new opportunities for internationalisation at home – within and beyond our curriculum – including experiential learning.

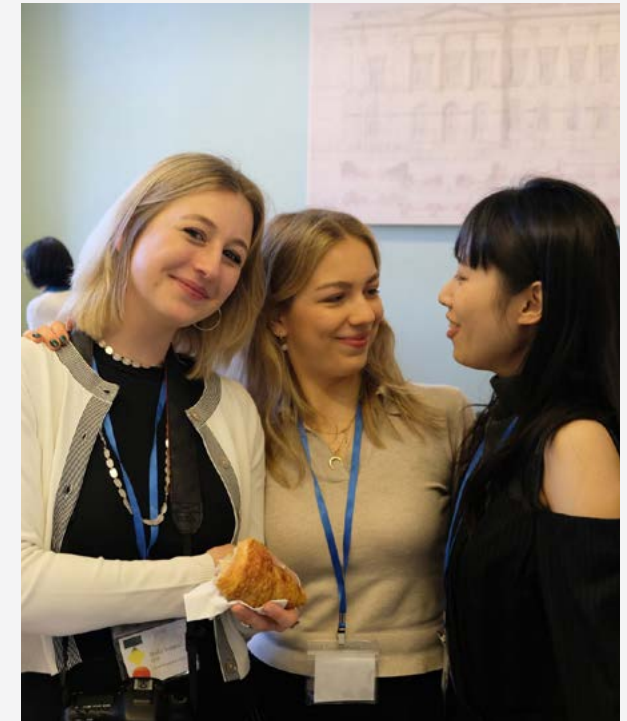
The future of education

Through Una Europa, an alliance of 11 leading European universities, the University offers students exclusive access to a pan-European community, learning experiences, and unique opportunities.

Since Edinburgh joined Una Europa, Edinburgh students have benefited from new virtual, physical and hybrid mobility experiences developed across the Alliance, and PhD candidates have participated in Una Europa's Doctoral Summer Schools.

By coordinating multilateral initiatives, Una Europa amplifies the impact of Edinburgh's bilateral partnerships, providing facilitated access to European funding, facilitated research collaboration and educational innovation, while delivering tangible outputs including joint education pathways, short-term mobility opportunities and access to high-quality research networks.

With Una Europa, Edinburgh has the potential to foster even greater collaboration, innovation and impact for students and researchers alike.



Members of the Una Europa Student Network at a sustainability workshop in 2024.

Three. Civic Mission

Global Action Plan | 2026 to 2028

Action	Outcome	Indicator
1. Advance support, partnership and access for forcibly displaced and at-risk academics and students.	1.1 Secure new external funding to support supporting students and academics who have been forcibly displaced and extend our partnership and support beyond Edinburgh.	1.2 Secure additional external income in support of our programme.
2. Embed sustainability and climate action across all of our collaborations and activities, enabled by alliances such as the Ocean Leaders Programme and Edinburgh Earth Initiative, and strong linkage with civic engagement, education and research to support our Climate Strategy commitments.	2.1 Create new international opportunities through our curriculum, partnerships and global alliances to increase our teaching and research impact across climate change, energy and sustainability. 2.2 Audit the carbon impact of international student mobility to and from the University. Implement targeted actions to reduce impact, including climate literacy training; sustainable transport options; and support for climate-aware decision-making.	2.3 Support sustainability and climate across curriculum. 2.4 Deliver specific programme focused on alleviating the environmental impact of international student mobility linked to University's Climate Strategy and commitments. 2.5 Global Partnerships and SRS to lead programme that embeds sustainability across all international activity, governance and decision making.
3. Visibly celebrate and communicate our international impact and welcome - supporting our international communities.	3.1 Develop an action plan to deliver and embed significant cross-University change in communications about international impact, internationalisation global engagement and welcome; led by Communications and Marketing and Edinburgh Global.	3.2 A consistent, high-impact international narrative is visible and embedded across all University communications which clearly communicates how international work is integral to the University's core mission.

Empowering climate leaders

Since 2016, the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program has made a significant impact on equity and inclusion, providing young African leaders from all backgrounds with access to funded educational opportunities at the University of Edinburgh and enriching our University community.

Between 2023 and 2030, the Program urgently responded to the climate crisis by embedding sustainability and climate action across all its activities, ensuring that every initiative advances environmentally and socially responsible solutions and increasing access even further to prioritise applicants from minority groups, including displaced people.

By 2030 the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program will engage 1,000 scholars and alumni, training climate leaders who can drive sustainable transitions.

Many have already made tangible impacts, leading change with integrity and advocating for inclusive social and economic growth within their local communities.



Mastercard Foundation Scholars at a dissertation writing retreat in 2025.

Discover more

www.ed.ac.uk/global

Global Action Plan | Version 1.1:
Published 6 August 2026

The University of Edinburgh is a charitable body,
registered in Scotland, with registration number
SC005336.

About this plan

Governance

The Global Action Plan is overseen, reviewed and monitored by the Global Partnership Group, which is chaired by the Provost. Each objective in the Plan has assigned senior ownership and accountability.

[Global Partnership Group](#)

Guided by values

The Global Action Plan is underpinned by the Principles and Framework for Global Engagement, which ensures all the University's global activities and partnerships are values-driven according to our 5 principles: Excellence, Equity, Responsibility, Sustainability, and Intellectual Freedom. Read the Principles to quickly connect to guidance and further detail on global engagement.

[Principles and Framework for Global Engagement](#)

Related strategies

[Research and Innovation Strategy](#)

[Regenerative Sustainability Strategy](#)

[Learning and Teaching Strategy](#)

[Community Plan 2025-30](#)

Senate Education Committee**15 October 2026****Students' Association Sabbatical Officers' Priorities for 2026/27****Description of paper**

1. This paper articulates the priorities of the Students' Association Vice President Education and the Sabbatical Officer team for 2026/27.

Fit with remit

Education Committee	Y/N
Promote strategically-led initiatives and university-wide changes designed to enhance the educational experience of students and learners.	Y
Promote innovations in learning, teaching and assessment, embrace new teaching methods and consider cross-cutting themes such as research-led and technology-enhanced learning, digital and information literacy, education for employability, internationalisation and lifelong learning. Consider and promote local developments or initiatives with substantial implications for University learning and teaching strategy, policy, services or operations.	Y
Oversee policy relating to students' academic experience and proactively engage with high-level issues and themes arising from student feedback.	Y
Give specific consideration to instances in which the experience of one particular cohort of students or learners (undergraduate, postgraduate taught or postgraduate research students, and those involved in non-standard programmes) may diverge from that of others.	Y
Anticipate and prepare for new opportunities and likely future developments in learning and teaching for all cohorts of students and learners.	Y
Consider the implications of the Committee's work and its decisions in the context of external initiatives and compliance and legal frameworks, particularly in relation to equality and diversity.	Y

Action requested / recommendation

2. To note and comment

Background and context

3. Each year a paper is presented to Senate and its standing committees, summarising the Sabbatical Officers' priorities for the coming year, enabling Senate and its member to identify areas of common interest and collaboration. These priorities are based on the manifestos the Officers were elected on – this year's Officers received a combined 9,216 votes – and were further refined during the Officers' inducted, based on data from the various national student experience surveys and feedback from outgoing student representatives.

Discussion

4. See attached paper.

Resource implications

5. Actions arising from the ideas discussed in the paper may have resource implications; these will be considered in detail if specific action is proposed.

Risk management

6. Actions arising from the ideas discussed in the paper may have risk implications; these will be considered in detail if specific action is proposed.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

7. Actions arising from the ideas discussed in the paper may have Climate Emergency and Sustainable Development Goals implications; these will be considered in detail if specific action is proposed.

Equality & diversity

8. Actions arising from the ideas discussed in the paper may have equality and diversity implications; these will be considered in detail if specific action is proposed.

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

9. Actions arising from the ideas discussed in the paper may have communication, implementation and evaluation implications; these will be considered in detail if specific action is proposed.

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10/09/2026

Presenter

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Freedom of Information: Open

Students' Association Vice President Education priorities for 2026/27:

- Hold the University accountable for delivering the quality of education it promises, including challenging cuts to teaching, course and learning opportunities.
- Champion an inclusive, decolonised and globally relevant curriculum, with better support for inclusive teaching.
- Develop a fair, student-centred approach to AI in teaching and assessment that prioritises critical thinking, creativity and independent learning.
- Protect students' learning and wellbeing during disruption, while improving academic adjustments, support and access to essential wellbeing provision.
- Strengthen the student voice by ensuring students are meaningfully involved in decisions about their education.

Sabbatical Officer team priorities for 2026/27:

- Strengthen student voice and accountability, ensuring students are meaningfully involved in University decision-making and receive clear, transparent updates on issues affecting them.
- Tackle the cost-of-living crisis, including affordable housing and food, free or cheaper travel, financial support and access to essential services.
- Build a more inclusive and accessible student community, with better support for marginalised students, commuters, international students, postgraduates and students across different campuses.
- Improve student wellbeing, safety and support, including mental health provision, consent and sexual violence prevention, academic and welfare support and safer, more accessible spaces.
- Protect and enhance student life, through stronger societies, peer support, volunteering, employability opportunities and a more diverse range of social and cultural activities.
- Challenge University cuts and protect student services, scrutinising financial decisions and their impact on teaching, support and the wider student experience.
- Push for a more sustainable and responsible University, particularly around divestment, sustainable food and products, ethical investment and environmental responsibility.

Senate Education Committee

15 October 2026

Generative AI in Education: training development and guidelines update

Description of paper

1. This paper has three sub-sections:

- A. Information about the new generative AI training course for all students (AI Essentials: Responsible use in your studies), which went live at the end of September. A brief demo will be given. *For information.*
- B. A brief proposal for an approach to staff training on the use of generative AI in teaching. *For discussion.*
- C. A revision to the generative AI guidelines for students. *For approval.*

Fit with remit

Promote strategically-led initiatives and university-wide changes designed to enhance the educational experience of students and learners.

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.

Oversee policy relating to students' academic experience and proactively engage with high-level issues and themes arising from student feedback.

Anticipate and prepare for new opportunities and likely future developments in learning and teaching for all cohorts of students and learners.

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.

Action requested / recommendation

2. The actions requested are:

- A. Student training course – for information
- B. Staff training approach – for discussion
- C. AI student guidelines – for endorsement

Section A: AI Essentials course for all students

Background and context

1. Demand from students for training on the basics of acceptable and responsible use of generative AI in their studies has been addressed by creation of a Learn Essentials course. The course launched on 23rd September and is available to all enrolled students.
2. The course learning outcomes are as follows. On successful completion of this course, you should be able to:
 - Explain what generative AI is and be aware of different perspectives on how it might be used.
 - Identify acceptable and unacceptable uses of generative AI in your learning, coursework and assessment.
 - Make informed decisions about when generative AI may undermine your learning or academic integrity.
 - Identify key risks associated with the use of generative AI, and understand what counts as responsible use.
 - Effectively use ELM, the University's free-of-charge, secure portal to AI.
3. The course has been designed and built by a cross-University team, supported by colleagues in LTW Educational Design and Engagement:

Sian Bayne, CAHSS (lead)

Lizzy Garner-Foy, ISG Educational Design and Engagement (technical lead)

Stuart King, CSE

Chris McKenzie, CMVM

Lesley Kelly, Academic Skills

Bartłomiej Pohorecki, ISG Digital Skills

Geoff Fortescue, ISG Educational Design and Engagement

Stuart Nicol, ISG Educational Design and Engagement

Satu Kapiainen, ISG Digital Skills

Fiona Buckland, ISG Education Design and Engagement

With additional input from:

Steve Loughnan, CAHSS and Jo Mends, EUSA VP Education

4. The focus of the course is on providing basic guidance and information, but also bringing in interesting student and staff voices to illustrate that there are diverse views on AI use, and different disciplinary practices and norms. It emphasises responsible use, including clarity on potential impacts on cognition, environment, ethics and political economy. The core message throughout is that students must familiarise themselves with University-level and course-specific guidance, and speak to their Course Organiser if anything isn't clear.
5. The initial course build was reviewed by academic and professional colleagues nominated by College Deans of Education. The feedback from this review was excellent. We now await further feedback from students following launch.

Course structure and content overview

Section 1: An introduction to AI at university (c20 mins)	Section 2: Acceptable and unacceptable uses (c30 mins)	Section 3: Using AI responsibly (c30 mins)	Section 4. Using ELM (c20 mins)
Text: Intro to the course	Text: Intro to section 2	Text: Intro to section 3	Text: Intro to section 4
Text: What is AI and how does it work?	Text: University guidelines on AI use Video: Introduction to the guidelines	Video (10 mins): What does the research tell us? Two academics with different perspectives talking. Judy Robertson and Ben Williamson	Video (1.5 mins): What do students think of ELM? Various students across several Schools – ISG interns
Video (5 min): Student voices – how do you use AI? Various students across several Schools – ISG interns and Jo Mends	Activity – use of AI in different kinds of assessment (1 per College) (30 min) – includes feedback Developed by Chris McKenzie, Sian Bayne and Stuart King, and built by Lizzy Garner-Foy	Text: Potential negative impacts of AI use: Environmental Learning Ethics, bias and inaccuracy Political economy	Screenshare video: How to use ELM Screenshare video: How to evaluate AI outputs
Video (7 min): Academic voices – how is AI used in teaching and across discipline areas? Stuart King CSE, Chris McKenzie CMVM, Sian Bayne CAHSS		Activity: Exploring positive use-cases in different discipline areas using the AI for Teaching Innovation apps	Exercise: practice using ELM
Text: Library guidance on citing and referencing AI in your work			
Quiz: Revision and self-testing			

Discussion

6. The course was made possible by the technical and organisational support provided by the LTW Educational Design and Engagement team within ISG, the expertise in AI and education we hold within the university, and by the willingness of staff and students to contribute time and content.
7. Communications about the course have gone out in the student newsletter, at induction events, on MyEd and via a briefing for College Deans to cascade via their education committees.
8. At this early stage we have limited student feedback but a priority will be to synthesise and act on this over the coming year. All students taking the course are invited to provide feedback on completion.

Resource implications

9. The course will require regular review and updates. Keeping it current will require academic, student and ISG support and resource, and clear leadership.

Risk management

10. Dependence and over-use of generative AI carries risks for cognition, environment, intellectual property, bias, disinformation, democracy and labour rights. Good quality training is necessary to mitigate these.
11. The university will need to allocate resource to maintaining the course and ensuring its ongoing currency.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals**Equality & diversity**

12. Equal access to generative AI models, and training on how to use them, is essential. The course contributes to this by being available to all students, and by providing substantive content on how to access and use ELM. ELM provides universal access to secure, private and environmentally-sustainable AI models, to all enrolled students.
13. The course includes diverse representation from students and staff.

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

14. This paper is for information only. The course will be evaluated on an ongoing basis, and adjusted as needed. Actions relevant to SEC will be brought to the committee.
15. Committee members' support and help in spreading the word to students regarding course availability would be very welcome.

Section B: Approach to academic staff training on the use of generative AI in teaching

Background and context

1. With generic, University-level training for students on responsible use of generative AI now available, it is important to turn to the issue of academic staff training.

Discussion

2. The ISG Digital Skills programme includes online, live training in AI skills for staff, including introductory and advanced use of generative AI and ELM. We also have a course for professional services staff in P&M on 'Using genAI with confidence'. However we do not as yet have a short, self-study online course for academic colleagues.
3. A group of colleagues were asked to provide reviewer feedback on the student course prior to launch. Reviewer feedback included several comments that the course should also be made available to all staff, and we have had several requests from staff for access to the course.
4. This paper therefore proposes that we develop an academic staff-facing course, re-using the design and much of the content developed for the student one. Following discussion with ISG LTW, it is agreed that the Online Course Production team can provide resource to adapt and re-build the student-facing course on Learn to create a staff-facing course on People & Money.
5. Prior to the re-build, we would have a cycle of course design, looking at which areas of the student course would need to be adapted, and where new content is needed. LTW Education Design and Engagement have confirmed they can provide resource to support this activity.
6. However, it is clear that there is also a need for more local development and experience-sharing at College and School level. Generative AI is highly disruptive to our core teaching and assessment activities, and provision of generic training does not meet the deeper need for community-building, practice sharing and collective vision development among colleagues responsible for delivering and supporting teaching.
7. This paper recommends that Colleges and Schools allocate resource to local, subject and discipline-specific academic development activities to sit alongside the proposed generic training.

Resource implications

8. Resource to adapt and re-build the student-facing course on People & Money has been agreed with ISG LTW. We would need some additional input from AP Education Futures (Sian Bayne), College AI leads (Chris McKenzie, Stuart King

and Steve Loughnan) and ISG for the re-design.

9. Ongoing resource to maintain and ensure course currency will be needed.

Risk management

10. Dependence and over-use of generative AI carries risks for cognition, environment, intellectual property, bias, disinformation, democracy and labour rights. Good quality training and staff development is necessary to address these.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals



Equality & diversity

11. Equal access to generative AI models, and training on how to use them, is essential. The proposed course will be available to all staff, and will include substantive content on how to access and use ELM. ELM provides universal access to secure, private and environmentally-sustainable AI models.
12. The course will include diverse representation from students and staff.

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

13. If SEC agrees on the proposed way forward, we will move ahead with implementation of the plan to build the staff-facing course. Evaluation of the course will be ongoing.
14. Colleges and Schools will take responsibility for the development of local, domain-specific AI practice-sharing.

Section C: Update to student generative AI guidelines

Background and context

1. The [current generative AI student guidelines](#) were published in March 2026. While most of the content remains current, student feedback has indicated that the guidelines are over-long and do not provide enough clarity.
2. This paper presents an updated, reduced and simplified set of guidelines for the committee to discuss and endorse.

Discussion

3. As the University has adapted to generative AI, local procedures and guidance at College, School, programme and course level have evolved in line with disciplinary and professional norms and expectations. Generative AI – while still often disruptive of practice – has become more embedded and more normalised.
4. For this reason, there is a need for a slight shift of focus in the University-level guidance. This – alongside the feedback on lack of sufficient clarity in the current guidelines – drives the current proposal for revision.
5. The edits in the document do not make any substantive changes to the guidance, or require any policy changes. Rather, they focus on reducing word count, clarifying language and further emphasising the need to check local, programme and course-level guidance.
6. The revision removes reference to concrete ways in which students might choose to use generative AI in their studies, following feedback from students and staff that this creates confusion. Instead, it focuses on providing absolute clarity on what is *not* permissible anywhere in the University, and reiterates the need to follow local guidance on permitted use.

Resource implications

7. No resource needed beyond an update of the student guidance web page, and revision of the PGR guidance.

Risk management

8. Dependence and over-use of generative AI carries risks for cognition, environment, intellectual property, bias, disinformation, democracy and labour rights. Clear guidance helps address these.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals



Equality & diversity

9. Access to generative AI at the societal and global level is uneven and embeds local and regional inequalities. Within the university however, ELM provides equal, free and secure access for our students.

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

10. If the committee supports the revision, the revised guidelines will replace the current ones on the web site, keeping the current link. They will be accompanied by a short video aimed at improving the clarity and accessibility of messaging to students.

Using generative AI in your studies: guidelines for students [draft revision, October 2026]

Edit note: revised guidelines explicitly address student request for greater clarity; document shortened from 6 pages to 3.5; language simplified; core message to consult local guidance emphasised; connection and consistency with the AI Essentials course throughout

This guidance is for all students enrolled at the University of Edinburgh. It is University-level guidance, which means that it explains what uses of generative AI are not allowed anywhere in the University.

You will also have access to guidance from your programme and from your courses, which will have more specific information relevant to each assignment that you complete. This guidance may allow you to use AI in certain ways, or it may restrict it further.

The reason we have different levels of guidance is that Edinburgh is a very large and diverse university, and perspectives on acceptable use of AI vary across disciplines and subject areas.

If there is only one thing you take from these guidelines, it should be that if you are not clear about what you are allowed to do with AI on your course, speak to your lecturer, tutor or course organiser – they are here to help you.

AI Essentials short course for Edinburgh students

You have access to a free, online course we have developed for students at Edinburgh. This will help you understand the issues around use of generative AI in more depth, and is designed to sit alongside these guidelines. [You can access the course via Learn](#) (look for the Essentials link in the left hand menu).

Overview

Edit note: language simplified; content on agents moved and reduced

The University recognises that developing skills in the responsible use of generative AI is important and will likely be significant for your future life and work. We want to ensure that you have the knowledge and skills to thrive in a changing world, and we recognise that generative AI can be used creatively, critically and with integrity.

The University trusts you as students to act responsibly in relation to the use of generative AI. It also recognises that you need clarity on when its use breaches the University's rules on academic misconduct. These guidelines aim to provide you with this clarity.

Unacceptable uses of generative AI for assessment

Edit note: no change to this section

Passing off someone – or something’s – work as your own for an assessment is academic misconduct. This could include failing to cite a source you have used in a piece of assessed work, getting someone or something else (such as an AI agent) to complete your work for you, claiming authorship of machine-generated content or presenting machine-translated work as your own.

If you submit a piece of work for assessment that is not your own original work you risk being investigated according to the university’s [academic misconduct investigation procedures](#). This could have serious implications for you and your studies.

The following uses of generative AI are not acceptable and constitute misconduct: if you use them you risk investigation and penalties.

1. Presenting AI outputs as your own, original work.
2. Using an AI translator to convert assessed work to English before submission: English is the language of teaching and assessment at Edinburgh – machine translation is treated as false authorship and is not acceptable.
3. Submitting an assessment which includes elements of AI-generated text without acknowledgment.
4. Submitting an assessment which includes AI-generated images, audio or video without acknowledgment.
5. Submitting an assessment which includes AI-generated mathematical formulae or reasoning, or computer code, without acknowledgment.
6. Citing and referencing AI-found sources without reading and verifying them.
7. Using an AI agent or AI browser to complete any type of work – assessed or not – within your virtual learning environment.

Use of live translation apps in class

The University’s [Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy](#) allows you to make audio recordings of classes but does not allow you to share and distribute these recordings with a third party. AI-based translation apps retain and process recordings in a way that is not allowed in this policy. They can also negatively effect the group dynamic in your labs, tutorials and seminars. As a result, **you must not use third-party AI-based translation apps in class.**

You may however use translation services outside the classroom to help clarify and enhance your understanding of lecture, lab or seminar notes where necessary. You should only use the University’s generative AI service – ELM – to do this as it has in-built privacy protections. [You can access ELM and find out about training opportunities here.](#)

AI Agents

Using an AI agent within Learn or any other University learning or assessment platform which requires you to log in is not permitted. Sharing your login details with an agent or agentic browser is a breach of the [University Computing Acceptable Use Policy](#). This will result in your access to University digital services being removed and disciplinary action being taken against you

Edit note: content on using generative AI to support your learning removed as it may not be consistent with local guidance and causes confusion

Using the University's own generative AI platform (ELM)

Edit note: content slightly reduced

All University of Edinburgh students have free access to ELM, which offers you a secure gateway to a range of generative AI models, including locally-hosted and energy efficient models like Qwen, along with larger models like Claude and GPT. You should use ELM because:

- It keeps your data is secure – it will not be used by third party services to train their models or for any other purpose.
- It is free to use for all staff and students, providing the same access for all and saving you money.
- ELM allows you full freedom of choice about which models you select to use, including locally-hosted models which do not rely on external data centres, do not use water for cooling and are less straining on the natural environment. [You can access ELM and find out about training opportunities here.](#)

Reasons to be cautious about your use of generative AI

Edit note: volume of content in section reduced and made consistent with the AI Essentials course; links updated and made consistent with the AI Essentials course

You should be aware that there are risks and disadvantages associated with over-use of generative AI to support learning.

Negative impact on learning

Over-dependence on AI can negatively affect your learning. You may want to look at research on how cognitive offloading and reduction in capacity for critical thinking may be associated with this. This report provides a useful overview:

[Lodge J. M. and Loble L \(2026\). Artificial intelligence, cognitive offloading and implications for education, University of Technology Sydney](#)

Environmental impact

Training, running and using AI carries a heavy cost for the environment, including water use, energy use and environmental degradation. You can read more in this useful report:

[Aczel M., Chamanara S., Matin M., Farsi A., Marwala T., Madani K. \(2026\) Environmental Cost of AI's Energy Use: Carbon, Water and Land Footprints, United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health, Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada.](#)

Bias and inaccuracy

Generative AI output often appears convincing and reliable, but the behaviour of AI models is strongly influenced by the data they are trained on, so they can perpetuate harmful biases, fabricate information and make errors. You will be held accountable for these errors and biases if you include them in assessed work. [You can read more about AI bias and inaccuracy here.](#)

Politics and ownership

There are deep concerns about the lack of democratic accountability of AI systems and companies, and the lack of global governance to ensure AI equity, safety and accountability. This brief article will help you if you want to know more about this issue:

[Open Government Partnership \(2026\) Towards a Collective Ownership of AI](#)

Acknowledging your use of AI

Edit note: length of section reduced; advice changed to consult local guidance to avoid confusion

If you choose to use generative AI for permitted aspects of an assessment, it is important to be transparent about how you have done so. Look for guidance from your course about how you should acknowledge use of generative AI in each assignment you submit.

Citing your use of generative AI

If you use content generated by AI within your work, for example an AI-generated image or legitimate use of text from an AI chatbot, you will need to reference it. This means including an in-text citation or footnote in the body of your work, and a corresponding reference in your reference list.

[The Library's guide to using generative AI gives very useful guidance on this.](#)

Links

Edit note: links updated, some removed for currency

Training

[Short, online, self-study course for Edinburgh students: AI Essentials](#). All students can access this course from Learn by clicking on 'Essentials' in the left hand menu.

[University of Edinburgh Digital Skills Programme](#)

Further guidance

[Generative AI use for Postgraduate Research students](#)

[Library guide to using generative AI in academic work](#)

Academic misconduct guidance

[Further guidance on academic misconduct \(including plagiarism\) and how to avoid it](#)

[University of Edinburgh Academic Misconduct Procedures](#)

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26 September 2026

Presenter

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Freedom of Information

Open

Senate Education Committee

15 October 2026

Towards a University approach to AI in learning, teaching and assessment

Description of paper

1. This paper proposes a coherent, education-led University approach to artificial intelligence (AI) in learning, teaching and assessment. It brings together an indicative account of existing University of Edinburgh (UoE) activity, identifies questions about coordination, ownership and support, and proposes a common University foundation with appropriate disciplinary interpretation. The University's Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030 provides the principal mandate. It commits UoE to a future-ready curriculum, engaged and empowered learners, inspiring teaching, and the development of digital literacy, data fluency and AI proficiency. It also emphasises authentic assessment, disciplinary depth, ethical and socially responsible graduates, student agency, staff development and implementation in partnership across the University, Colleges and Schools. A shared collective vision of our unique educational offering in the age of AI is needed with a plan for future direction.

The proposed approach covers undergraduate and postgraduate taught education, short courses including continuing professional development, postgraduate researcher education and training, and development for academic and professional services staff with teaching, assessment or educational support responsibilities. This education approach should develop in parallel with wider institutional AI arrangements.

Fit with remit

Education Committee	Y/N
Promote strategically-led initiatives and university-wide changes designed to enhance the educational experience of students and learners.	Y
Promote innovations in learning, teaching and assessment, embrace new teaching methods and consider cross-cutting themes such as research-led and technology-enhanced learning, digital and information literacy, education for employability, internationalisation and lifelong learning. Consider and promote local developments or initiatives with substantial implications for University learning and teaching strategy, policy, services or operations.	Y
Oversee policy relating to students' academic experience and proactively engage with high-level issues and themes arising from student feedback.	Y
Anticipate and prepare for new opportunities and likely future developments in learning and teaching for all cohorts of students and learners.	Y

Action requested / recommendation

2. Senate Education Committee is invited to:

- Discuss the proposed educational position and direction: shared University expectations and support, with locally appropriate disciplinary delivery and endorse the direction of travel.
- Discuss the seven proposed components (Appendix A), including the development of a shared capability framework and distinct work on curriculum and assessment.
- Discuss the defined first phase and the staffing and operating resources required to deliver its proposed outputs (Appendix D).
- Discuss reporting on first-phase outputs and how SEC wishes to be informed on future activities.

Background and context

3. Generative AI has moved rapidly from an emerging technology to a routine feature of students' and staff members' educational lives. The relevant question is no longer whether the University should respond, but how it can protect learning and academic standards while helping its community develop the judgement required to use, question or decline AI appropriately.

AI is advancing rapidly and is driven by an unprecedented level of investment across the world with no pause expected in its evolution. Therefore, we need to make sure we are preparing students for the near future of AI which includes the ability to harness and work with complex, powerful AI agents and models. The technical capabilities, risks and opportunities of AI could well outpace our ability to understand, adapt and safely harness them. Our approach needs to address the continued rapid development of AI.

The University's Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030 provides the principal mandate. It commits UoE to a future-ready curriculum, engaged and empowered learners, inspiring teaching, and the development of digital literacy, data fluency and AI proficiency. It also emphasises authentic assessment, disciplinary depth, ethical and socially responsible graduates, student agency, staff development and implementation in partnership across the University, Colleges and Schools. This makes AI an educational and curriculum matter, which may include academic misconduct when not used appropriately. Regulations, assurance, disclosure, and investigation processes remain absolutely necessary. They must also sit within a harmonized institutional approach whose primary purpose is educational development and enhancement.

The January 2024 report of UoE's short-life working group on Internal Adoption of Artificial Intelligence recommended that the University pursue three areas concurrently: managing risks, developing capabilities and creating opportunities. It also identified the need for clearer ownership, a communications hub and community, impact assessment, staff and student development, controlled pilots and, critically, a longer-term institutional approach.

Senate Education Committee's record since 2023 shows a similar progression. Initial work focused on guidance, academic integrity and assessment redesign; subsequent papers emphasised trust, AI literacy, equitable access, disciplinary variation, consistent communication, student and staff development, and a need for clearer governance and resourcing. The Committee has also considered the protection of human judgement, critical and creative skills, and responsible and sustainable AI use.

To inform this proposal, the authors compared approaches to AI in education at Swansea, Exeter, King's College London, Sheffield, Bristol and Birmingham. A

summary is provided (Appendix C). The comparison identified useful elements across these approaches, including capability development differentiated by role or level, connections between educational direction and institutional support, shared assessment terminology, programme-level review, disciplinary interpretation and defined responsibilities. These are areas for UoE to consider, rather than a complete model adopted by every comparator. The comparison does not establish the detailed capabilities, responsibilities or resources UoE requires, which will need to be developed through further evidence and consultation.

The purpose of a UoE approach should therefore not be to accelerate adoption indiscriminately. It should enable the University community to make informed, critical and responsible decisions about when AI should be used, how it should be used, and when it should not be used within a clear, University-level framework articulating our approach to AI in learning, teaching, and assessment. A shared collective vision of our unique educational offering in the age of AI is needed, as is a plan for future direction.

Discussion

4. The following is an indicative account of activity visible to the author group. It is not a comprehensive inventory. Appendix B summarises the principal existing activities identified and the questions requiring clarification. We are proposing a focused initial review which should surface and connect existing uses of AI in education, with fuller and continuing mapping undertaken during delivery. Limited visibility is a reason to investigate coordination and duplication; it does not establish that provision is absent, it just highlights the often-disparate nature of areas of good practice.

Relevant provision already exists across the UoE. There is published guidance for taught students, postgraduate researchers and staff. The material reviewed is broadly trust-based: AI is not prohibited as a category, but its use may be restricted in assessed work and local programmes, or disciplines may set additional expectations. Critically, the emphasis is on Course Organisers providing AI guidance for assessments and places significant interpretation and communication demands on individual staff and may lead to inconsistent communication. Similarly, at programme and School level, staff discussions on AI approaches are taking place, but the author group has identified uncertainty about central coordination to harmonise guidance and the intended student experience. Staff guidance addresses approved platforms, transparency, verification, data protection, copyright and routes for more systematic adoption. These observations about local practice and coordination require confirmation through the initial review.

The University's Assessment and Feedback Policy was approved by Senate Education Committee and took effect on 1st of August 2026. It is mandatory for all taught provision. It requires explicit, assessment-specific AI statements, including how use is evidenced and explanations of restrictions (2.6, 4.4 and 8.3). Academic staff must retain final judgement and validate AI-assisted outputs; staff using AI in assessment must use approved tools and be disclosed to students (8.4 and 8.5). It also supports relevant AI skills while protecting critical thinking, independent judgement and disciplinary understanding (8.6). This policy is an existing foundation for the approach outlined in this paper, which should support

policy implementation through staff development, practical guidance, examples and evaluation.

Edinburgh is in the enviable position whereby ELM provides an important institutional foundation through supporting equity of access for all students and staff to multiple, diverse large language models, training, safety information and routes for development on a university owned and managed secure, ethically and environmentally responsible AI platform for access and innovation. The ELM infrastructure must connect with the institutional educational approach with curriculum, capabilities, assessment and ownership of decisions which still require educational support.

Existing AI training resources and sessions provide a valuable foundation for staff and student development. These include the AI Essentials course alongside ongoing discussions about staff training and development. The course combines University guidance with scenarios, questions, feedback and staff and student perspectives to support informed judgements about AI use.

The proposed work should build on this provision and existing programme activity, considering how learning is reinforced in disciplinary settings and where further development or support is needed. The proposed initial review should clarify how activities connect and the capacity, ownership and maintenance arrangements needed to sustain them. Evaluation should consider participation, learning demonstrated through course activities and application within programmes.

Initiatives such as the AI Adoption Hub, launched in September 2023 by the AI Adoption Task Force, was an internal information and community space. Follow-up enquiries have confirmed that it has no designated owner and its content is not being maintained or updated. Colleagues continue to handle access requests and occasional mailbox enquiries, but these informal arrangements do not provide ongoing ownership and maintenance. Decisions regarding the Hub's future use and maintenance should be clarified through the emerging University AI governance arrangements.

AI for Teaching Innovation has supported disciplinary groups to co-design educational applications and provides a valuable source of educator-led experience. This work can contribute examples and evidence to the proposed approach. Any wider use of developed applications will require agreement with their owners on evaluation, support, maintenance and sustainability.

There is also significant local activity. Committee papers describe dedicated AI leadership and an AI Education Strategists Group in CSE. Within the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies, a School AI working group and symposium provide local coordination, while PGT programmes are piloting and sharing approaches to AI declarations, assessment guidance, rubrics and student support. Relevant activity is also taking place in undergraduate teaching, research methods and ethics processes. Within CAHSS, different schools and subject areas have developed programmatic approaches to overseeing AI use and restriction within assessment, and College AI networks of practice are forming. Colleagues in the Medical School have developed discipline-specific educational activity, and further work is likely to exist elsewhere but is not consistently visible. The extent to which comparable arrangements exist across Colleges and Schools, and how local activity connects with wider University structures, is not yet clear. The initial review should extend this picture and identify where coordination and support are

needed. Local work should be treated as expertise to connect and learn from, while retaining appropriate disciplinary ownership.

The provisional diagnosis is therefore disparate activity rather than inactivity. Guidance, platforms, training, innovation and communities exist, but their relationship is not always visible to the author group; ownership is sometimes time-limited or unclear; and a single coherent pathway to comprehensive information is not readily apparent. The review should establish where promising local work needs a clearer route to shared provision or sustained service. The added contribution of this proposal is to connect educational direction, capability development, provide a forum for sharing good practice, curriculum and assessment, support and responsibilities. It does not assume that existing projects will transfer ownership or be absorbed into a new structure.

5. A coherent University approach should be led by educational aims and focused on enhancing learning, teaching, and assessment. It should begin with what students and staff need to know and do, the judgements they need to make and the learning experiences that will support them. It should also establish clear expectations for responsible use, proportionate safeguards, and fair processes where misuse is suspected. The approach should not be based primarily on trying to detect AI use. Assurance of students' achievement should come principally from clear expectations, appropriate assessment design, and fair review processes.

This position does not mean that AI should be incorporated into all learning, teaching, or assessment. Decisions about its use should be guided by the intended learning outcomes and the disciplinary or professional context. Where students need to demonstrate knowledge, reasoning, skills or professional judgement independently, assessment should be designed to provide credible evidence that they can do so without AI assistance. This does not necessarily prevent AI-supported learning or preparation beforehand. Expectations should be explicit, and restricting AI use in an uninvigilated assessment should not, by itself, be treated as evidence that the work was completed without AI.

Critical AI literacy should be broader than effective prompting or proficiency with a current tool. It should include understanding relevant capabilities and limitations; evaluating and verifying outputs; recognising fabrication, bias and uncertainty; protecting privacy and confidential information; understanding copyright and intellectual property; acknowledging use; avoiding over-reliance; preserving human judgement; and considering social, cultural, political, economic, and environmental consequences. These wider skills should help prepare students for future working lives alongside AI. The detailed content and level required should be developed through evidence, consultation, and disciplinary and professional input. Building on AI Essentials and existing programme activity, the proposed work should develop and evaluate how these capabilities are reinforced through disciplinary learning and assessment and identify where further support is needed. This should include approaches that help students recognise when AI use may undermine their learning and retain responsibility for their own judgement, alongside appropriate staff support and arrangements for maintaining and evaluating resources.

The proposed shared capability framework should set expectations appropriate to students' stage of study and discipline, and to staff members' educational responsibilities. Schools and programmes would map relevant learning and

support to it, recognising provision that already meets the expectations. The aim is to develop new capabilities as well as assure achievement. Detailed outcomes and proportionate ways of evidencing them would be developed during the first phase.

Part of the work proposed here should be aimed at investigating how robust assessments can be structured to evidence student learning without AI assistance and using a blend of AI skills as appropriate. Without pre-judging the outcomes of that investigation, it is possible this will consist of a two-track approach, some assessments done without AI involvement, whereas others would develop and assess responsible, critical and discipline-appropriate use of AI where relevant. The aim for any investigation is to survey existing approaches, and codify and explain these across the institution, allowing discipline specific approaches to be developed which harmonise with a central top-level articulation, and permit auditing of types and amount of assessment against these different styles. This will give Schools and Colleges licence to provide common resources and infrastructure where needs are genuinely shared. Colleges, Schools and programmes can then interpret and extend these in disciplinary, professional, pedagogical and regulatory contexts as best fits their specific needs.

University-wide provision need not be produced solely by a central team. Colleges, Schools, programmes, professional services, students and existing projects should be able to contribute resources, case studies, expertise and delivery for wider use. University provision would describe its reach, assurance, accessibility, maintenance and funding, not the organisational location of every contributor.

The relationship should be reciprocal: University foundation → disciplinary interpretation → local practice and evaluation → shared learning → improvement of the University foundation. Communities of practice are therefore part of the operating model, not an optional communications activity or simple organ of enactment. They need curation, routes into governance and recognition of the work involved.

Students should participate as partners in design, governance and evaluation, not only as recipients of guidance or late-stage consultees. Participation should include students from different levels, disciplines and backgrounds, including those likely to experience unequal benefits, barriers or harms. Where students undertake substantive co-design or evaluation work, appropriate support and payment should be considered.

The approach should protect meaningful human judgement and relationships, recognise effects on workload and professional identity, and consider accessibility and unequal access. It should draw on relevant specialist advice about wider social and environmental consequences. Non-use should remain a legitimate outcome where educational benefit does not justify the costs or risks.

Proposed components of the University approach

1. Student and staff capability framework. Develop a shared framework setting out the AI-related knowledge, understanding, skills and judgement appropriate to students' study stage and discipline, and to staff members' educational responsibilities. Identify where capabilities are taught, practised and evidenced, and recognise existing provision. The framework's detailed content will require evidence and consultation; the proposal does not require every member of staff to acquire the same capabilities.

2. Curriculum, learning and teaching. Require all programmes to consider where AI is taught, used, restricted and critically examined; whether learning outcomes remain appropriate; and how learning activities support them. Support programmes to consider how AI changes disciplinary knowledge and professional practice, while retaining local judgement about educationally useful and inappropriate uses.
3. Assessment and assurance of achievement. Support implementation of the Assessment and Feedback Policy through practical guidance, examples, staff development and evaluation. In line with the policy, all programmes should consider whether learning outcomes are assessed in an appropriate way and how students demonstrate their own achievement. Provide a small, shared vocabulary for communicating appropriate AI involvement in learning activities and assessments. Local decisions about the level and form of use should be guided by learning outcomes, with clear instructions for students about each assessment. Support programmes to consider assessments collectively against their intended outcomes, including acknowledgement requirements, assessment of AI-related capabilities where relevant, and credible evidence of unaided performance where required. This should occur with a recognition of the requirements of professional bodies and the expectations of future employers.
4. Shared provision, support and communities. Coordinate access to existing guidance, ELM, staff and student learning, specialist advice, examples and communities. Agree with current owners how resources are maintained and how effective local work can be shared, attributed and adapted across the University.
5. Educational tools and innovation. Connect and strengthen routes for identifying, developing and evaluating educational uses of AI, including University priorities, local ideas and emerging technologies. Build on existing innovation activity and agree responsibilities for advice, development, testing, adoption and ongoing support with Schools, ISG and relevant services. Application development and running costs require separate decisions.
6. Governance and responsibilities. Define the sponsor, University coordination, College coordination and School/programme responsibilities. Connect education decisions with the relevant authorities for tools, data, technical infrastructure, procurement, sustainability, research and investment. Identify matters requiring joint decisions and maintain a route for emerging issues.
7. Responsible adoption and evaluation. Apply proportionate review of educational benefit, human oversight, privacy, accessibility, equality, sustainability, workload and cost. Involve staff and students, use relevant specialist advice and establish how evidence leads to changes, wider adoption or discontinuation. Consider how AI may shape the future University.

Indicative operating model and responsibilities

The approach requires University coordination and disciplinary delivery, with explicit responsibilities and allocated capacity. The model (Fig. 1 and Appendix E) is proposed for discussion. It should build on suitable existing roles and reporting arrangements while making any additional work and support needs explicit.

AI education should include both shared capabilities and the forms of AI relevant to each discipline. The relevant technologies, applications, capabilities and risks will therefore vary between disciplines and programmes.

A named senior academic sponsor would hold responsibility for the educational direction and decisions requiring wider institutional agreement. A University coordinator, with allocated time, would organise delivery, maintain the account of responsibilities and dependencies, support shared provision and coordinate evaluation. These are distinct functions, but do not automatically require two new posts. Existing roles could fulfil them if remit, authority and capacity are confirmed.

Each College would identify an Educational A lead or coordinating arrangement with an agreed remit, workload allocation and connection to Schools. The relevant College would confirm who undertakes the role and the time and support required.

School and programme responsibilities should be connected with suitable existing roles and arrangements where these exist, including CSE's AI Education Strategists, subject to confirmation of their remit and capacity. The initial review should establish what comparable arrangements or relevant expertise exist elsewhere. Where no existing role has an appropriate remit or sufficient capacity, the relevant College or School would need to assign clear responsibility and provide the time and support required.

A small coordination and delivery group is proposed, bringing together the senior sponsor, University coordinator, College leads, student representatives, and educational development and learning technology expertise, including appropriate representation from ISG/LTW. The group should also have a formal connection with EDINA and the ELM service owner where its work concerns AI platforms, technical development or service support.

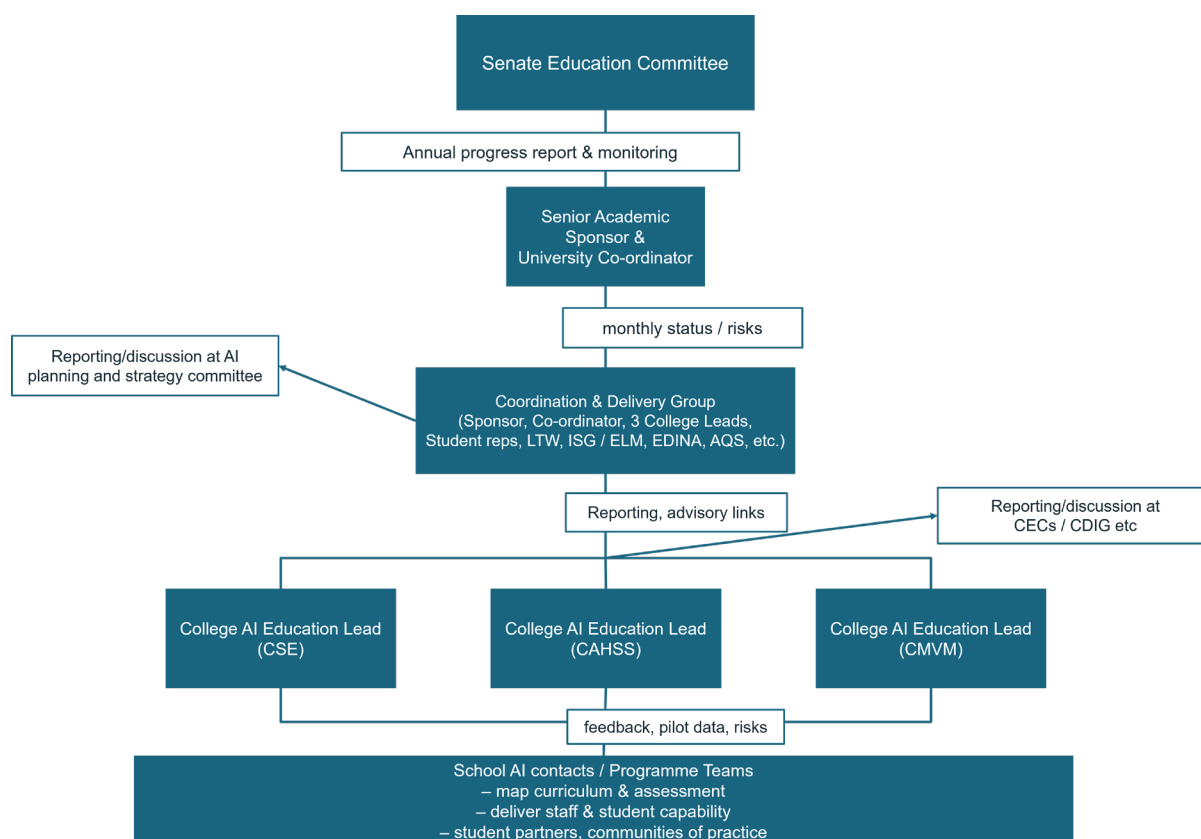


Figure 1. Indicative outline of proposed structure for co-ordination, sharing best practice and communication of activity in relation to AI and education.

The group's purpose would be to agree priorities, coordinate delivery, review evidence and direct decisions to the appropriate authorities. Other specialist services would contribute where needed. Subject to endorsement of the proposed direction, the group's institutional home, terms of reference and relationship with existing groups and committees would be agreed with the Deans and relevant University and Information Services leads. An appropriate committee or subcommittee should provide oversight of the development, dissemination, monitoring and enhancement of the University's AI provision in learning and teaching.

Educational leads and relevant University bodies should identify emerging AI opportunities alongside proposals from staff, students, Schools and services. These may involve evaluating existing tools or developing new applications. Priorities should reflect educational need, evidence of meaningful benefit, risks and available capacity. Responsibility would depend on the application's purpose. Work should connect with existing innovation routes, with proportionate testing and evaluation informing decisions about adoption, wider use or discontinuation, and with ownership and ongoing support agreed.

The education approach should proceed without waiting for a complete institution-wide AI strategy, but it cannot operate independently of wider institutional decisions (see figure of proposed education reporting, beyond SEC it is unclear how governance fits). Educational purpose, curriculum and assessment expectations should follow the relevant education governance routes. Approved tools, infrastructure, data, procurement, investment and long-term service ownership require named interfaces with the relevant University authorities. The Assessment and Feedback Policy already gives SEC responsibility for policy oversight, institutional priorities and training needs.

Resource implications

6. The main resource requirement is staff time for educational leadership, University and College coordination, capability development, curriculum and assessment work, shared support, student partnership and evaluation. Appendix D sets out a specific indicative model: a University coordinator, three College leads with allocated time, dedicated programme support and separate LTW, ELM staff support and other Information Services support and an operating budget. The first-phase outputs below define what that capacity is intended to deliver. Existing Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation funding and other provision should be mapped against the proposal, with project leads, before new allocations are confirmed. The model should distinguish work already funded from new or reassigned responsibilities and any continuing costs after project funding ends.

The resource proposal focuses on education. Specialist legal, data, security, accessibility, sustainability, commercialisation and technical advice should be sought through existing services, with their available capacity and response routes confirmed. Application development, hosting, scaling, maintenance and retirement costs are separate dependencies to be considered with the relevant owners; they are not included in the core staffing estimate.

A costed implementation plan should distinguish one-off development, recurrent central capacity, local workload and service-level costs. It should also identify where existing staff or budgets are being redirected rather than presenting that

effort as cost-free. Without this, the approach risks depending on hidden labour and widening differences between areas with and without local expertise. The indicative staffing requirement is 0.6-0.8 full-time equivalent (FTE) for a University coordinator, 0.5 FTE for each of three College leads, 0.2 FTE for dedicated programme support and 0.2 FTE for educational development and learning technology support through LTW and Information Services. This totals 2.5-2.9 FTE. The University coordinator requires a substantial allocation to coordinate the work across the institution, develop shared outputs, manage dependencies and support governance and reporting. The College leads would have substantive delivery roles, including engaging Schools and programmes, identifying existing activity and needs, involving staff and students, and leading development and testing within their Colleges. Dedicated programme support is required for administration, engagement, communications and reporting, while the LTW and Information Services allocation would connect the work with educational development, learning technology, training and relevant institutional services. Senior sponsorship would be provided through an existing senior role. These are indicative requirements rather than agreed or fully costed allocations. In sum, the resourcing of this approach focuses on staffing costs and requires clear budgets which acknowledge both one-off and recurrent costs and the impact of redistributed labour, with a clear mechanism for distributing resource proportionately. Before implementation, the relevant authorities should confirm the funded period, role descriptions, workload arrangements, salary and associated costs, operating activities and feasible milestones. Delivery of the proposed first-phase outputs depends on securing the staff time and operating resources set out in Appendix D. Funding, appointments and workload allocations would require approval through the relevant University and College routes.

Risk management

7. AI is identified as both a risk and an opportunity that will continue to influence pedagogy in the University. The proposals documented throughout this paper help to educe the risk by acknowledging the current position and being clear on future aspirations, including developing principles, a framework and clear governance. The principal risk of no coordinated approach is not only inappropriate AI use, although academic misconduct is a serious and guiding concern. It is uneven educational opportunity; inconsistent assessment communication; duplicated local effort; loss of promising innovation; unsupported applications; unclear accountability; dependence on individual enthusiasts or vendors; and reduced trust among students and staff. A model that achieves coordination by becoming highly prescriptive creates different risks: token compliance, suppression of legitimate disciplinary difference, excessive workload and rapid obsolescence. Implementation should therefore use proportionate assurance, staged investment and regular review. Key controls should include named ownership; approved platforms and data practices; programme-level consideration of learning and assessment; specialist review for systematic or higher-risk uses; explicit consideration of the University's duty of care to students and staff; accessible routes to advice, human support and reporting concerns; student and staff participation at all levels, including active School involvement in shaping and supporting implementation; evidence-based decisions at pilot and scale stages;

the availability of appropriate non-AI alternatives; reversibility; and planned maintenance or retirement.

The University should maintain a live risk and dependency register for the approach. This should cover student and staff wellbeing and the University's duty of care; educational harm and cognitive off-loading; academic standards; privacy and security; equality and accessibility; copyright and intellectual property; environmental and social impacts; staff workload and role change; procurement and vendor concentration; financial sustainability; and reputational risk.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

8. Harnessed appropriately AI can enable greater integration of data sets that provide insights into global challenges including responding to the climate emergency and sustainable development goals. AI literacy should develop staff and student understanding of AI's broader societal impacts. AI has material environmental and global consequences, including energy and water consumption, hardware and supply chains, labour conditions, uneven representation of knowledge, and unequal distribution of benefits and harms. Addressing these consequences is necessary if the education approach is to align with the University's educational values and its Regenerative Sustainability Strategy.

The proposed approach should address these issues in three ways. First, critical AI literacy should include an understanding of AI's environmental and societal costs and consequences. Second, proposed educational uses should identify their expected value, consider whether the anticipated benefits justify the environmental, social, financial and human costs, and compare AI with less resource-intensive or non-AI alternatives where appropriate. Third, decisions about adopting or procuring AI services should connect with the University's sustainability processes and commitments. Although an education approach cannot resolve AI's wider global impacts, it should draw on relevant specialist advice so that they inform decisions about when AI should be used and when it should not.

Equality & diversity

9. The use of AI has multiple potential equality and diversity implications. It is one of the essential reasons that the proposed framework is required. If we are not careful we could exacerbate inequalities. The need to include students as partners in the development of our approach is clear. AI can improve access and flexibility for some students and staff, while creating new barriers or amplifying existing inequalities for others. Relevant issues include disability access, cost and tool availability, language and cultural bias, confidence and prior experience, data representation, placement or professional requirements, and the possibility that different groups are subjected to unequal suspicion or surveillance.

Common access to approved tools and baseline learning is therefore an equity measure, but access alone is insufficient. Equality impact assessment and accessibility review should address the educational use of AI, building on any existing assessments of platforms and services. Disaggregated evaluation, inclusive alternatives and meaningful student partnership should also be built into implementation. No student should be disadvantaged because a local area lacks capacity to recreate provision that could reasonably be shared across the University.

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

10. Paper to be discussed at Senate Education Committee to endorse the proposed approach. The paper will also be shared with University Executive to establish whether the University supports the educational position and to identify governance and resources going forward with an ambition to develop a holistic University wide approach for AI in research, teaching and innovation.

Subject to endorsement and confirmation of the relevant approvals and capacity, the next phase should involve the rapid establishment of key role holders at University and College level to oversee the commencement of the project. The proposed coordination and delivery group should be established through the agreed governance route. This will require role descriptors, allocated time and terms of reference to be completed. The sponsor and coordinator would agree delivery responsibilities with College leads and existing project and service owners. The work set out below identifies the main outputs and the roles responsible for delivering them. A timetable will be agreed once the necessary approvals and staff capacity are confirmed.

Establish the starting position. College leads and the University coordinator would map known provision, expertise and responsibilities against the seven components. The output would be a focused, maintainable account of usable resources, material gaps and dependencies, built from existing information and targeted discussions. It would support early action and continuing mapping without requiring a complete institutional audit first.

Develop and test the educational foundations. The coordinator and College leads would bring together staff, students and relevant educational expertise to develop an initial capability framework and guidance for curriculum and assessment, building on the Assessment and Feedback Policy. Selected programmes or other educational settings would test their clarity, usefulness and workload implications before wider use. Assessment work would identify practical support needs within the policy's existing responsibilities and implementation timetable.

Coordinate access to support. Working with existing resource and service owners, the coordinator and support staff would establish a clear route to guidance, training, tools, specialist advice and communities. The output would identify what is available, where users should go and who maintains the information. Educational innovation routes would be clarified with the relevant owners as part of the dependency work.

Staff and student participation should be built into development and testing, with contributions from Schools, programmes, relevant professional services and current projects. Consultation should be targeted to the work concerned and make use of existing communities. Specialist input should be obtained where decisions cross into data, technology, procurement, research, accessibility or sustainability.

Review outputs and early findings. The first-phase report should show what has been delivered, what has been learned through development and testing, unresolved dependencies and resource pressures, and the next priorities.

Evaluation should consider capability, clarity of assessment expectations, learning and unaided achievement where required, equity, accessibility, staff workload and reuse of provision. Participation and course completion data should

be treated as measures of reach rather than sufficient evidence of educational impact.

Schools should use existing programme, Board of Studies and learning and teaching routes to bring evidence and issues to Colleges. College education committees would report progress and matters requiring University decisions. The coordination group would consolidate this evidence, and SEC would review institution-level progress. An annual SEC review is proposed, with College consideration as needed and the first-phase report at an agreed earlier or scheduled meeting.

Subject to endorsement and approval of the required resources, the University coordinator, College leads and coordination and delivery group should be in place within 6 months. An interim progress report should be submitted to SEC within 6 months of the roles being established. This should cover the identified provision and dependencies, progress on the capability framework and curriculum and assessment guidance, coordination of support, initial testing and any matters requiring wider University decisions. A fuller report should return to SEC within 12 months of the roles being established, setting out evaluated proposals for continuing delivery, governance, ownership and resourcing. Each report should distinguish work that can proceed through existing authority and budgets from matters requiring further University or College approval.

Edinburgh already has an impressive amount of AI-related educational assets and expertise. The immediate need is a coherent education approach supported by clear operating arrangements. This should connect a shared University foundation with meaningful disciplinary enactment, defined responsibilities, practical support, an innovation-to-service pathway and responsible evaluation. The first phase would establish leadership, consolidate the starting position and begin developing and testing the educational foundations. Any innovation-to-service arrangements would be agreed with application owners and relevant services, with application development and running costs treated separately.

The paper therefore asks SEC to endorse the educational direction and support the proposed first phase, including the staffing and operating resources needed to deliver it.

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30/09/2026

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Freedom of Information Open

Appendix A: Proposed approach at a glance

This appendix summarises the seven proposed components. The detailed framework and implementation arrangements remain to be developed and agreed.

Component	Common University foundation	Local delivery and evidence
Capability framework	Develop shared expectations by role, study stage and discipline; common learning and evaluation support.	Map existing and planned learning to the framework; extend it for disciplinary needs; evidence development proportionately.
Curriculum, learning and teaching	Principles for reviewing learning outcomes and developing relevant AI capabilities through learning and teaching.	Disciplinary and professional requirements; curriculum mapping; relevant learning activities and opportunities to practise.
Assessment and assurance	Implementation of the Assessment and Feedback Policy; shared terminology; clear communication and appropriate assessment of learning outcomes. Credible evidence of unaided achievement where required.	Programme-level assessment review; appropriate AI use; assessment of AI capabilities; unaided evidence where required.
Support and communities	Coordinated access to existing resources, advice and communities; agreed maintenance responsibilities.	Contributed examples and expertise; local networks; adaptation and feedback into shared provision.
Educational tools and innovation	Connect existing advice and development routes; clarify educational evaluation and wider institutional decisions.	Educator-led ideas, co-design, testing and evidence; agreed local ownership and support arrangements.
Governance	Sponsor, coordinator and small delivery group; agreed remits and institutional connections; SEC review.	College leads; School and programme responsibilities; College reporting through existing structures.
Responsible adoption	Proportionate assurance, evaluation framework, common risk lenses, decisions to change or retire. Common Change management framework and approach using the ADKAR change management model (already adopted and used in the other university strategic change programmes)	Contextual benefits and risks; student/staff participation; local monitoring and reporting.

Appendix B: Existing activity and questions to clarify

Existing asset or activity	Question for the initial review	Implication for the approach
Public guidance for taught students, PGRs and staff	How do the different resources connect, and who maintains shared and local guidance?	Build on existing guidance, clarify routes to it and develop shared principles with its owners.
ELM platform, APIs, training and safety support	How do ELM's safeguards, access arrangements and development priorities support the proposed educational approach and the Learning and Teaching Strategy, and where are further connections or support needed? What AI-related capabilities and support do students need at different stages and in different disciplines, how does existing provision address these needs, and where is further development required?	Connect ELM with the educational approach and confirm responsibilities with the service owners. Map existing student learning and support against the proposed capability framework and identify any further development required.
Training and short-course development (e.g., AI Essentials)	How do current and planned learning resources relate to the proposed capability framework?	Map and recognise existing provision, identify gaps and develop proportionate evaluation.
AI Adoption Task Force and internal Hub	How should future ownership and maintenance of the Hub be assigned, and where should any remaining Task Force functions sit?	Agree future ownership and maintenance arrangements for relevant resources retained from the Task Force.
AI for Teaching Innovation and locally created applications	What evaluation, support, maintenance and wider-adoption arrangements already exist or are planned?	Agree connections and any gaps with project owners; treat application running costs separately.
College, School and discipline initiatives	Which roles and networks are active, and what local needs or effective practice should inform University decisions?	Connect local expertise, recognise disciplinary differences and support contributions to shared provision.
L&T Strategy Implementation PID	What is approved, funded and active, and who owns outputs during and after the project?	Map existing commitments against the proposed work and identify additional requirements without assuming a transfer of ownership.

Appendix C: Evidence base used for this discussion draft

These working sources are carried forward from the author draft. The Assessment and Feedback Policy's approval, effective date and relevant requirements have now been checked against the supplied policy.

University of Edinburgh, Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030 (2025).

University of Edinburgh, Assessment and Feedback Policy. Approved by Senate Education Committee, 7th May 2026; effective 1 August 2026. Relevant provisions: 2.1-2.8, 4.4, 7.2-7.6, 8.1-8.6 and section 9. [Policy repository PDF](#).

University of Edinburgh, Internal Adoption of Artificial Intelligence: Short-life Working Group Report (January 2024).

University of Edinburgh, Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation - Project Initiation Document, draft v0.3 (24 April 2026; approval status to be confirmed).

Senate Education Committee agenda papers and minutes, January 2023-May 2026, including papers on generative AI guidance, assessment and feedback, Learning and Teaching Strategy implementation and educational AI governance.

University of Edinburgh guidance for taught students, postgraduate researchers and staff; ELM information, training and safety materials; AI for Teaching Innovation project information.

University of Edinburgh Digital Strategy, Research and Innovation Strategy, People Strategy, and Regenerative Sustainability Strategy 2025-2040.

Author-group comparator review of Swansea University, University of Exeter, King's College London, University of Sheffield, University of Bristol and University of Birmingham. See further below.

Sam Illingworth, What UK University AI Policies Actually Do: A Study of 96 Institutions, HEPI Policy Note 71 (2026).

Author-group discussion and emerging local intelligence, including College, Medical School and Veterinary School activity.

Comparator evidence and sources

Purpose and limits. The six universities were selected purposively because each illustrates a materially different response to AI in education. They are not a representative sample or a ranking. The descriptions below summarise official public material checked for the comparator paper as at 12th August 2026. The implications for UoE are the authors' comparative interpretation, not positions claimed by the institutions.

University	Distinctive approach	What it contributes to the UoE proposal
Swansea	A role-based capability framework for teaching staff, students, researchers and professional services, organised across responsible use, core literacy and role-specific literacy at Baseline, Established and Innovative levels.	A structure for progressive expectations differentiated by role, study stage and discipline, linked to development. It does not by itself provide a complete implementation, governance or resource model.
Exeter	An institution-wide enabling strategy connecting AI foundations, skills, efficiency and innovation with education, research, people, place and partnerships, supported by policy, an AI catalogue, training, communities and a proposal route.	Shows how educational aims depend on approved tools, data, infrastructure, governance, support and a route for innovation. Public material does not provide a complete funded roadmap or reporting cycle.
King's College London	Layered guidance allocating responsibility across University, department or programme, module and assessment, educators and students, with a four-level permitted-use model and the PAIR learning framework.	Supports explicit decision rights, programme coordination, shared assessment language and critical use in learning. The case also shows that guidance requires continuing governance, development and monitoring to achieve consistency.
Sheffield	A Common Approach requiring generative AI literacy in every undergraduate programme, described as "harmonisation, not homogenisation", with common principles, learning resources, support and assessment-use choices interpreted by disciplines.	A common student entitlement with disciplinary delivery rather than one identical syllabus. Public sources do not show the complete assurance method, delivery timetable, resource model or measures.
Bristol	Four assessment-use categories, Prohibited, Minimal, Selective and Integral, combined with longer-term programme review of the assessment portfolio against learning outcomes, inclusion, progression and independently authenticated work.	Connects immediate task-level clarity with programme-level curriculum and assessment review. Published material encourages review but does not show mandatory completion, reporting or a complete resourcing model.

University	Distinctive approach	What it contributes to the UoE proposal
Birmingham	A guiding framework given practical force through academic governance. For 2026/27, summative assessments use Type A, B or C classifications, with programme-level requirements for evidence of independent achievement.	Shows how common expectations can become recurring and auditable through existing structures. Its thresholds illustrate one mechanism and are not figures proposed for Edinburgh. Public evidence does not provide a complete capability progression or funded roadmap.

How the evidence informs the proposed components

Proposed component	Strongest comparator contribution
Student and staff capability	Swansea's progressive role-based framework, reinforced by Sheffield's common entitlement.
Curriculum, learning and teaching	Sheffield's disciplinary interpretation and King's PAIR framework for critical educational use.
Assessment and assurance	King's shared terminology, Bristol's programme review and Birmingham's governance and independent-achievement model.
Shared provision and support	Reusable learning, guidance, communities and human support are visible across the six cases.
Educational tools and innovation	Exeter connects approved tools, communities and a proposal route with wider institutional foundations.
Governance and responsibilities	King's allocates decisions across levels, while Birmingham embeds recurring review in academic governance.
Responsible adoption and evaluation	Across the models, educational use is tied to transparency, human judgement, risk and continuing review.

Interpretive boundary. The comparison identifies areas for development. It does not determine Edinburgh's detailed capabilities, responsibilities, assessment thresholds, delivery model or resources, which require UoE-specific evidence, consultation and decisions.

Principal official sources

- [Swansea University, Artificial Intelligence Framework](#)
- [University of Exeter, Enabling AI at Exeter and Enabling AI Strategy](#)

- [King's College London, Guidance on generative AI for teaching, assessment and feedback](#)
- [University of Sheffield, Principles for generative AI in education](#)
- [University of Bristol, Guidance on AI and using AI in assessment](#)
- [University of Birmingham, Generative AI in teaching, learning and assessment](#)
- [University of Birmingham, Guidance Principles on Assessment and Assessment Load 2026–](#)

Appendix D: Indicative first-phase delivery and resources

This is a discussion model for the defined first phase. The figures have not been costed or agreed with the proposed role holders, Colleges or relevant services. The level of resource, period and output scope require confirmation.

Role / capacity	Discussion estimate	Intended first-phase contribution
University coordinator	0.6-0.8 FTE	Coordinate the delivery plan, initial framework and guidance, shared support, dependencies and progress report.
Three College leads	0.5 FTE each; 1.5 FTE total	Connect Schools; map relevant provision; involve staff and students; coordinate development and testing; report College needs and progress.
Dedicated programme support	0.2 FTE	Support meetings, administration, engagement, communications, evidence collation, record-keeping and preparation of governance and progress reports.
LTW and Information Services support	0.2 FTE	Provide educational development and learning technology expertise, and connect the work with training, digital learning services, ELM, EDINA and other relevant Information Services provision.
Total staff allocation	2.5-2.9 FTE	Provisional capacity estimate. Salary costs, grades, duration and existing or reassigned time still need to be established.

Leadership and College roles. Senior sponsorship must be confirmed alongside the coordinator role; this estimate does not automatically include a separate new sponsor post. College leads would be confirmed through the relevant College arrangements. All allocations and links with existing School roles require confirmation.

Operating budget. An operating budget of £20,000-£30,000 will be allocated one year at a time to support University conferences, workshops, engagement events and related delivery activities. The annual spending plan will identify provision for meaningful student participation and accessibility requirements. Where these or other agreed delivery costs cannot be met from the operating budget, they will be costed separately and considered through the appropriate funding route.

Capacity and cost boundaries. Confirm existing project funding and available educational development, learning technology and ISG input. Specialist advice and School/programme workload must be recognised. This estimate does not cover application development,

hosting or ongoing service costs. Those require separate consideration with the relevant owners.

Outputs and timing. The model is intended to support confirmed leadership arrangements; a focused account of provision and dependencies; development and testing of an initial capability framework and curriculum/assessment guidance; coordinated access to support; and a first-phase progress report. Start date, duration, testing settings, milestones and reporting date remain to be agreed against the capacity secured.

Appendix E. Structural arrangement for AI in education.

Level/owner	Core responsibility	Examples of evidence	Key connections
University sponsor and coordinator	Sponsor: educational direction and decisions across University functions. Coordinator: delivery plan, shared provision, dependencies and evaluation.	Agreed remit; allocated capacity; capability framework; delivery and progress reports.	University Executive; SEC; Learning and Teaching Strategy governance; University AI planning and Strategy committee. ELM; ISG; ethics; information governance; legal; procurement; sustainability.
College Educational AI leads or coordinating arrangements	Coordinate implementation, connect Schools, identify shared gaps and effective practice, and represent broad disciplinary, professional and regulatory needs to central teams. Bring local needs, gaps and resource pressures into University decisions.	Named lead; agreed workload; College progress report; priorities and issues for University decisions.	Deans of Education; College education committees; University coordinator; local education and digital support.
Schools	Support programmes and staff to integrate AI into education in ways that are relevant to their disciplines; contextualise shared University provision; identify local innovation, needs and risks; and ensure clear communication and access.	School plan or mapping; staff development; local guidance aligned to University principles.	College lead; programme directors; Learning and Teaching Committees; Boards of Studies; professional bodies; Learning Technologists.
Programmes / course and assessment teams	Integrate the AI capabilities and practices relevant to the discipline and profession; provide opportunities to develop and apply them; communicate permitted use; and correctly assess achievement of learning outcomes.	Curriculum and assessment mapping; briefs; learning activities; programme review evidence; student feedback.	Students; Boards of Studies and Examiners; learning technologists; disability and student support.

Level/owner	Core responsibility	Examples of evidence	Key connections
Students	Exercise critical judgement, follow stated expectations, acknowledge use where required, participate in development and report barriers or harms.	Responsible practice; reflection and evaluation; participation in partnership and communities.	Course teams; student representatives; support services; communities of practice; EUSA.

Senate Education Committee

15 October 2026

Proposed additions to the Learn Foundations Template

Description of paper

1. This paper outlines changes to the Learn Foundations course template – the institutional baseline provided for all courses at the start of the academic year in the Learn Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). The changes reflect developments taking place in the Learning and Teaching workstream aimed at enhancing student employability and the experience of assessment and feedback, whilst the Learn Foundations template contributes to online accessibility and our commitment to sustainable and accessible digital teaching and learning.

Fit with remit

Education Committee	Y/N
Promote strategically-led initiatives and university-wide changes designed to enhance the educational experience of students and learners.	Y
Promote innovations in learning, teaching and assessment, embrace new teaching methods and consider cross-cutting themes such as research-led and technology-enhanced learning, digital and information literacy, education for employability, internationalisation and lifelong learning. Consider and promote local developments or initiatives with substantial implications for University learning and teaching strategy, policy, services or operations.	Y
Oversee policy relating to students' academic experience and proactively engage with high-level issues and themes arising from student feedback.	Y
Anticipate and prepare for new opportunities and likely future developments in learning and teaching for all cohorts of students and learners.	Y
Consider the implications of the Committee's work and its decisions in the context of external initiatives and compliance and legal frameworks, particularly in relation to equality and diversity.	Y

Action requested / recommendation

2. The committee are requested to review the outline proposal for changes and approve if appropriate.

Background and context

3. Since 2019 a consistent template, called Learn Foundations, is applied to all courses in the Learn VLE, other than those in the School of Social and Political Science and the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies. The template defines baseline information that should be included in all courses as well as consistent structure and terminology so that students can easily find learning resources, assessment submission areas, and feedback in the online course space.
4. Recent work in the learning and teaching workstream has focussed on the implementation of a new graduate employability framework, Skills for Success, with the aim of embedding the framework into all programmes and courses. A

new assessment and feedback policy was also introduced on 1st August 2026 which defines essential information to be included with assessments, including the provision of rubrics.

Discussion

5. Because the Learn Foundations template is made available to almost all courses across the institution at the start of the new academic year, it provides a mechanism to remind course organisers about new developments and requirements for courses.
6. In consultation with both the Skills for Success project team and the Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group, it is proposed that the Learn Foundations template be updated to include guidance on these new requirements.
7. The changes need to be agreed by December 2026 to go live across courses for the start of academic year 2027/28. This is to align with key dates in the new academic year process, with course information being updated and fed from EUCLID.
8. Although the exact detail of placement and information is yet to be agreed, both additions will focus on information for course organisers and links to relevant resources – there will be no new technical updates or changes in functionality.
9. If requested, exact changes can be brought to a future SEC meeting for information.

Resource implications

10. Resource will be required within the LTW Learn service team to update the course template; however, this will be part of the ongoing cycle of service improvements.
11. Resource will also be required from the Skills for Success team and the owner of the assessment and feedback policy to define the information to added and agree the placement.

Risk management

12. Including information about new course requirements within the Learn template responds to the risk that course organisers may not adopt the new requirements.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

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

Equality & diversity

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

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

15. All communication, implementation and evaluation activities are being actively managed via the Learn service.

Author

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20/09/26

Presenter

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Freedom of Information

Open

Senate Education Committee

15 October 2026

Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) Institutional Questions

Description of paper

1. This paper presents the proposed institutional questions for PRES 2027. The questions, if approved, will be asked after the core questionnaire and specifically of postgraduate research students at the University of Edinburgh.
2. The data generated from PRES contributes to improving the quality of research and learning, the student experience and student satisfaction.
3. This supports Strategy 2030 by enhancing the quality of the student experience and by supporting user-friendly and efficient processes that encourage student participation and engagement in feedback across their course, programme and the wider institution.

Fit with remit

Education Committee	Y/N
Promote strategically-led initiatives and university-wide changes designed to enhance the educational experience of students and learners.	Y
Promote innovations in learning, teaching and assessment, embrace new teaching methods and consider cross-cutting themes such as research-led and technology-enhanced learning, digital and information literacy, education for employability, internationalisation and lifelong learning. Consider and promote local developments or initiatives with substantial implications for University learning and teaching strategy, policy, services or operations.	Y
Oversee policy relating to students' academic experience and proactively engage with high-level issues and themes arising from student feedback.	
Give specific consideration to instances in which the experience of one particular cohort of students or learners (undergraduate, postgraduate taught or postgraduate research students, and those involved in non-standard programmes) may diverge from that of others.	Y
Anticipate and prepare for new opportunities and likely future developments in learning and teaching for all cohorts of students and learners.	Y
Consider the implications of the Committee's work and its decisions in the context of external initiatives and compliance and legal frameworks, particularly in relation to equality and diversity.	

Action requested / recommendation

4. SEC is asked to **consider and approve** the proposed questions to be included in PRES 2027.

Background and context

5. PRES takes place every 2 years at the University of Edinburgh and runs between March and May. The survey is administered nationally by AdvanceHE and locally, at institution level, by Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling (SAIM) in Registry Services.
6. The data from the survey provides University results as well as the opportunity for benchmarking against other institutions. In 2025, over 35,000 students from 93 institutions participated, including 1,564 from the University of Edinburgh. This amounts to a response rate of 29.6%, the highest since 2019.
7. Satisfaction in all core themes increased significantly between 2023 and 2025. Full data can be viewed on the [Insights Hub](#).
8. PRES includes a set of core questions (Appendix 1) as well as the option to ask additional institutional questions.
9. Deans of Postgraduate Research, the EUSA Vice President Education, and the EUSA Academic Engagement and Policy Coordinator were consulted and worked with SAIM to agree the recommendations below.

Discussion

10. In 2021 and 2023 the University opted to include one institutional question:
 - a. If you have any additional comments about support for health and wellbeing, please write them here (open comment)
11. In 2025, two questions were included.
 - a. I know how to find out about the student support services the University offers (e.g., Student Counselling, Student Wellbeing Service, etc.) (Strongly agree – Strongly disagree, n/a)
 - b. My institution offered activities and resources designed to prepare me for the next step in my career. (Strongly agree – Strongly disagree, n/a)
12. 80% of respondents gave a positive response to the question about wellbeing support services and 61.1% gave a positive response to the question about careers support in 2025.
13. For 2027, it is recommended that the following questions be included:
 - a. When needed, the information and advice offered by wellbeing and student support services has been helpful (e.g. Student Wellbeing Service, Student Counselling Service, Disability and Learning Support Service) (Strongly agree – Strongly disagree, n/a)
 - b. My institution offered activities and resources designed to prepare me for the next step in my career. (Strongly agree – Strongly disagree, n/a)
14. Through a wider piece of work to review the survey landscape, SAIM and the Student Survey Management Group have approved two surveys which are relevant for this discussion – *Have Your Say on... Semester One so far* and the *Research Cultures Survey* (Appendices 2-4).

15. Questions from PRES, Have Your Say, and the Research Cultures Survey were mapped to identify gaps and determine which questions would add the most useful data. The two recommendations above form part of a wider picture of PGR experience, and SAIM will work with colleagues to bring this data together.

Resource implications

16. No resource implications.

Risk management

17. The data from the PRES is used to improve the experience of students at the University. Failure to improve the student experience is a reputational risk for the University.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

18. Analysis of the data gathered through the PRES contributes to SDG4 (Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all).

Equality & diversity

19. Data from PRES and other surveys is presented on the Insights Hub broken down by a variety of demographics, including a number of protected characteristics. Hence, data gathered through the PRES can be useful to identify where specific cohorts of students report lower satisfaction overall or on specific themes, allowing the University to provide relevant support.

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

20. If agreed, these questions will be included in PRES 2027 and included on the PRES Dashboard on the Insights Hub once the survey is closed.
21. SAIM will work with colleagues to bring together data from all surveys targeted towards PGR students to build a holistic picture of their experience.

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September 2026

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Freedom of Information

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Appendix 1: PRES Core Questions

Category	Question
Supervision	My supervisor/s have the skills and subject knowledge to support my research
Supervision	I have regular contact with my supervisor/s, appropriate for my needs
Supervision	My supervisor/s provide feedback that helps me direct my research activities
Supervision	My supervisor/s help me to identify my training and development needs as a researcher
Supervision	If you have any additional comments about supervision, please write them in here
On-campus resources	I have a suitable working space when I am on campus
On-campus resources	There is appropriate access to physical library resources and facilities
On-campus resources	There is appropriate access to IT resources and facilities when I am on-campus
On-campus resources	I have access to the specialist resources necessary for my research (for example, equipment, facilities, software, materials) when I am on campus
On-campus resources	If you have any additional comments about on-campus resources, please write them in here
Online learning resources	I have a suitable working space when I am studying remotely
Online learning resources	There is appropriate access to online library resources
Online learning resources	I have access to the specialist resources necessary for my research (for example, course materials, software, virtual learning environment) when I am studying remotely
Online learning resources	If you have any additional comments about online resources, please write them in here
Research culture	I have access to a good range of seminars in my research area
Research culture	I have frequent opportunities to discuss my research with other researchers including research students
Research culture	The research community in my research area influences my work
Research culture	I am aware of opportunities to become involved in the wider research community, beyond my department
Research culture	If you have any additional comments about research culture, please write them in here
Community	I feel part of a community of postgraduate research students
Community	I feel a sense of belonging at my institution
Community	There are sufficient opportunities to interact with other postgraduate research students

Community	If you have any additional comments about community and belonging, please write them in here
Progress and assessment	I received an appropriate induction to my research degree programme
Progress and assessment	I understand the requirements and deadlines for formal monitoring of my progress
Progress and assessment	I understand the required standard for my thesis
Progress and assessment	The final assessment procedures for my degree are clear to me
Progress and assessment	If you have any additional comments about induction, progression arrangements and assessment, please write them in here
Responsibilities	My institution values and responds to feedback from research degree students
Responsibilities	I understand my responsibilities as a research degree student
Responsibilities	I am aware of my supervisors' responsibilities towards me as a research degree student
Responsibilities	Other than my supervisor/s, I know who to approach if I am concerned about any aspect of my degree programme
Responsibilities	If you have any additional comments about feedback mechanisms and student/staff responsibilities, please write them in here
Support	The support for academic skills meets my needs (for example, support for your writing, language, subject-specific skills)
Support	The support for using IT and accessing resources meets my needs (for example, support with accessing online journals and e-books, using digital learning tools/apps)
Support	The support for my health and wellbeing meets my needs (for example, personal tutor, student support and counselling services)
Support	If you have any additional comments about support, please write them in here
Research skills	My skills in applying appropriate research methodologies, tools and techniques have developed during my programme
Research skills	My skills in critically analysing and evaluating findings and results have developed during my programme
Research skills	My confidence to be creative or innovative has developed during my programme
Research skills	My understanding of 'research integrity' (e.g. rigour, ethics, transparency, attributing the contribution of others) has developed during my programme
Research skills	If you have any additional comments about research skills development, please write them in here
Professional development	My ability to manage projects has developed during my programme
Professional development	My ability to communicate information effectively to diverse audiences has developed during my programme

Professional development	I have developed contacts or professional networks during my programme
Professional development	I have increasingly managed my own professional development during my programme
Professional development	If you have any additional comments about professional development, please write them in here
Opportunities	Please indicate which of the following opportunities (including virtual and in-person opportunities) you have experienced during your research degree programme:
Opportunities	Please indicate whether you have undertaken paid (or equivalent) teaching work at your institution during your research degree programme (e.g. as a Graduate Teaching Assistant or Graduate Demonstrator)
Overall experience	Overall, I am satisfied with the experience of my research degree programme
Overall experience	I am confident that I will complete my research degree programme within my institution's expected timescale
Overall experience	What has been the one most positive aspect of your research degree programme so far
Overall experience	What, if anything, is the one top area in which your experience of your research degree programme so far could be improved
Motivations	What type of career do you have in mind for when you complete your research degree

Appendix 2: Have Your Say on Semester One so far (Entrants version)

Note: only a selection of questions relevant to this paper are shown below.

Question
You've been here a few weeks, how much do you feel...
Welcomed
Supported
Informed
Connected
Known
Motivated
In this new academic year, have you experienced any difficulties accessing or using learning resources (Library, IT, or online resources such as MyEd, LEARN Virtual Learning Environment, DiscoverED or Resource Lists) so far?
Is there anything the University could have done to better help you to prepare for the start of semester?
How likely is it that you would recommend the University of Edinburgh to someone?
Considering everything you know, overall, how would you rate the University of Edinburgh?
What would make student life better for you?

Appendix 3: Have Your Say on Semester One So Far (Returners version)

Note: only a selection of questions relevant to this paper are shown below.

Category	Question
Settling in	It's a new semester, how much do you feel... Welcomed Supported Informed Connected Known Motivated
Settling in	Overall, how easy was it to complete the Academic Fees and Payment steps during Annual Registration?
Settling in	Thinking about the past few weeks, is there anything the University could have done to better help you to prepare for the start of semester?
Your learning and career	Which of the following most closely matches the stage you are at in preparing for after your current programme? Various options under the headings: Exploring Planning Putting plans into action Plans are already in place
Your learning and career	To what extent have transferrable skills been made clear during your teaching activities?
Your learning and career	I feel confident that I am developing my skills in: Problem Solving Critical Thinking Curiosity Communication Collaboration Reflection Inclusivity Adaptivity Data and Digital Literacy
Your learning and career	How likely are you to consider the University of Edinburgh for future study/research?
Overall	Considering everything you know, overall, how would you rate the University of Edinburgh?
Overall	Finally, what would make student life better for you?

Appendix 4: Research Cultures Survey

1. How long have you been working at the University?

2. Over the last two years, roughly what percentage of your working time has been spent on research or research support work?
3. Where do you mainly work?
4. Who has the greatest impact on the research culture you experience? Please select one option from the list below:
5. The previous question asked you who has the greatest impact on the research culture you experience. Please now select from the list below any other people/groups that have an impact on your research culture.
6. Who has the greatest responsibility for developing and maintaining a good research culture at the University? Please select one option from the list below.
7. The previous question asked you who has the greatest responsibility for maintaining a good research culture at the University. Please now select from the list below any other people/groups that have some responsibility for maintaining good research culture.
8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statements below - strongly agree/agree/neither agree nor disagree/disagree/strongly disagree/I don't know?
 - a. The research culture at the University is not relevant for my role
 - b. The research culture at the University affects my daily work life
9. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? - strongly agree/agree/neither agree nor disagree/disagree/strongly disagree/I don't know
 - a. The work that I do is valued
 - b. The work that I do is valuable
 - c. I am proud to work at my School/Department
 - d. I am proud to work at the University of Edinburgh
10. Over the past few years, teams across the University have undertaken actions related to research culture. How genuine do you believe the University efforts to improve research culture are?
11. Over the last two years, how would you describe the overall research culture at the University?
12. Over the last two years, how would you describe the overall change in research culture at the University?
13. Regardless of whether you think that the research culture has improved or not, to what extent have teams across the University taken steps to improve research culture in the last two years?
14. How impactful in terms of improving research culture do you think the steps taken by teams across the University have been over the last two years?
15. How do you feel the following aspects of research culture have changed over the last two years in the University of?
 - a. Citizenship & Collegiality
 - b. Wellbeing
 - c. Ethics & Integrity
 - d. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
 - e. Career Development
 - f. Open and FAIR Research
16. In general, I feel supported by the following...
 - a. My peers
 - b. My line manager/supervisor

- c. My immediate work unit (e.g., team/lab)
 - d. My wider work unit (e.g., School/department/institute)
 - e. Central university support services
 - f. The University Senior Leadership Team
17. I feel comfortable approaching the following for advice or support...
- a. My peers
 - b. My line manager/supervisor
 - c. My immediate work unit (e.g., team/lab)
 - d. My wider work unit (e.g., School/department/institute)
 - e. Central university support services
 - f. The University Senior Leadership Team
18. Over the last year, how many hours have you typically worked/studied?
19. How manageable is your typical workload?
20. Over the last year, how has your level of work-related stress been?
21. What are the primary drivers of stress in your work?
- a. Workload (here we are referring to your workload as a whole – including research, teaching, and administrative workload etc.)
 - b. Tools, systems, and processes (e.g., IT systems, financial processes, research tools, etc.)
 - c. University regulations
 - d. Interpersonal dynamics (e.g., team behaviours, interactions with colleagues, isolation etc.)
 - e. Expectations (e.g., my own personal expectations, expectations of my line manager/supervisor, expectations of my team, etc.)
 - f. Understaffing (e.g., covering for absent colleagues, taking on additional tasks)
 - g. Uncertainty (e.g., job insecurity, precarity, unclear messaging etc.)
 - h. Other, please specify
 - i. Not Applicable
22. Is the University wellbeing support appropriate for your needs?
23. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about recognition?
- a. The work that I do is fairly and adequately recognised by my peers at the University
 - b. The work that I do is fairly and adequately recognised by my line manager
 - c. The work that I do is fairly and adequately recognised in my immediate work unit (e.g., my team/lab/Centre/School/Department)
 - d. The work that I do is fairly and adequately recognised in the University
24. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about collaborative culture?
- a. There is a collaborative research culture amongst my peers at the University
 - b. My line manager promotes a collaborative culture
 - c. There is a collaborative culture in my immediate work unit
 - d. There is a collaborative culture in the University
 - e. There is a collaborative culture in the Higher Education sector
25. How do you feel about the level of competition among researchers at the University of Edinburgh?

26. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements relating to ethics and integrity at the University?
- a. Research integrity is valued at the University
 - b. Open & FAIR research practices are valued at the University (*hover over definition for open and fair*)
 - c. The University uses metrics responsibly when assessing research
 - d. The policies and practices in place at the University relating to ethics and integrity are satisfactory
 - e. The training available for ethics and integrity related practices at the University is appropriate for my needs
27. I know the University expectations of how to:
- a. Undertake research ethically
 - b. Report breaches of research ethics
 - c. Manage my research data appropriately
 - d. Engage with open and FAIR research practices
 - e. Assess research and use metrics responsibly
 - f. Engage with good research practice
 - g. Report poor research practice
28. I know how to get help, support, and/or approval to:
- a. Undertake research ethically
 - b. Report breaches of research ethics
 - c. Manage my research data appropriately
 - d. Engage with open and FAIR research practices
 - e. Assess research and use metrics responsibly
 - f. Engage with good research practice
 - g. Report poor research practice
29. Before taking this survey, were you aware of the following?
- a. The University's commitments to improve the research assessment processes. E.g., responsible use of metrics, valuing diverse research outputs, valuing everyone involved in delivering research (DORA and/or CoARA)
 - b. The steps that you can take to assess the research contribution of others responsibly
 - c. How others should assess your contribution to research responsibly
30. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about equality, diversity and inclusion? - strongly agree/agree/neither agree nor disagree/disagree/strongly disagree/I don't know:
- a. I feel that the University treats all staff fairly and appropriately regardless of protected characteristics (i.e., age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation)
 - b. I feel that the University takes action to remove barriers and provide support for underrepresented groups
 - c. I feel confident in raising concerns related to equality, diversity and inclusion at the University
 - d. I feel that reporting a concern would have a negative impact on my research or research support career
 - e. I feel that the policies and practices in the University for tackling discrimination, bullying and harassment are appropriate

31. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about learning and reflecting?
- a. I am afforded sufficient time to reflect and learn after each piece of work that I complete
 - b. Time to think is valued and allowed within my immediate work unit
 - c. I feel able to spend time undertaking Continuing Professional Development activities that are relevant to my career aspirations
 - d. There are sufficient training options and resources available to support my professional development
 - e. My line manager supports me with my professional development
 - f. I am able to access appropriate career advice and guidance
 - g. Personal and professional development is valued at the University
32. In the last two years, have you had the opportunity to discuss any of the following with a more senior member of staff? This could be your line manager, mentor, or any University of Edinburgh staff member that could support your professional development. Please select all that apply.
- a. Your performance
 - b. Skill development
 - c. Training opportunities
 - d. Career progression
 - e. Career aspirations
33. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about sustainability?
- a. I know what the University's goals and targets are regarding sustainable research and innovation practice.
 - b. I have the time and resources to engage with sustainability projects during my work/study.
 - c. Our current research cultures at University enables sustainable research practices.
34. Are you considering applying for a different role?
35. *[Branch from Q34]* Do you still want to work in research/research support?
36. How satisfied are you with your career prospects within research or research support at this university?
37. How have the current financial circumstances of the University affected the research culture?
38. What should we do to improve research culture over the next two years?
(limited open text answer)

Senate Education Committee

15 October 2026

Assessment and Feedback Policy Implementation Timeline

Description of paper

1. The paper presents a phased implementation timeline (Appendix A) for specific elements of the Assessment and Feedback Policy, which came into effect on 1 August 2026.

Fit with remit

Education Committee	Y/N
Promote strategically-led initiatives and university-wide changes designed to enhance the educational experience of students and learners.	Y
Promote innovations in learning, teaching and assessment, embrace new teaching methods and consider cross-cutting themes such as research-led and technology-enhanced learning, digital and information literacy, education for employability, internationalisation and lifelong learning. Consider and promote local developments or initiatives with substantial implications for University learning and teaching strategy, policy, services or operations.	Y
Consider the implications of the Committee's work and its decisions in the context of external initiatives and compliance and legal frameworks, particularly in relation to equality and diversity.	Y

Action requested / recommendation

2. The Committee is asked to **note** the policy implementation timeline.

Background and context

3. The Assessment and Feedback Policy was approved by the Committee in May 2026, and came into effect from 1 August 2026. At the point of approval, the Committee noted that there were elements of the policy which some Schools would not be able to put into practice for 2026/27 where there were changes that would require approval from Boards of Studies and/or College curriculum committees, or equivalent. The Committee therefore agreed to a phased implementation for these specific aspects of the policy in order to allow Schools to develop and seek the necessary approvals for changes to the curriculum.
4. Given that the policy would come into effect from August 2026, the Committee agreed for the implementation timeline to be developed over the summer, in order to be published alongside the policy at the start of the academic year. The Committee agreed that the implementation timeline would be presented to the Committee to note at its next meeting.

Discussion

5. The implementation timeline (Appendix A) specifies five elements of the policy which may require a phased implementation in some Schools. It is worth noting

that some Schools may already be able to implement these elements, but that there will be variation on this. The timeline aligns with other University projects and activity where necessary, e.g. Learning and Teaching Strategy and Skills for Success Framework.

6. It is worth noting that the University does not usually introduce policies with a phased implementation. However, there was agreement at the Committee that it was preferable to have a phased implementation for a policy that reflected the intention and commitments for assessment and feedback, rather than a policy which could immediately be implemented in full, but which fell short of these. A phased approach would allow the University to maintain existing expectations and requirements in the previous Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities while progressively introducing enhanced expectations in line with the intended direction of travel, providing time for Schools and other areas to plan for and implement these changes effectively. This was considered particularly important as the University was preparing for the QAA National Review of Awarding Arrangements (NRAA) which took place in September 2026.
7. Given that assessment and feedback are institutional priorities for the University, the Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary Students requested monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the policy. The monitoring and evaluation plan is currently under development and will be agreed with College Deans of Quality and College Offices prior to sharing more widely.
8. The implementation timeline of the policy, and proposed approach to monitoring and evaluation, received positive feedback from the external review panel at the recent NRAA meetings.

Resource implications

9. The mandatory elements of the Assessment and Feedback Policy predominantly reflect pre-existing expectations, which were previously articulated in the Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities. The resource implications will vary across Schools depending on how close they already are to the requirements set out in the policy, e.g. mapping of assessments to programme course learning outcomes, programme-level monitoring of assessment methods.
10. Given the requirement for approval from Boards of Studies and/or College curriculum committees for amendments to the curriculum, there may be significant resource implications for these committees in Schools that have a large number of amendments to propose.
11. The phased implementation timeline seeks to mitigate some of the pressure on resources for Schools by allowing a longer timeline (until 2027/28) for the implementation of aspects which may require further curriculum development, including the option to further extend the timeline (until 2028/29).
12. The monitoring and evaluation of the policy implementation will also have resource implications for Colleges and for Academic Quality and Standards, who will be coordinating this work.

Risk management

13. Failure to implement the Assessment and Feedback Policy is a risk to the student experience and to the quality assurance of our teaching. 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 and the intentions set out in the recent QAA NRAA. The development of an implementation timeline, and associated monitoring and evaluation plans, is a significant mitigating activity to respond to this risk.
14. 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.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

15. This paper supports the implementation of the Assessment and Feedback Policy, which reflects 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

16. An Equality Impact Assessment was conducted alongside the development of the Assessment and Feedback Policy, and has been published. 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

17. The policy implementation timeline was shared with key contacts across Schools and Colleges in August 2026.
18. The policy implementation will be monitored and evaluated, as noted above in 7-8. The proposed plan aims to monitor and evaluate the five elements of the implementation plan over the first two years of the policy implementation.
19. The proposed monitoring and evaluation plan is to be agreed with Colleges and will be shared widely with Schools over the coming weeks.

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September 2026

Freedom of Information: Open

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

Appendix A: Assessment and Feedback Policy Implementation Timeline

The [Assessment and Feedback policy](#), approved by SEC in May 2026, comes into effect from 1 August 2026.

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.

The policy is based on the existing Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities and therefore reflects established and ongoing expectations and practices across Schools. However, some aspects of the policy are new and will require changes to practice in certain areas. To support these changes, a phased implementation timeline is set out below for the new aspects, with specified dates for full implementation. Unless otherwise indicated below, Schools are expected to implement the policy from 1 August 2026.

Schools may wish to consider points 1, 2 and 4 collectively to support a coherent and constructively aligned approach to learning outcomes, assessment and the integration of the Skills for Success Framework across programmes.

1. **Mapping of assessments to learning outcomes (2.1, 2.2):**

Schools which have already done this mapping, should implement this for AY 2026/27.

Schools which have not done this mapping, or for which the mapping is incomplete, should undertake mapping of assessments to learning outcomes over the course of AY 2026/27.

Where the mapping results in changes to learning outcomes and/or assessments, the necessary changes should be submitted to Boards of Studies by the end of 2026/27 where possible, for implementation by AY 2027/28. Where this is not possible, the College may, as an exception, approve a longer timeline for the School to continue the mapping exercise and submit any necessary changes to Boards of Studies by the end of AY 2027/28, for implementation by AY 2028/29 at the latest.

2. **Programme-level monitoring of assessment (2.7):**

Schools which already have this level of programme-level monitoring, e.g., for accreditation purposes, should implement this for AY 2026/27.

Schools which do not have this in place, should implement programme-level monitoring of assessment and feedback approaches, as set out in the policy, over the course of 2026/27. Where this results in changes which require Boards of Studies approval, these should be submitted and approved by Boards of Studies by the end of AY 2026/27 where possible, for implementation by 2027/28. Where this is not possible, the College may, as an exception, approve a longer timeline for the School to continue this work and submit any necessary changes to Boards of Studies by the end of AY 2027/28, for implementation by AY 2028/29 at the latest.

3. **Competence standards (3.4, 3.5):** All competence standards must be endorsed by a Board of Studies, and approved by the relevant College Committee, in accordance with the [Programme and Course Approval and Management policy](#), by the end of AY 2026/27. All competence standards for any programme or course delivered by the University must be clearly identified by the start of AY 2027/28, and communicated to prospective and current students. Communication to prospective students should include information on the programme degree finder webpages and the programme information publicly available on the Degree Programme Table webpages. Current students will be informed of any competence standards on their programme, and the information should also be included in programme handbooks, as well as information publicly available on the Degree Programme Table webpages.
4. **Skills for Success Framework (SFSF) (1.2, 2.4, 8.6):** All new and existing programmes and courses submitted to Boards of Studies for approval from 2026/27 onwards will be expected to reference the SFSF framework. Schools should aim to align all remaining existing courses and programmes with the SFSF by the end of AY 2027/28, and ideally in conjunction with the implementation of 1 and 2 above. This phased approach supports the timeline set out in the Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Plan, with the aim that, by 2030, the SFSF will be fully embedded within programme and course design, surfaced through teaching and learning, and effectively articulated by students. References to the Framework should exist in Degree Finder information for programmes, and in the 'Additional Information: Skills for Success / Graduate Attributes box' in DRPS for courses. It may also appear in Learning Outcomes information for courses, where skills are reflected in learning outcomes. Resources for staff are available to support this: [Skills for Success Framework](#).
5. **Approval of learning technology systems, platforms and tools (7.2):** ISG will undertake an audit of all tools currently in use during AY 2026/27 via College Heads of IT to understand what systems, platforms and tools are being used for assessment and feedback. Through the Deans of Education and the University Learning, Teaching and Student Experience IT Portfolio Group, agreement will be reached on how these will be supported and resourced going forward for AY 2027/28. Schools must ensure that systems, platforms and tools have the necessary support from Colleges and from ISG by the end of AY 2026/27, for implementation by AY 2027/28.

Communication and training

- Communication and dissemination of the new **Assessment and Feedback Policy** will be via Academic Quality and Standards key policy updates and webpages, as well as the Board of Studies Network.
- All staff involved in learning and teaching are strongly recommended to complete the online, self-paced **Competence Standards and Reasonable Adjustments** course (available via People and Money [Competence Standards and Reasonable Adjustments](#)).
- The **Skills for Success Framework** Sharepoint site has information on why we should be incorporating skills development into our practice, and key resources to help staff embed, surface and articulate the skills in teaching, learning and assessment activities: [Skills for Success Framework](#).
- Assessment and Feedback is part of the wider [Learning and Teaching Strategy](#) Implementation Plan, which will be widely communicated to staff.

Monitoring and evaluation

Schools will be asked to report on progress on the implementation of the points above through AY 2026/27 and 2027/28 – with confirmed accountable owners, dates for progress updates and escalation routes. There will also be ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Assessment and Feedback policy via quality assurance processes.

Senate Education Committee

15 October, 2026

Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group Update

Description of paper

1. This paper updates the Committee on the work of the Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group since its last meeting, with a particular focus on the review of the University's Common Marking Scheme descriptors and the clarity of expectations for students.

Fit with remit

Education Committee	Y/N
Promote strategically-led initiatives and university-wide changes designed to enhance the educational experience of students and learners.	Y
Promote innovations in learning, teaching and assessment, embrace new teaching methods and consider cross-cutting themes such as research-led and technology-enhanced learning, digital and information literacy, education for employability, internationalisation and lifelong learning. Consider and promote local developments or initiatives with substantial implications for University learning and teaching strategy, policy, services or operations.	Y
Oversee policy relating to students' academic experience and proactively engage with high-level issues and themes arising from student feedback.	Y
Anticipate and prepare for new opportunities and likely future developments in learning and teaching for all cohorts of students and learners.	Y
Consider the implications of the Committee's work and its decisions in the context of external initiatives and compliance and legal frameworks, particularly in relation to equality and diversity.	Y

Action requested / recommendation

2. SEC are asked to note the update and provide any comments.

Background and context

3. Assessment and feedback have been identified as areas for enhancement in both ELIR 2021 and QESR 2023. In response, the University has undertaken a sustained programme of work to improve students' experiences of assessment and feedback. This has included the development of the Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities, and their subsequent evolution into the new Assessment and Feedback Policy, which came into effect in August 2026. Together, these establish clear, institution-wide expectations for assessment and feedback.
4. Alongside this policy development, the introduction of institution-wide monitoring of feedback turnaround times from academic year 2023/24 has supported significant improvement in the timeliness of feedback. Between Semester 2,

2022/23 and Semester 1, 2025/26, the proportion of feedback returned within the University's three-week standard increased from an average of 56% to 83%. While there remains variation across Schools, a University-wide KPI has been established for all Schools to achieve at least 80% of feedback returned within the three-week standard, with an aspiration to reach 90%.

5. The impact of this work is also reflected in students' perceptions of assessment and feedback. Between 2023 and 2026, the proportion of students agreeing that feedback was returned on time increased from 52.1% to 73.9%. In the last year alone, there was a 15 percentage-point increase in perceptions of feedback timeliness, representing the largest positive movement on any NSS question across institutions in the Russell Group.
6. There has also been improvement in the proportion of students agreeing that feedback was helpful (from 56.0% to 64.0%), that marking was fair (from 75.0% to 80.0%) and in students' perceptions of the clarity of marking criteria (from 61.5% to 66.9%).
7. While improved, the clarity of marking criteria remains less positive than the other measures and is an area where further improvement is needed. In particular, the evidence suggests that, while students' experience of the assessment and feedback process has improved significantly, there is further work to do to ensure that students have a clear and consistent understanding of the standards and expectations associated with different grades.
8. In the recent National Review of Awarding Arrangements, the NR team expressed interest in the University's work to develop consistent grade descriptors and support students in understanding assessment expectations. While the Assessment and Feedback Policy encourages the use of marking rubrics and clear assessment criteria, greater consistency in the terminology used to describe different levels of performance would further support this objective.
9. Against this background, the Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group has reviewed the descriptors within the Extended Common Marking Schemes ([ECMS](#)), with a particular focus on CMS1 (Undergraduate Degree Assessment) and CMS4 (Postgraduate Degree Assessment).
10. The current descriptors provide limited differentiation at the upper end of the marking scale. In particular, all marks of 70 and above are currently described as 'excellent', despite the significant distinction between performance in the 70–79, 80–89 and 90–100 ranges. In addition, the current fail categories contain four separate bands, including terminology such as 'bad fail', which is considered unnecessarily negative.
11. The current approach can create challenges for both students and staff:

- a. For students, it can make it more difficult to understand the expectations associated with achieving different levels of performance, particularly at the upper end of the scale.
 - b. For staff, limited differentiation in the descriptors can contribute to variation in the terminology used within assessment and marking rubrics and potentially to inconsistency in their application.
12. Greater differentiation in the ECMS descriptors would therefore support the wider work underway through the Assessment and Feedback Policy to improve transparency, consistency and students' understanding of assessment expectations.

Discussion

13. The Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group considered whether the wording of the ECMS descriptors should be amended to provide greater clarity and differentiation between the upper grade bands and to simplify the fail categories.
14. To inform this work, a survey was undertaken with members of the Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group (that includes all Deans for Education and Quality), the Directors of Teaching Network and student representatives. Forty individuals responded, with clear support for differentiated descriptors for A1, A2 and A3 and for reducing the number of fail bands.
15. For both undergraduate and postgraduate marking schemes, 70% of respondents supported the following descriptors:

Grade	Mark	Proposed descriptor
A1	90–100	Exceptional
A2	80–89	Outstanding
A3	70–79	Excellent

16. There was also strong support for reducing the current four fail bands to two, removing the current 'bad fail' terminology: 87.5% of respondents supported a revised structure comprising:
- Marginal Fail: 30–39 (current E band); and
 - Clear Fail: 0–29, combining the current F, G and H bands.
17. The proposed changes are intended to be minor and targeted. They would not alter the underlying marking scale or standards; rather, they would provide clearer and more differentiated language to describe performance at different points on the scale. This would support greater consistency in the development and application of marking rubrics and provide students with clearer information about the standards expected at different grade levels.

18. No changes are proposed to CMS3 (MBChB) as part of this proposal. CMS2 (BVM&S) currently uses the term 'bad fail'. This has been discussed with the Dean for Education in CMVM, and the Vet School has agreed to replace 'bad fail' with 'clear fail', bringing the terminology into greater consistency with the other Common Marking Schemes.
19. Changes to the ECMS require approval by APRC. Any approved changes to the marking descriptors would take effect from the start of academic year 2027/28.
20. Following this, the Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group is also proposing to develop a set of generic marking criteria to support the interpretation and application of the revised descriptors. Many universities have developed similar criteria to support their marking schemes, and this would bring us in line with comparator institutions across the sector. The aim is to provide a common reference point for staff and students and to further support students' understanding of the standards and expectations associated with different levels of attainment. There will be opportunities throughout the academic year for staff and students to contribute to and provide feedback on the development of these criteria, ensuring that the final approach is informed by a broad range of perspectives and experience. It is the intention that these will be helpful in supporting colleagues in the development of assessment and marking rubrics, but it is not the intention that this should dictate or constrain what goes into specific rubrics. This will continue to be a matter of academic judgement.
21. As part of the implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy, two PhD interns are being appointed to work across the assessment and feedback portfolio, with a particular focus on ensuring that student voice and student perspectives are embedded throughout this work. This will include contributing to the development of accessible guidance and an animation for students explaining how their work is assessed, helping students to better understand the assessment process and expectations. The interns will also contribute to the development of the generic marking criteria aligned to the Common Marking Scheme descriptors, ensuring that the language and terminology used is clear, meaningful and accessible from a student perspective.
22. The Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group is also reviewing as part of the glossary of terms associated with the Assessment Regulations, key assessment definitions, aligning with external QAA definitions. This is to ensure that key terms are clearly defined and consistently understood across the University. The Group is starting with the definition of an examination, which is currently not sufficiently descriptive to provide a clear basis for determining what constitutes an examination and the operational requirements associated with it. Developing a clearer University-wide definition will support Colleges in their new role under the PCAM policy in approving new in-person examinations, as well as providing a clear foundation for the development of digital examinations. In particular, the

agreed definition will support Information Services in determining the requirements for digital examinations and the associated infrastructure, and will provide a basis for further development of the University's approach to digital assessment.

Resource implications

23. There are no immediate resource implications from this paper.

Risk management

24. 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 recommendation in the recent ELIR and QESR reviews. It is also expected that the recent NRAA will require us to address the marking scheme descriptors and improve students' understanding of the expectations of assessment.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

25. 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

26. Equality and diversity is inherent to the Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities. One of the Principles specifically relates to fair, inclusive and equitable assessment practices.

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

27. Any approved changes via APRC will be communicated to relevant stakeholders as required at the appropriate point.

Author

Professor Tina Harrison, Deputy Vice-Principal Students (Enhancement)
1st October, 2026

Presenter

Professor Tina Harrison, Deputy Vice-Principal Students (Enhancement)

Freedom of Information: Open

Senate Education Committee

15 October 2026

Student Success (Awarding Gaps) Task Group Update

Description of paper

1. This paper presents an update on the activities of the Student Success (Awarding Gaps) Task Group and actions the group propose to take forward. The task group is a subgroup of the Senate Quality Assurance Committee ([Terms of Reference available here](#)).

Fit with remit:

Education Committee	Y/N
Promote strategically-led initiatives and university-wide changes designed to enhance the educational experience of students and learners.	Y
Give specific consideration to instances in which the experience of one particular cohort of students or learners (undergraduate, postgraduate taught or postgraduate research students, and those involved in non-standard programmes) may diverge from that of others.	Y
Consider the implications of the Committee's work and its decisions in the context of external initiatives and compliance and legal frameworks, particularly in relation to equality and diversity.	Y

Action requested / recommendation

2. The Committee is requested to note the proposals which will set the direction of the task group throughout 2026/27. The Committee is invited to propose mechanisms to raise visibility of this work and establish greater accountability within the institution.

Background and context

3. In December 2025, the Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) approved the terms of reference and remit for the Student Success (Awarding Gaps) Task Group. The group is responsible for identifying actions aimed at reducing awarding gaps and informing institutional level monitoring of awarding gaps.
4. The University's approach to monitoring the awarding gap was the subject of the following QAA recommendations:

QESR recommendation (2023): Attainment gap monitoring - The University should pay particular attention to sharing good practice and supporting staff in understanding the causes of attainment gaps and taking effective action.

ELIR recommendation (2021): Attainment gap monitoring - Consider how to address attainment gaps in student performance through the oversight, coordination and monitoring at an institutional level of school-level actions.

5. The task group has been presented with a series of data analysis reports compiled by Academic Planning (Registry Services) colleagues. The reports have detailed the degrees awarded across the student population and have explored key student profiles and intersectionality across groups. Analysis has also focussed on gaps at College-level to give more insight across subject areas.
6. The data analysis has identified that students most likely to be affected by awarding gaps include Widening Participation students, ethnic minority students and Scottish domiciled students. This reflects the awarding gaps most commonly seen elsewhere in the sector. Key statistically significant gaps are as follows:
 - a. **Ethnicity:** Black, Chinese and Asian students are significantly less likely than White students to be awarded a First Class degree (with gaps of 21.3, 15.9 and 8.1 percentage points respectively). The Black–White gap has widened over time, the Asian–White gap has narrowed, and the Chinese–White gap has remained broadly constant. There are no significant gaps in 2:1 awards. Among UK-domiciled students, the only significant ethnicity gap is between Black and White students, with Black students 24.4 percentage points less likely to be awarded a First Class degree.
 - b. **Domicile:** Scottish-domiciled students are 14.9 percentage points less likely than RUK students and 6.1 points less likely than international students to be awarded a First Class degree. Both gaps have widened over time.
 - c. **Widening Participation (WP):** Among UK-domiciled students, WP students are 10.5 percentage points less likely to receive a First Class degree, with no significant gap for 2:1 awards. The gap increases to 18.1 points when WP is defined using SIMD20 and ACORN 5/6. The overall WP gap is largely driven by Scottish-domiciled WP students (10.7 points); there is no significant First Class gap among RUK WP/non WP students. The awarding gap for WP students has not changed significantly over the last five years.
 - d. **Disability:** Students with a disclosed disability are 3.6 percentage points less likely to receive a 2:1 than students without a disclosed disability, with no significant gap in First Class awards. The key gaps are for students with social/communication conditions (22.7 points) and those who prefer not to disclose their disability (6.3 points). No significant gaps were identified for other disability types.
7. Whilst improvements for and limitations of the existing data have been identified by the task group, changes to University-wide data collection and systems are not an achievable aim in the coming years. Existing data does evidence clear gaps affecting certain groups of students. This can inform decisions about where to target efforts and support work with selected Schools during 2026/27–2027/28 to test different approaches and build the evidence base of what is effective.

Discussion

8. Academic Quality and Standards (AQS) manages the annual monitoring QA process where all programmes and Schools report on their activities within key themes and institutional priorities. There is a section on Student Outcomes where Schools are asked to report on the awards and outcomes data on their PowerBI Dashboard and to identify any local actions they are taking to address awarding gaps.
9. The task group has collectively reviewed the 2025/26 responses from Schools and identified a number of promising areas of practice. However, there is currently insufficient evidence to determine their effectiveness. Working with Schools, the next step will be to develop the data and evidence base to evaluate impact and build understanding of what works, for whom, and in what contexts.
10. The group noted the importance of working within existing initiatives and strategies, such as the WP Strategy, the CAHSS Closing the Gaps initiative and the University's EDI Roadmap, to avoid duplication of effort and fragmentation of workstreams.
11. Specific promising areas of practice include:
 - **Business:** A WP Steering Group meets three times per year, supported by a WP strategy. The strategy is currently being refreshed, informed by focus groups with Widening Participation students. The academic attainment of WP students is monitored and reported through the WP Steering Group.
 - **Biological Sciences:** UG Immunology is the main programme reporting specific actions. These include continued drop-in sessions, the introduction of formative feedback opportunities ahead of all summative assessments, and a summer school bridging second and third year.
 - **Divinity:** For the last three years, a compulsory first-year UG course, the Theology and Religious Studies Foundation Seminar, has focused on developing students' core academic skills, with particular relevance to students from WP or otherwise disadvantaged backgrounds. The seminar has received positive feedback through SSLCs and student feedback and was also commended by the IPR Panel.
 - **Edinburgh Medical School:** Within UG Medicine, the planned introduction of regular applied knowledge testing, prompt feedback and enhanced academic support provides an opportunity to evaluate impact on progression before and after resits, support uptake and outcomes for Context Plus and other relevant student groups. The programme should also consider assessment demands alongside work, commuting and caring responsibilities, and monitor the differential impact of changes to resit and progression arrangements.
 - **Engineering:** In collaboration with the CSE planning team, a dashboard has been developed to track degree outcomes and awards for groups of students by ethnicity, gender, disability and age at programme entry. A comparable dataset for socio-economic background has not yet been identified. As a new

tool, the dashboard may also provide a potential model for similar monitoring across other Schools in the College.

- **HCA:** A new Widening Participation committee has been established as one mechanism for addressing attainment gaps. Work is also underway to ensure that international students, including at progression stages where some awarding gaps have been identified, are better recognised and supported. Further work has begun to consider how the core recommendations from the CAHSS 'Closing the Gaps' project can be implemented.
- **Informatics:** Research into the experiences of Scottish students, who are statistically more likely to experience difficulties and withdraw, has informed the development of a bespoke mentoring approach for students identified as being at greater risk of struggling, enabling earlier and more targeted support. A new Level 7 maths course was introduced in 2025/26, with a Level 7 programming course due to follow in 2026/27, with the aim of addressing gaps for students entering with insufficient entry qualifications.
- **Law:** Existing activities include: Early offer-holder days with a WP focus; A mentoring scheme pairing WP students with alumni; A 'Dress Smart' drop-in/free service providing formal clothing for interviews and events through donated items; Engagement with IntoUniversity, an organisation based in Craigmillar, including a day visit organised with Edinburgh Cares and Reach for S1–S3-aged young people and their families.
- **LLC:** With support from the LLC Widening Participation team, datasets covering 2021/22 to 2025/26 have been developed to explore key WP-related questions. These datasets are now accessible for further analysis, supported by an executive summary of the findings. Subject areas and departments can use the datasets to explore the findings in greater depth. Building on this work, a Department of European Languages and Cultures (DELC) WP Steering Group has been established to support outcomes for WP students.
- **SPS:** The School continues to implement its three-year Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy for Learning, Teaching and Student Experience, adopted in 2025, which aims to create an inclusive and aspirational learning environment and contribute to closing awarding gaps. In 2026, the School's EDI Committee organised a workshop for staff and PGR students addressing accent bias, social class and linguistic discrimination, with the aim of raising awareness and providing research-led strategies for mitigating these issues.

12. The responses from Schools demonstrate a range of activities and approaches targeting their respective student communities. However, it is also apparent that Schools recognise the need to strengthen the evidence base on the impact of these activities and indicated that institutional-level direction would be helpful in guiding and supporting this work. A key next step is therefore to work with Schools to better understand the activities currently in place, assess how these align with the awarding gaps and student groups identified through the available data, and ensure that activity is appropriately targeted across the range of identified gaps.

13. The task group also identified the need for greater consistency in the allocation of responsibility for this work across Schools and Colleges, while recognising that the appropriate approach may differ according to context. Working with Schools will provide an opportunity to identify where activity is already addressing particular gaps, where there may be gaps in provision, and where further evidence is needed to understand the effectiveness of existing approaches. This should support a more systematic approach to identifying, developing and evaluating activity, rather than assuming that existing activity is necessarily addressing all identified gaps or student groups.
14. In relation to disability, further consideration is required of the specific gaps identified for students with social/communication conditions and for students who are not currently recorded as disclosing a disability. It is proposed that this is taken forward in discussion with Student Disability Service (SDS), including consideration of how existing activity and support arrangements address these groups. In particular, it will be important to understand whether students who do not currently disclose a disability are accessing the appropriate support and reasonable adjustments, and whether there are barriers to disclosure or accessing support that should be addressed. This work would help to ensure that activity is informed by the specific circumstances and needs of the student groups identified in the data.
15. The task group observed variation in how Schools currently use and interpret the available data and dashboards, with some Schools also developing their own datasets to support local analysis. The task group agreed that there would be benefit in establishing a consistent set of core metrics and data to be shared across all Schools, providing a common baseline against which progress can be monitored and reported over time. It is proposed that this work initially builds on the data and analysis already being undertaken by Schools, working with them and the Student Analytics and Insights team to develop a standard set of key metrics for baseline reporting and future monitoring of progress.
16. The task group noted that some Schools observed that there may be a link between English language skills and the academic development demonstrated by some students from an ethnic minority background. It was speculated that some students who do not speak English as their first language are more likely to experience awarding gaps. The Senate Quality Assurance Committee has tasked an English Language Skills Working Group with exploring language skills and their relation to awards and engagement. The working group will operate throughout 2026/27 and report in to SQAC.
17. This work will also be considered alongside related activity being taken forward through the Race Review Action Plan and the EDI Action Plan, as well as the work of the Education Project Board (EPB) Lead and the three recently appointed Decolonisation Transformation Leads (DTLs), one within each College, providing an opportunity to connect relevant activity and avoid duplication. Further work should therefore consider how these existing strands of activity can be joined up where they have the potential to address ethnicity-related awarding gaps, and how

learning and evidence from this work can inform the wider approach to closing awarding gaps.

18. There is an expectation that the University will have taken steps to support staff in addressing awarding gaps and sharing good practice by the time of the next external review that will take place early in AY 2027/28.
19. Therefore, it is necessary for the task group to continue in a way that allows collaboration with relevant Committees and strategies, has oversight of effective activities at School and College level and can demonstrate efforts and progress towards closing awarding gaps.

Resource implications

20. There will be resource implications depending on the approach taken and specific interventions that may be agreed to be taken forward more widely.
21. Resource consideration must be given to the teams working in data analysis and planning roles, as well as staff in QA roles which will manage the systematic monitoring. Additional resource may be required as these teams roll-out data and evidence-based monitoring throughout the institution.

Risk management

22. For students, failing to address awarding gaps risks perpetuating systemic inequalities that undermine students' fairness, belonging, wellbeing, and long-term opportunities. For the University, poor performance across the range of student experience and lifecycle metrics is a risk to the University's reputation, particularly if we do not develop a better understanding of which groups of students are at higher risk of withdrawing or experiencing inequitable outcomes and the underlying reasons.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

23. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Equality & diversity

24. Equality and diversity are integral to the student experience and student success. The task group will work closely with the University EDI Lead and EDI Committee to ensure that appropriate consideration is given to this work.

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

25. Communication will be driven by the Deputy Vice-Principal Students (Enhancement) and shared by staff working in QA roles across the institution. Action may be driven through existing and enhanced QA practices.

26. Evaluation will be a key part of any practice adopted to address the awarding gap. The task group expects that interventions will be initially piloted and evaluated to understand their impact before rolling out more widely.

Authors

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October 2026

Presenters

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Freedom of Information Open

Senate Education Committee

15 October 2026

Internal Effectiveness Review of Senate Standing Committees 2025/26

Description of paper

1. This paper provides the Committee with the results, analysis and proposed actions drawn from the responses received to the internal effectiveness review survey for Senate Standing Committees, conducted in July 2026.

Fit with remit

Education Committee	Y/N
Consider the implications of the Committee's work and its decisions in the context of external initiatives and compliance and legal frameworks, particularly in relation to equality and diversity.	Y

Action requested / recommendation

2. To note the analysis of feedback received and comment on the areas for development as set out in Appendix 1.

Background and context

3. 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."

4. At its 19 May meeting, Senate approved plans for an internal effectiveness review of Senate Standing Committees. This was to consist of a survey of Committee members focussed on the Committee's effectiveness. The survey also included targeted questions on actions taken in response to the external review recommendations on the following topics:
 - a. Recruitment and Induction
 - b. Senate Standing Committees and their relationship to Senate
5. In June 2026, a survey was issued to all members of Senate Standing Committees.

Discussion

6. A summary of the responses, analysis, and areas for improvement are provided in Appendix 1.
7. There is a substantially lower response rate when compared to the previous internal effectiveness survey of Senate Committees; the areas for improvement are proportionate to the scope of the review, volume of feedback received and areas for improvement as given in survey responses.

8. The outcome of the survey will be reported to Senate alongside the annual report from the Standing Committees in October 2026.

Resource implications

9. The resource implications of the areas for improvement have been considered within Academic Quality and Standards and will be prioritised and taken forward in line with available resources.

Risk management

10. This activity supports the University's obligations under the 2023 Scottish Code of Good HE Governance. Internal effectiveness review activity is intended to aid continuous improvement of the University's approach to academic governance.

Equality & diversity

11. The review provides an opportunity for members to identify any issues relating to the internal effectiveness of Committees. Members were not asked specific questions on equality and diversity issues, however are at liberty to raise such issues via the completion of the survey if they believe this to be relevant.

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

12. As detailed in paragraph 9.

Author

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Head of Committees and Governance
Registry Services

Presenter

N/A

Freedom of Information

Open

APPENDIX 1: Report of Senate Standing Committee Internal Effectiveness Review 2025/26

A single anonymous survey of all Senate Standing Committees was conducted in June and July 2026. Respondents were asked to identify which Committee they were a member of at the commencement of the survey. Those who are members of multiple committees were invited to complete the survey for each Committee they are a member of. The Convener, Vice-Convener and Secretary did not participate.

Fourteen responses were received, there are a total of 61 members across all Senate Committees, excluding the Convener, Vice-Convener and Secretary. This equates to an overall response rate of 23%.

Three responses were received from members of the Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC) from a total of 20 members giving a response rate of 15%. Three responses were received from members of the Senate Education Committee (SEC) from a total of 26 members giving a response rate of 12%. Eight responses were received from members of the Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) from a total of 15 members, giving a response rate of 53%.

An internal effectiveness review survey of Senate Committees was not undertaken in the 2024/25 academic year, however compared with the 2023/24 academic year there has been a substantial reduction in response rate. For APRC, there was a 40% reduction in response rate from 13 to 3 responses. For SEC, there was a 32% reduction in response rate from 11 to 3 responses. For SQAC, there was a 1% increase in response rate to 8 from a possible 14, which is an increase from the 9 responses from a possible 16 received in 2023/24.

Of the responses, five responses were received from ex-officio members, including student members and five responses were received from nominated members, including College and Service area representatives. Two responses were received from elected Senate members and two responses received from co-opted members.



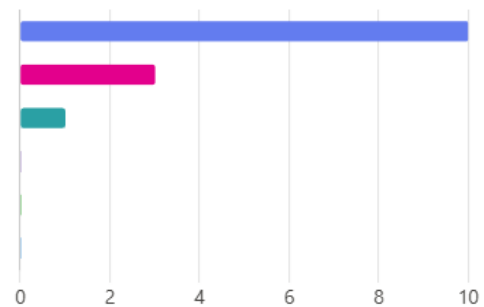
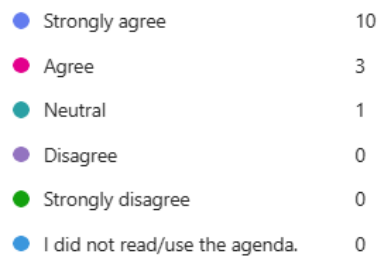
Due to the low response rate from APRC and SEC, and the potential to identify individual respondents, the analysis of survey results has been undertaken as a single exercise for all Committees. Where there is Committee-specific feedback provided in free text comments, this has been provided for completeness with any identifying information removed from comments.

A summary of survey responses Agendas and papers

Meeting agendas

The majority of respondents found meeting agendas to be clear and well-structured, one respondent was neutral on this question and no respondents disagreed with this statement.

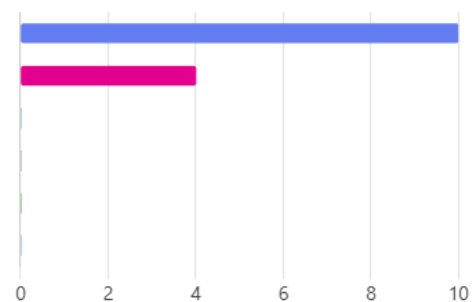
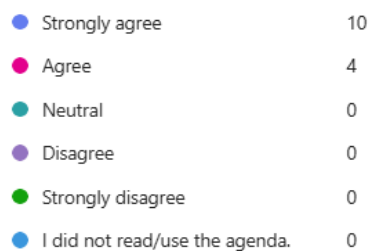
3. I found meeting agendas to be clear and well-structured.



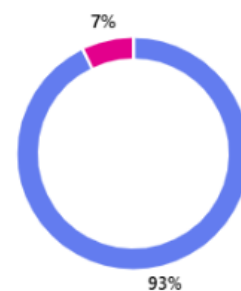
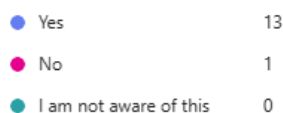
Fit to remit

All respondents agreed that agenda items fit within the Committee's remit. A majority of respondents (13) found the mapping of agenda items on the cover paper helped their understanding of how agenda items fit within the remit of the Committee, one respondent disagreed with this statement.

4. I found agenda items fit within the Committee's remit.



5. The mapping of agenda items to committee remit in the cover paper helped me understand how items fit within remit.

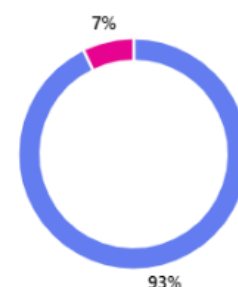


Coverage of agenda items

A majority of respondents (13) felt that agenda items were adequately covered during meetings, one respondent disagreed with this statement.

6. I felt that agenda items were covered adequately during meetings of the Committee.

● Yes	13
● No	1
● I did not attend meetings.	0



There were three free-text comments received in relation to Committee agendas. Free text comments in this category were submitted by 3 members of the Senate Quality Assurance Committee and a summary of the feedback is provided:

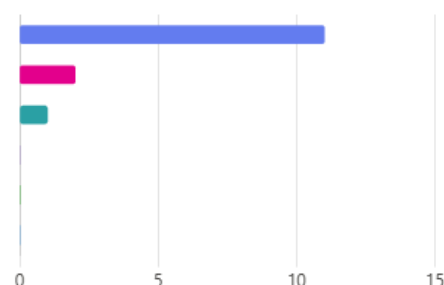
- The majority of Committee papers were to a high quality and aligned to Committee remit, however where papers were not high quality, or the action requested was unclear, this impacted on the Committee's discussions and decision-making and created confusion for members.
- There is a lack of clarity between the Committee's remit and University strategy, which impacts on the Committee's effectiveness and strategic and institutional impact on QA matters.
- Overall Committee discussions were productive and constructive, however did not address governance aspects required to support full Senate understanding and decision making on relevant matters.

Committee meetings

A majority of respondents (13) agreed that all members had an equal opportunity to contribute to the discussion, one respondent was neutral on this statement.

8. I felt that all members had an equal opportunity to contribute to the discussion.

● Strongly agree	11
● Agree	2
● Neutral	1
● Disagree	0
● Strongly disagree	0
● I did not attend meetings.	0



A majority of respondents (13) felt that the hybrid meeting format allowed members to contribute equally. One respondent disagreed with this statement.

9. The hybrid meeting format allowed in-person and online members to contribute equally?



Four free-text comments were received in relation to Committee meetings. Three free text comments were submitted by 3 members of the Senate Quality Assurance Committee and one free text comment was submitted by a member of another Senate committee. A summary of feedback is provided:

- One respondent expressed a personal preference for meetings to take place in-person or online only, noting that hybrid meetings can feel disjointed and technology is generally inadequate.
- Two respondents indicated that it was difficult to measure whether members had an equal opportunity to contribute, with one respondent stating that strong voices dominate Committee discussions.
- One respondent expressed appreciation for hybrid meetings which facilitated attendance for members in particular circumstances.

Relationship to Senate

A majority of respondents (11) strongly agreed with the understanding that the responsibilities of the Committee are delegated by Senate. One respondent agreed, one respondent was neutral on this statement and one respondent disagreed with this statement.

12. I understand that the responsibilities of the Committee are delegated by Senate



A majority of respondents (9) strongly agreed that they understood the Committee's role in relation to Senate. Three respondents agreed, one respondent was neutral and one respondent disagreed with this statement.

13. I understand the Committee's role in relation to Senate



There were two free-text comments received on the Relationship to Senate. Both free text comments were submitted by 2 members of the Senate Quality Assurance Committee and a summary of the feedback is provided:

- There are ongoing discussions regarding Standing Committees at Senate meetings and it has been some time since the delegation of responsibilities and roles of Committees were discussed at Senate. A respondent referenced a decision to not honour a vote on committee chair's being elected.
- One respondent expressed a general understanding of the written remit of the Committees, however another expressed uncertainty regarding their understanding of the Committee's relationship to Senate.

Committee effectiveness

A majority of respondents (12) considered the Committee to be effective. One respondent was neutral on this statement and one respondent disagreed with this statement, both respondents were members of the Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC).

11. Overall, I consider the Committee to be effective.



Additional questions: measuring the effectiveness of the external review recommendations

There was one additional question intended to measure the effectiveness of actions taken in response to the External Review of Senate undertaken in 2022/23. Respondents were asked for their view on the effectiveness of Recruitment and Induction actions implemented in 2025/26 which were in response to the recommendations of the External Review.

Recruitment and Induction – Standing Committees

Standing Committee Induction pack

Of the fourteen responses, eight respondents indicated that they were not a new member in 2025/26 and therefore could not comment on the provision of a Senate Standing Committee induction pack, including a recording of the Senate Induction Session and additional Committee resources on the Committee Portal. Of the remaining six respondents, two responses indicated this was very positive, one response indicated this was positive, two respondents were not aware of the action and one respondent did not give an answer.

Overall Standing Committee Induction Process

Five respondents indicated that the overall Standing Committee Induction process was positive, with one respondent indicating they were unaware of the action. Eight respondents were not a new member in 2025/26 and therefore could not comment on the action taken, and one respondent did not give an answer.

15. Please rate the effectiveness of the following actions on Recruitment and Induction:

[More details](#)

Very positive Positive Negative Very negative I am not aware of this action I was not a new member in 2025/26

The provision of a Senate Standing Committee induction pack, including a recording of the Senate Induction Session and additional Committee resources on the Committee Portal.

The overall Standing Committee Induction Process



There was one free text comment with the respondent indicating that support from other members was helpful for their induction.

The responses to this section will be logged for the next External Effectiveness Review of Senate.

Good practice

Based on the responses to the survey presented above, the following areas are consistently highlighted as areas where there is good practice:

- **Fit to remit on Committee paper templates:** A majority of respondents agreed that the paper templates and mapping of agenda items to the Committee remit helped them to understand how items fit to the Committee remit. This was an action in response to the internal effectiveness review survey conducted in 2023/24.
- **Hybrid meetings:** A majority of respondents value that meetings are conducted in hybrid format. Meetings will continue to be held as hybrid, and AQS staff will

arrange meetings in rooms with good hybrid functionality, wherever possible and subject to availability.

Areas for development

Two key themes were identified within the feedback as areas where the Committee could seek to focus enhancement:

- **Survey response rate:** The reduction in response rate to the survey in 2025/26 (overall response rate of 24%) makes it difficult to ensure that the results are sufficiently representative of members' views and that actions reflect members' priorities for improving the internal effectiveness of the Committee. We will therefore aim to improve response rates for the next survey.
- **Relationship to Senate:** The responses to questions on the relationship to Senate indicate that respondents have an overall positive view, however these responses indicate a lower level of satisfaction when compared to other questions. The Statement of Senate's Primary Responsibilities (SOPR) has recently been approved by the University Court and will help to explain the relationship and develop understanding of the responsibilities delegated by Senate to its Standing Committees.