

**Minutes of the Meeting of Senate Education Committee held at 2pm on
Wednesday 9 October 2019 in the Research Suite, Main Library**

1. Attendance

Present	Position
Colm Harmon	Vice-Principal Students (Convener) – Ex Officio
Tina Harrison	Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance (Deputy Convener) – Ex Officio
Sabine Rolle	Representative of CAHSS (Learning and Teaching)
Lisa Kendall	Representative of CAHSS (Learning and Teaching)
Stephen Bowd	Representative of CAHSS (Postgraduate Research)
Judy Hardy	Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching)
Michael Seery	Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching)
Antony Maciocia	Representative of CSE (Postgraduate Research)
Neil Turner	Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching, UG)
Steph Vallancey	Edinburgh University Students' Association, Vice-President Education – Ex Officio
Iain Gordon	Head of School, CSE
Richard Andrews	Head of School, CAHSS
Mike Shipston	Head of Deanery, CMVM
Sue MacGregor	Director of Academic Services – Ex Officio
Velda McCune	Representing Director of Institute for Academic Development – Ex Officio
Rebecca Gaukroger	Director of Student Recruitment & Admissions – Ex Officio
Melissa Highton	Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Services Division of Information Services – Ex Officio
Shelagh Green	Director for Careers & Employability – Ex Officio
Philippa Ward	Secretary
Apologies	
Sarah Henderson	Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching, PGT)
Paddy Hadoke	Representative of CMVM (Postgraduate Research)
Sarah Moffat	Edinburgh University Students' Association, Permanent Staff Member – Ex Officio
Sian Bayne	Co-option – Digital Education
In Attendance	
Paula Webster	Student Data and Surveys
Ros Claase	Service Excellence Programme
Emma Hunter	Service Excellence Programme
Rosie Edwards	Service Excellence Programme
Gavin Douglas	Deputy Secretary Student Experience
Sharon Maguire	Institute for Academic Development

All members were welcomed to the first meeting of the new Committee.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

Education Committee approved the minutes of the final meetings of Senate Researcher Experience Committee (REC) and Senate Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) held on 14 and 22 May 2019 respectively.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 Review of Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy (AILP) (LTC 22 May 2019, agenda item 6.1)

The Director of the Learning, Teaching and Web Services Division of Information Services reported that consultation about the AILP had been undertaken over the summer. This had suggested that the Policy was no longer fit for purpose on the basis that it did not reflect the current make-up of the student body or recent developments in technology-assisted learning.

The Committee agreed that work on developing a revised statement of the University's intentions around learning and teaching would be undertaken, possibly through the Support for Curriculum Development Group.

Action: Convener to meet with Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance, Director of the Learning, Teaching and Web Services Division of IS and CAHSS Dean for Undergraduate Studies to discuss the development of a revised statement of the University's intentions around learning and teaching.

4. Convener's Business

The Convener thanked members for the warm welcome he had received to the University. He noted that Edinburgh was an institution that was receptive to innovative change and that there had been significant activity in recent years to address concerns around education and the student experience. A clearer, wrap-around narrative outlining the purpose of this activity was now a priority for him as Vice Principal.

Members noted the launch of 'Strategy 2030', and the opportunity this presented for the University to think again about the type of graduates it was aiming to produce and a curriculum that would facilitate this. In this context, this Convener, with input from Education Committee, hoped to produce a discussion paper this semester which would be used as the basis for widespread consultation in the new year. Members noted that the direction of travel was not already set, would be agreed as a result of the consultation, and would be specific to the Edinburgh context. The Convener also noted that work already undertaken, particularly around curriculum review in individual Schools, would not be wasted.

5. For Discussion

5.1 Senate Education Committee Terms of Reference

Members noted and approved the Terms of Reference for the new Committee, recognising that it had been established following review of the structure of the Senate Standing Committees. Education Committee was taking on the learning and teaching-related

responsibilities of the former Learning and Teaching Committee and the strategic, postgraduate research-related aspects of Researcher Experience Committee's business. (The more operational business formerly undertaken by REC would be dealt with elsewhere.) The broader student experience was currently being managed by a sub-group of University Executive, although it was noted that Senate Quality Assurance Committee also had a role in overseeing this area.

Academic Services would undertake a review of the effectiveness of the new Terms of Reference later in academic year 2019/20.

5.2 Student Satisfaction Results 2019

The Committee thanked the Head of Student Data and Surveys for the high quality documentation provided. Members noted that the results of the 2019 surveys showed significant variation in the levels of student satisfaction both between and within Schools. Taught postgraduate (PGT) students were the most satisfied. Overall satisfaction amongst postgraduate research (PGR) students was declining, with concerns around supervision appearing to be key to this. Levels of satisfaction amongst undergraduate students were poor as compared with other Russell Group institutions, with failure to provide feedback in a timely way and a lack of a sense of belonging being significant concerns.

Members discussed the following:

- The decline in satisfaction amongst PGR students was a cause for concern. Issues with supervision, inconsistent experiences across the PGR student body (for example due to variation in stipend and scholarship arrangements or length of programme), and concerns about the estate were thought to be major factors in this. It was hoped that recent revisions to the Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students and arrangements for supervisor training would have a positive impact over time. Members also discussed establishing clearer links between the work of Senate Education Committee and Estates.
- There appeared to be some confusion around feedback turnaround times, with many students being under the impression that feedback should be returned within 2 weeks and not within 15 working days as stated in the Taught Assessment Regulations (TARs). Members discussed the potential value of amending the wording of Regulation 16 of the TARs to make it clear that 15 working days equates to 3 calendar weeks.
- There may be benefit in further breaking down the PGT data to compare students who undertook their undergraduate degrees at Edinburgh with those who studied at other institutions.
- The mismatch between the survey results and what students report about their experience in person to members of staff was noted.
- Student Data and Surveys has done some work on the correlation between student satisfaction and student numbers, but there may be benefit in doing more work in this area and for PGT students in particular.
- Members agreed that sense of belonging was a key issue (particularly at Kings Buildings). It was noted that a 'Sense of Belonging' Task Group had been established as part of the Student Experience Action Plan. Anyone wishing to be involved in this group, or with ideas about ways in which issues might be addressed were asked to contact the Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance.
- Interrogation of the results for those on joint degree programmes demonstrated that there was no clear correlation between sense of community and overall level of

satisfaction. Furthermore, overall satisfaction of those on joint degree programmes was no different to that of students on the related, single honours programmes.

- Coherence of programmes may be an issue and may provide an explanation for the strong results achieved by the Vet School, Divinity and Health in Social Science year on year. This issue should be considered carefully in the context of curriculum review.

Action:

1. Convener to consider whether there should be clearer links between the work of Senate Education Committee and Estates.
2. Student Data and Surveys to see whether it is possible to gain additional insight by:
 - a. breaking down the PGT data based on location of undergraduate study
 - b. doing further work on the correlation between overall satisfaction and student numbers
3. Members wishing to contribute to the work of the Sense of Belonging Task Group to contact the Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance.

5.3 Progress Against University of Edinburgh Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Plan

The Committee noted that a substantial amount of very positive activity had been undertaken to implement the Learning and Teaching Strategy. However, it was agreed that the Strategy had now served its purpose and that, in the context of Vision 2030, there was an opportunity to refresh the University's aspirations for its learning and teaching.

Members discussed the fact that the proportion of teaching staff with HEA Fellowship or a teaching qualification or equivalent remains relatively low, although numbers are growing. The benefits and disadvantages of requiring all teaching staff to hold such a qualification were discussed.

5.4 University of Edinburgh Students' Association Vice-President Education Priorities 2019/20

The Students' Association Vice-President Education highlighted her three priority areas for 2019/20 namely:

1. Promoting quality and constructive feedback
2. Ensuring students have access to the support they need
3. Improving the accessibility and inclusivity of academia

In relation to priority area 2 and the role of the School Representative system within this, members noted the importance of:

- Schools engaging well with their Representatives
- ensuring that there was good succession planning in the system to assist with the flow of information from year to year
- ensuring that Representatives were provided with high quality data to assist them in their roles. The work being undertaken by Student Data and Surveys in this area was noted.

5.5 Student Support and Personal Tutor Project

Members welcomed the paper, which provided an update on the review of Student Support and Personal Tutoring, and presented the three models of future ways of working currently under consultation with students and staff. It was noted that there had been good engagement with the consultation from staff to date, and that work was been undertaken to increase student engagement. The Committee raised the following points in discussion:

- It would be essential to ensure that those undertaking the new roles described in the paper were adequately developed, recognised and rewarded for their work. Members were advised that posts of this type were now relatively common within the sector, and as such, it would be possible to learn from best practice at other institutions.
- Justifiable variation within the system was discussed. It was noted that, at this stage, the expectation was that all areas of the University would be asked to adopt a single model. However, flexibility in the implementation of this model would be permitted. The Committee agreed that a degree of homogeneity across the University was essential.
- Members generally agreed that there would be benefit in increasing the level of professional services' support offered to students, therefore allowing academics to focus more on the provision of academic advice. However, it was noted that some of the administrative tasks currently performed by Personal Tutors do provide opportunities to build relationships with students. Members were reassured that opportunities for relationships to form will be embedded in any future model adopted, in line with the Project's Design Principles.
- The importance of the business case was discussed, with members recognising that implementation of the Project was not going to be cost neutral. More detailed costing would be possible once the future model had been agreed. Given the costs involved, members agreed that there would be benefit in piloting the new model before changing the arrangements for all students.

The Convener asked members of the Committee to encourage staff and students within the constituencies they represented to engage with the ongoing consultation.

5.6 Student Experience Action Plan – Update

The Deputy Secretary Student Experience presented the paper, which provided a brief update on what was a large and generously-funded project. Significant outcomes were expected from the project. Members were advised that a Staff Experience Action Plan was also in the process of being developed and that some of the work streams previously associated with the Student Experience Plan would be taken forward under the Staff Plan.

The Committee discussed:

- Communications – it was recognised that further work was required to communicate effectively with all areas of the University about the work being undertaken as part of the Action Plan. Communicating the project's early successes ('low-hanging fruit') would be beneficial in this respect.
- The importance of ensuring that there was good communication between the Student Experience and Staff Experience Action Plans.
- The importance of building leadership capacity at all levels of the institution.
- The link between the Student and Staff Experience Action Plans and the Service Excellence Programme. Members noted that, with time, all of the University's ongoing

projects and initiatives would be understood within the context of the Student and Staff Experience Action Plans.

5.7 Enhancing Doctoral Training Provision Through a Doctoral College – Update

The Committee was reminded that the May meeting of Learning and Teaching Committee had supported a proposal to establish a 'Doctoral College'. This paper provided an update, and members were advised that more concrete proposals would be brought to the December 2019 meeting of Education Committee and University Executive for approval. It was hoped that it would be possible to start operating the Doctoral College early in 2020.

Members expressed concern about the feasibility of undertaking the work associated with the Doctoral College without any additional resource. It was noted that the University had under-invested in the PGR student experience for a number of years.

5.8 Excellence in Doctoral Education and Career Development Programme

The paper provided background information on the work of this Programme, formerly overseen by REC, and focussed particularly on the 'Supervisor Support and Training' work stream. Members agreed that the work being undertaken was beneficial, particularly in the context of the previously discussed PRES results, and that it should continue to be overseen by Education Committee. The possibility of funding the work through the Staff Experience Action Plan would be pursued.

It was noted that there was some resistance to undertaking the training amongst supervisors. This could perhaps be overcome by labelling the sessions as 'briefings' not 'training'.

6. For Information and Noting

6.1 Assessment and Feedback Enhancement Group / Support for Curriculum Development Group Annual Report

The report was noted.

6.2 Report from Knowledge Strategy Committee (24 May 2019)

Members noted the report, and highlighted a desire to see the outcomes of the Near Future Teaching project implemented.

6.3 Student Partnership Agreement Update

The Committee was advised that 3 key themes had been agreed for 2019/20, and invitations to submit bids for small project funding were in the process of being circulated.

Philippa Ward, Academic Services, 10 October 2019