

**Minutes of the Meeting of Senate Education Committee  
held via Microsoft Teams at 2.00pm on Wednesday 27 January 2021**

**1. Attendance**

| <b>Present</b>       | <b>Position</b>   |
|----------------------|---|
| Colm Harmon          | Vice-Principal Students (Convener) – Ex Officio   |
| Tina Harrison        | Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance (Vice-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)   |
| Antony Maciocia      | Representative of CSE (Postgraduate Research)   |
| Neil Turner          | Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching, UG)  |
| Sarah Henderson      | Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching, PGT)   |
| Paddy Hadoke         | Representative of CMVM (Postgraduate Research)  |
| Mike Shipston        | Head of Deanery, CMVM   |
| Richard Andrews      | Head of School, CAHSS   |
| Iain Gordon          | Head of School, CSE   |
| Stuart Lamont        | Edinburgh University Students' Association, Permanent Staff Member                            |
| Sue MacGregor        | Director of Academic Services – Ex Officio  |
| Velda McCune         | Representing Director of Institute for Academic Development – Ex Officio                      |
| Shelagh Green        | Director for Careers & Employability – Ex Officio   |
| Melissa Highton      | Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Services Division of Information Services – Ex Officio |
| Rebecca Gaukroger    | Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions – Ex Officio                                   |
| Sian Bayne           | Assistant Principal Digital Education   |
| Philippa Ward        | Academic Services (Secretary)   |
| <b>Apologies</b>     |   |
| Michael Seery        | Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching)   |
| Fizzy Abou Jawad     | Edinburgh University Students' Association, Vice President Education                          |
| <b>In Attendance</b> |   |
| Johanna Holtan       | Program Director – Mastercard Foundation Program  |
| Nick Rowland         | Regional Director, Africa – Mastercard Foundation Program                                     |
| Gill Aitken          | Programme Director Clinical Education   |
| Tom Ward             | Head of Education Administration and Change Management - Edinburgh Futures Institute          |
| Paula Webster        | Head of Student Data and Surveys  |

**2. Minutes of Meeting held on 18 November 2020**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2020 were approved.

### **3. Convener's Communications**

#### **3.1 Expectations Around 2021/22 Teaching**

Members recognised that the situation in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic was changing constantly. A number of the University's planning assumptions for teaching in 2021/22, made at the end of 2020, were no longer valid. A key question was whether the University should still be assuming that all students would be on-campus in 2021/22, or if it should be offering a location-indifferent model.

Members discussed the following:

- While the University has been successful in delivering a hybrid model in 2020/21, it is not yet ready to deliver this as its standard product. Students have been very tolerant this academic year, but may be less so next year.
- While the University should aspire to offer a fully flexible model in the future, with students on a programme being taught synchronously on or off campus as a single cohort, the University will not have the infrastructure in place to do this in 2021/22.
- The 2020/21 model of offering both on-campus teaching that adheres to social distancing requirements, and asynchronous, online teaching has placed a heavy burden on staff. This cannot continue indefinitely.
- Regardless of the model adopted in 2021/22, Schools are keen to retain the timetabling flexibility they have had in 2020/21.
- When students were consulted about why some were not attending the on-campus teaching being offered earlier this academic year, they noted that they were making rational choices based on a cost benefit analysis: it was not worth their while to travel to campus for a short period of teaching when the material was also available online. They also noted that the lack of availability of other facilities, for example access to study space, reduced the appeal of coming to campus. If students are to be attracted to campus in academic year 2021/22, the University will need to ensure that they are given coherent timetables and can access high-quality facilities on campus.

In light of its discussion, the Committee agreed that the University should be planning for students to be on-campus in 2021/22 (whilst recognising that provision will still need to be in place for students who find themselves unable to travel or needing to self-isolate). Members discussed a number of issues and challenges linked to 2m physical distancing, and noted that it might be beneficial to consider prioritising particular cohorts of students, such as Honours-level and PGT, for access to in person teaching. The Committee agreed that the University should retain flexibility to allow it to pivot at short notice if required.

### **4. For Discussion**

#### **4.1 Lessons from the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program**

The paper was presented by the Program Director and Regional Director – Africa of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program.

Members noted that the Program provides full undergraduate and postgraduate scholarships to young people from Africa with great potential and few educational opportunities. It provides both full financial and pastoral support, and Scholars also participate in a transformative leadership programme.

The paper was the product of an extensive review that assessed the impact of and learnings from the Program, and highlighted learnings of relevance to the University as a whole. It was noted that these learnings could help the University to realise the aspirations of Strategy 2030 and to move forward discussions around global access, equality and diversity and curriculum transformation. Key learnings were in the areas of:

- defining and making adaptations for global access;
- providing academic and pastoral support;
- providing opportunities for experiential and reflective learning to develop leadership;
- overcoming hidden financial barriers;
- and providing a sense of belonging and community.

The Committee welcomed the paper, noting that it provided an outstanding example of leading by values. Members discussed the facts that:

- the lessons learnt through the Program were highly transferable and resonated with the University's work on widening participation, student mental health and student parents and carers.
- the findings of the review of the Program were closely aligned with the findings of the University's Personal Tutor and Student Support Review.
- the learnings around reflective and experiential learning were extremely valuable and should be taken into consideration within the curriculum transformation project.
- the learnings were very relevant to the University's efforts to expand its global activities, and particularly to its efforts to explore ways in which University of Edinburgh awards might be delivered with partner institutions.

Members agreed that there would be benefit in the paper being shared more widely and therefore taken to future meetings of Senate and University Executive.

## **4.2 Fully Taught Masters Degrees**

The paper asked the Committee to discuss the proposal that the University offer fully taught Masters degrees. It was noted that the proposal had previously been discussed by Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC) and had not been approved. However, in the context of discussions around curriculum transformation, it was considered timely to reconsider the issue.

Although a small number of fully taught Masters programmes already exist within the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine, most Masters programmes require students to produce a 60 credit academic dissertation. However, this may not be the most valuable form of learning for all students, particularly those who do not plan to move into an academic career. The paper proposed that the University should be increasing flexibility and offering some fully taught Masters programmes in order to:

- better meet the needs of students;
- support the aims of the University's Strategy 2030;

- maintain flexibility of programme structure for students;
- and ensure equity of access to fully taught programmes.

Members expressed strong support for the proposal. They noted that:

- our current structures lack flexibility and feel somewhat outdated;
- there is demand for programmes of this type;
- other institutions are offering programmes of the type described;
- programmes of this type might be particularly well suited to large-scale Masters programmes that attract high numbers of international students;
- the proposal appeared to be consistent with the QAA Qualifications Framework.

As such, Education Committee gave 'in principle' support to the proposal, but noted that it would now need to be taken to the relevant Committee (APRC) for detailed consideration.

**Action:** Convener, APASQA and paper's authors to meet to discuss next steps.

### 4.3 Edinburgh Futures Institute (EFI) PGT Model

The Committee was advised that EFI's challenge has always been to make good on its commitment to offer students flexibility. The model being proposed was conceived prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, but was now potentially more useful than ever.

Members noted that the fusion model proposed provided the ability to teach students on and off campus together as a single cohort, without the need for double-teaching. Students would be able to move between modes. The experience would not be identical in each mode, but the programme overall would benefit from the strengths of each mode. The model involved three spatiotemporalities: on campus; remote in real time; and remote in alternate time.

The University of Edinburgh is not the first institution to develop a model of this type: similar models are being piloted in Australia, Canada and the United States. Fusion models are predicted to be key to COVID-recovery across many sectors.

Technical infrastructure was critical to the model. Therefore teaching spaces in the EFI building would be highly technologized and would include small and larger teaching spaces and 'bring-your-own device' computing labs. The potential to use robots to support learning was also being investigated.

The proposed teaching model was intensive: it would aim to deliver teaching in two intensive days, with work for the student both before and after.

All ideas were currently being worked through with EFI's Fellows, and the Committee's input was also being sought.

Education Committee was highly supportive of the proposals. It noted that:

- the model would be of benefit not only to EFI's PGT programmes, but to the University's PGT offering as a whole;

- the model could also be used for UG programmes, though issues of scale would need to be addressed;
- having suitable teaching space would be critical if the University was to be able to use the model widely in its offering. Space Strategy Group and Estates would have essential roles in ensuring that the University's existing estate was suitably repurposed. The University would need to commit to investing in the required infrastructure.
- the model being discussed linked to the 'Space, Place and Pedagogy' work discussed at the November 2020 meeting of Education Committee;
- while many issues would need to be addressed in order to implement such a model widely, the University was entering a phase of transformation and should not shy away from bold thinking;
- the pandemic had also demonstrated that people place great value on being together in person. Approaches of the type being discussed should therefore be used in programmes where there was a clear rationale for doing so.
- Tackling climate change provided a strong argument for using approaches of this type going forwards.

Members were advised that the Student Recruitment and Funding Strategy Group had considered fees for programmes of the type described. At this stage, it was thought that fees may need to be set at a slightly higher level than for standard programmes, but that this level would be tolerated by the market.

In summary, the Committee's response to the proposed model was very enthusiastic, and it was keen to see its benefits realised beyond EFI. The Committee also noted that there would be benefit in considering ways in which approval processes for the proposals might be accelerated.

#### **4.4 PGR Update**

Members discussed the potential value of requiring all research postgraduate students to undertake mandatory Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) training. The Committee agreed that this would be beneficial, but noted that it would be important to review EDI training that was already being offered by the University to ensure that a coherent approach was adopted.

The Committee was also advised that the Doctoral College Operational Group had met for the first time. It was prioritising activities to ensure that it continued to have capacity to address issues around COVID mitigation.

The Student Recruitment and Funding Strategy Group was considering postgraduate research recruitment and widening participation, and would be making recommendations around this towards the end of the Semester.

#### **4.5 Student Surveys**

##### **4.5.1 Pulse Survey Results**

Members were advised that the University's Pulse Survey had been running for three months and had generated useful insights. It had highlighted the exacerbation of existing issues, including inconsistency across courses and Schools, insufficient

mental health support and variation in the quality of hybrid teaching. Levels of satisfaction were low and were declining. Work was being done to close the feedback loop and tell students about changes being made in response to their feedback.

The Adaptation and Renewal Team (ART) would be consulted about the frequency of the survey going forwards.

#### **4.5.2 PTES 2021 – Institutional Questions**

Members approved the proposed questions, although there was some concern about the Personal Tutor question having been replaced. It was also noted that the survey asked questions around employment, and that these were not applicable to all students given that some were already employed.

#### **4.5.3 PRES 2021 Questions (Tabled Paper)**

Members approved the proposed PRES questions.

### **5. Any Other Business**

#### **5.1 Chegg**

The Committee expressed concern about the University having investments linked to Chegg, a company offering homework solutions. It was agreed that this undermined the University's stance on academic misconduct, and the matter would be referred back to the Investment Committee for further consideration.

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| <p><b>Action:</b> Convener to refer the matter to the Investment Committee for further consideration.</p> |
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#### **5.2 COVID mitigation measures**

Members noted that APRC had put a package of COVID mitigation measures in place. Student communications on the subject would be sent out in the coming days. The importance of ensuring that these communicated clearly that this year's teaching had been well designed to mitigate for COVID was highlighted. Any further measures were to deal with issues that could not be addressed through learning design, or had arisen because of the changing environment.

Philippa Ward  
Academic Services  
30 January 2021