

**Minutes of the Meeting of Senate Education Committee
held via Microsoft Teams at 2.30pm on Wednesday 12 May 2021**

1. Attendance

Present	Position
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)
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
Fizzy Abou Jawad	Edinburgh University Students' Association, Vice President Education
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)
Apologies	
Stephen Bowd	Representative of CAHSS (Postgraduate Research)
In Attendance	
Tom Ward	Head of Education Administration and Change Management, EFI
Sarah Harvey	Edinburgh Futures Institute
Teresa Ironside	Director of Data Science Education
Gavin Douglas	Deputy Secretary, Student Experience
Paula Webster	Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling

Fizzy Abou Jawad and Neil Turner, both of whom were leaving the Committee, were thanked for their outstanding contributions.

2. Minutes of Meeting held on 3 March 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2021 were approved as an accurate record.

3. Matters Arising

The Convener advised members that the University was in the process of divesting from all investments linked to Chegg, as discussed at the January 2021 meeting.

4. Convener's Communications

4.1 Update on Academic Year 2021/22 Planning

The Convener noted that the University's current planning assumptions – 1m+ with other mitigations – appeared to be reasonable at this stage in light of recent Scottish Government decisions. Other institutions appeared to be planning on a similar basis.

The timetable was proceeding, and it was hoped that a first draft would be available in the next two weeks. Where Schools had specific wishes or wanted to do something non-standard, attempts were being made to accommodate this within the timetable.

Building confidence around the return to campus was a key issue. A strong testing regime was likely to be required, and it was hoped that TestEd would be hugely beneficial to Edinburgh in this respect.

Students travelling from amber list countries would be required to quarantine on arrival, probably within the University. Those from red list countries would be permitted to travel for education, but were likely to struggle with the costs associated with red list quarantine arrangements. The University was investigating ways in which these students might also be permitted to quarantine within the University to help reduce costs.

The Committee discussed the importance of managing students' expectations around face-to-face teaching given that this was still likely to be limited in 2021/22.

5. For Discussion

5.1 Curriculum Transformation

The Convener provided members with a presentation. It was noted that the Curriculum Transformation Programme has a number of cross-cutting, underpinning themes: the student experience; widening participation; sustainability; equality, diversity and inclusion; and digital education.

There was a desire for open and broad conversation around the project, and the Curriculum Transformation Hub had been launched on 21 April 2021. The Hub was available to all staff and a small group of student representatives, but it was hoped that it would go live to all those with an EASE login later in the year. Six briefing papers, supported by videos, had been published at this stage to allow communities to feed back. The Convener thanked the Institute for Academic Development for their help in launching the Hub. Members noted that the Hub appeared to have been well received by staff and was building momentum.

The Curriculum Transformation Programme Board had met twice and had had productive discussions around the vision and shape of the Programme and potential challenges and opportunities.

The starting point for the Programme was the development of a shared vision for 'The Edinburgh Graduate'. This vision would be the reference point as the University identified key elements of 'The Edinburgh Curriculum'. Once these elements had been identified, more detailed discussions around 'Degree and Curriculum Architecture' would take place, with stress-testing of different options.

The Curriculum Transformation Programme would be a standing item on Senate Education Committee's agendas going forwards.

5.2 Standalone Courses Task Group: Interim Report

The paper was presented by the Head of Education Administration and Change Management, Edinburgh Futures Institute, who noted that its purpose was to ask the Committee to clarify the Task Group's remit and focus. The Task Group had done a significant amount of thinking about standalone courses, but it had become apparent that there would be benefit in broadening the discussion to look at the University's overall approach to the provision of micro-credentials.

Members noted that the University's current processes are strongly geared towards programmes of study. Substantial work and investment would therefore be required if micro-credentials were to become a strategic priority for the University. The importance of adopting a strategic and values-led approach to any further developments in this area was noted.

The work of the Standalone Courses Task Group was closely linked to that discussed under items 5.4 and 5.5 below.

5.3 Edinburgh Futures Institute Undergraduate Curriculum

The paper provided members with an update on progress with the development of EFI's undergraduate curriculum. The Committee welcomed the paper, recognising the unique nature of the provision, which offered challenge-led, collaborative, interdisciplinary learning, complemented by a disciplinary focus.

A core team of six, representing all three Colleges, and supported by a group of Critical Friends, was taking the development work forward. Widespread consultation and market research were being undertaken to inform next steps.

Members noted that group work was an important component of what was proposed, and that, in order to accommodate this, it was likely to be necessary to do further thinking about the best way of assessing collaborative work. It may also be necessary to give further consideration to recruitment processes to ensure that programmes were sufficiently interdisciplinary. Finally, it would be important to do extensive market testing around the name of the first programme.

5.4 Data Skills Workforce Development and Upskilling Training

Members noted that in academic year 2019/20, the University had developed its Data Skills Workforce Development and Upskilling training portfolio at short notice in response to Government funding requirements. The Government's expectation was that the University would provide short, flexible, credit-bearing and / or accredited courses for those within the Scottish workforce. Following successful delivery of the pilot portfolio, funding was also provided for academic year 2020/21, and the University would be receiving further funding in 2021/22.

There appeared to be strong interest in training of this type from individuals, funders, and academic staff. However, upskilling is characterised by non-traditional learning and presents challenges for the University. Members agreed that, going forwards, it would be necessary for the University to discuss and take a view on whether or not the provision of upskilling training was a strategic priority.

5.5 Distance Learning at Scale Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Distance Learning at Scale (DLAS) was a three-year programme which tested the University's ability to produce and support sustainable, at-scale, online courses. The programme had now reached completion and had proved successful overall.

Members discussed the following:

- The University's existing VLE, Learn, is not suitable for the provision of short courses. It may be necessary for the University to invest in a new platform to successfully deliver courses of this type.
- DLAS covered postgraduate-level study only. The University will need to consider whether it also wishes to offer undergraduate-level study online.
- There would be value in undertaking a mapping exercise to ensure that all existing University provision that contributes to the micro-credentials landscape is recognised.
- DLAS's original goal of reaching 10,000 students may no longer be appropriate. There may be benefit in focussing on flexibility as opposed to scale. Before approving the recommendations for Senate Education Committee as outlined in section 5 of the DLAS paper, there would be value in revisiting the underlying questions around this provision.

Acknowledging the links between papers B, D and E (Standalone Courses, Upskilling and DLAS), the Committee agreed that the authors would meet with the Convener of SEC to consider some of the fundamental questions around the University's involvement in the provision of micro-credentials. Members noted that:

- Edinburgh is a city university that serves a community. The University also has global reach. Any provision should reflect both of these facts.
- The costs associated with delivering courses of this type can be prohibitive and are often badly understood.
- Micro-credentials can be used to showcase the University's research activity.
- It will be important for discussions to involve those areas of the University with significant experience of delivering micro-credentials, for example the Business School and the Centre for Open Learning. There may be benefit in co-opting to SEC a member with specific expertise in this area.

- There would be value in ensuring that all course offerings were brought within the University’s quality assurance framework. (It was noted that the existing School Annual Report template does ask Schools to include all provision, but that this may not be happening consistently.)

Action: Authors of Papers B, D and E to meet with the Convener to consider fundamental questions around the University’s involvement in the delivery of micro-credentials.

5.6 Doctoral College Operations Group Report

The Committee welcomed the report, noting the large amount of business that had been conducted by the Group during academic year 2020/21.

5.7 Exam Diet 2021/22 – Practical Implementation

The paper invited the Committee to approve the proposed overall approach to the exam diet in 2021/22 and to agree policy on extra time and late submission.

Members approved the overall approach, but noted that some issues required further consideration. The Committee discussed the following:

- The Students’ Association expressed concern that it had not had a representative present at the Planning Group meeting and as such, had not be adequately consulted about the proposals. It had reservations about reverting to two to three hour exams, noting that this removed freedom from Schools, and that there had been fewer complaints from students with Schedules of Adjustment about 24 hour exams.
- Ongoing discussions around the 10 minute ‘silent window’ and late submission would be best taken forward by Academic Policy and Regulations Committee.
- Schedules of Adjustments – some concern was expressed about offering tailored, individual student adjustments and the additional work that this would create for Schools. A number of members were of the view that a blanket, one hour approach for short format exams should be retained. The possibility of offering on-campus exams to those requiring specific adjustments (as well as to those whose home circumstances or accommodation were not well-suited to sitting online exams) was discussed.
- It would be important to take steps to ensure that students were adequately prepared for any return to short format, on campus exams.

A further paper, addressing the issues discussed, would be produced over the summer and circulated for electronic approval.

Action: Paper authors to produce a revised version for electronic approval over the summer.

5.8 Academic and Pastoral Support Policy

The Deputy Secretary Student Experience advised members that it would not be possible to implement the recommendations of the Personal Tutor and Student Support (PTSS) Review in academic year 2021/22. As such, the current Personal Tutor and student support structures would be retained. The Academic and Pastoral Support Policy had been updated to remove broken and redundant links and to align it with the amended Senior Tutor role descriptor, as approved at the previous meeting of the Committee.

However, the University's recent Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) had made recommendations around the University needing to make demonstrable progress in academic year 2021/22 in 'ensuring parity of experience for students and effective signposting to support services'. As such, there was value in the University considering what actions could be taken in 2021/22 that both met the expectations of the ELIR recommendation and were consistent with the direction of travel set out in the PTSS Review.

Members discussed the potential to make progress in the areas of cohort leadership and peer support. It was recognised that the proposed move to a more prescribed 'Programme Director' role to improve cohort leadership was likely to present challenges for some Schools. The Committee agreed that further discussion and consultation about the proposed role, including consideration of Workload Allocation Models, should take place. Contextualising the work within the overall direction of travel in relation to student support would be important. Any changes agreed would be reflected in further amendments to the Academic and Pastoral Support Policy in due course.

5.9 Committee Administration

Members noted the following items and that any further feedback should be sent to the Committee Secretary:

- 5.9.1 Annual Review of Effectiveness of Senate Standing Committees
- 5.9.2 Senate Education Committee Membership 2021/22
- 5.9.3 Draft Annual Report of the Senate Standing Committees
- 5.9.4 Senate Presentation and Discussion Themes for 2021/22 Meetings

6. For Information

6.1 Learn Foundations Project

Members noted that there had been continued, steady progress with this Project and that almost all Schools were now involved. The benefit to the student experience of having all Schools involved was noted.

Philippa Ward
Academic Services
10 June 2021