

**Minutes of the Meeting of Senate Education Committee
held via Microsoft Teams at 2.00pm on Wednesday 15 September 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)
Stephen Bowd	Representative of CAHSS (Postgraduate Research)
Judy Hardy	Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching)
Antony Maciocia	Representative of CSE (Postgraduate Research)
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
Tara Gold	Edinburgh University Students' Association, Vice President Education
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 Division of Information Services – Ex Officio; Assistant Principal (Online and Open Learning)
Rebecca Gaukroger	Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions – Ex Officio
Sian Bayne	Assistant Principal Digital Education
Paula Webster	Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling
Philippa Ward	Academic Services (Secretary)
Apologies	
Andy Dugmore	Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching)
Jamie Davies	Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching)
Sue MacGregor	Director of Academic Services – Ex Officio
In Attendance	
Tom Ward	Head of Education Administration and Change Management, EFI
Teresa Ironside	Director of Data Science Education
Gavin Douglas	Deputy Secretary, Student Experience

2. Minutes of Meeting held on 12 May 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2021 were approved as an accurate record.

3. Matters Arising from Meeting Held on 12 May 2021

3.1 University's Involvement in the Delivery of Microcredentials

The Assistant Principal (Online and Open Learning) updated the Committee on progress since the last meeting. A meeting of key stakeholders had taken place and mapping of all institutional activity relating to microcredentials was underway. Understanding the University's rationale for any involvement in the delivery of microcredentials would be essential, as would ensuring that the work was well integrated within University structures, with clear reporting lines.

Action: Assistant Principal (Online and Open Learning) to establish a group to take the work forward.

4. Electronic Business Conducted Since Meeting Held on 12 May 2021

Members noted that the Student Mental Health Strategy 2021-2026 had been approved by electronic business on 9 July 2021.

5. Convener's Communications

4.1 Update on Planning for Semester 2 2021/22

The Convener advised the Committee that the University would need to agree a broad direction of travel for Semester 2 2021/22 within the next few weeks. It was noted that some institutions were moving towards full re-opening in Semester 2. Members were in favour of greater opening up in Semester 2, noting that the University had asked students to return to campus and therefore had an obligation to provide an in-person experience. However the Committee expressed reservations about planning for full re-opening, particularly in the case of the largest lectures: it would be important to ensure that the University did not adopt a position now that needed to be reversed at a later date. In addition, it was noted that some of the alternative teaching arrangements use by the University during the pandemic were working well and were appreciated by students. It would not therefore be beneficial to return to previous arrangements simply because it was possible to do so. It was also recognised that in some Schools, student numbers and estate constraints meant that it would not be possible to return to all pre-pandemic modes of teaching.

Members agreed that strong engagement with students about plans for Semester 2 was essential. The Convener noted that he would feed the Committee's views back to the Semester 2 Planning Group.

6. For Discussion

6.1 Exam Diets 2021/22 – Practical Implementation

6.1.1 December Exam Diet 2021/22

Members approved the proposed approach to the December 2021 exam diet and to the implementation of adjustments for students with Schedules of Adjustments in particular.

6.1.2 Summer Exam Diet 2021/22

Members noted that this was a preliminary discussion about arrangements for the Summer 2021/22 exam diet and that a formal position paper for approval would be brought to the November meeting of the Committee.

The following was discussed:

- Many students would be apprehensive about a return to in person exams, and it would be important to seek their views on this.
- Appetite to return to in person exams varied across the University.
- Holding some in person exams should be permitted where there were pedagogic arguments for doing so. A clear process for judging whether or not there were good pedagogic reasons for using in person exams would need to be established.
- Online and open book exams are not one and the same thing. It would be important to understand whether those students who were in favour of online exams appreciated the online nature of the exam or the open book aspect.
- Concerns remained about the academic integrity of online exams, particularly from some accrediting bodies.

<p>Action: Convener and Secretary to establish a sub-group to discuss the issues and produce a position paper for the November 2021 meeting of the Committee.</p>
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6.2 University of Edinburgh Students' Association Vice President Education Priorities 2021/22

The incoming Students' Association Vice President Education outlined her priorities for academic year 2021/22:

- Strengthening the University's response to COVID-19 – the importance of listening to the student voice (particularly the voices of the most marginalised) and of ensuring that good practice developed over the past 18 months was not lost were highlighted.
- Modernising Edinburgh's curriculum – the Students' Association was keen to ensure that student engagement was central to this work and that it was collaborative. Discussions around decolonisation of the curriculum would be key.
- Increasing transparency, responsibility and accountability from the University to improve the student experience – it was noted that there is room to build more trust and greater understanding of University structures with students. The Students' Association was positive about plans to press ahead with the implementation of the new model of student support.

Members were very supportive of the priorities outlined and noted that the 'critical friend' role played by the Students' Association was highly valued.

6.3 Proposal to Establish a Student Voice Sub-Committee

The paper proposed the establishment of a sub-committee of Education Committee to:

- analyse and synthesise student feedback from questionnaires, Student-Staff Liaison Committees and other fora;
- and develop action plans and monitor progress with the implementation of changes in response to student feedback.

Members discussed:

- The need for any group to have a clear remit; to be empowered to make change; and to have ways of evaluating effectiveness.
- The intersection of the proposed group with the work of Senate Quality Assurance Committee and the Student Voice Policy.
- The frequency with which the group would need to meet if it were to work effectively, and particularly to address issues in-year.
- The potential value of referring to ‘student voices’ as opposed to ‘the student voice’.
- The potential value of establishing a ‘Senate Student Experience and Wellbeing Committee’, which might be a more natural ‘home’ for a group of this type.
- The value of having a greater proportion of students on the membership of any group established, and of the group being co-chaired by a student representative.

Members approved the proposed direction of travel, but expressed the view that the group as proposed may not be fit for purpose.

Action: Deputy Secretary (Student Experience) to work with other members of the Committee to revise the proposal.

6.4 Edinburgh Futures Institute Postgraduate Taught Programmes: Policy on Duration of Study for Lifelong Learning Students

The paper was presented by EFI’s Head of Education Administration and Change Management, who noted that EFI is committed to lifelong learning: it wants individuals to be able to take credit-bearing courses over a period of up to 10 years, and to be able to stack these up as opposed to undertaking them as part of a named programme of study. This is difficult within the University’s current structures: while there are no systems or statutory issues, when Academic Policy and Regulations Committee looked at the matter, it agreed that there were some policy issues that the University should take a position on before proceeding.

At this stage, it is difficult to forecast how many students will wish to engage in this way, although there does appear to be a good level of interest. It is not clear what the implications will be for student services, but the only way of finding out will be to pilot learning of this type with a set review point.

Members discussed the following:

- Lifelong learning is something that the University should be involved in. This proposed pilot would be one way of understanding how this might work.
- What was being proposed was not the same as part-time, intermittent study. There would potentially be value in looking again at the University’s regulations on part-time, intermittent study to see if these could be adapted to cover provision of this type.

- Other areas of the University were also interested in offering provision of this type. The possibility of running additional pilots outside EFI was raised. The PGT Curriculum Transformation workstream would consider how provision of this type might be rolled out more widely.
- Although the contact time of the proposed courses was largely concentrated into two days (14 hours), the overall time commitment for each course would be around 5 weeks, or 100 hours, on account of there being both structured and unstructured activities in the weeks before and after the contact time. The contact time element for courses was in line with, or slightly more than the average for PGT courses in the College of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences.
- Any concerns around courses potentially being withdrawn while students were still enrolled with the University could be addressed by advising students clearly at the outset that they would be permitted to accumulate any courses they took, but that the University was not committing to continuing every course.

In conclusion, the Committee was very positive about the proposals as a way forward for the University. It endorsed the proposed arrangements for flexibility in duration of study as set out in the paper.

6.5 Open Educational Resources Policy Review

Members noted that the Policy has served the institution well since its introduction in 2016. Revisions to the Paper included adopting a new definition of OER from the [UNESCO Recommendation on Open Education Resources](#) and bringing the Policy in line with the University's Lecture Recording and Virtual Classroom Policies. The revised Policy also clarified what personally identifiable information colleagues should be aware of when creating OER.

The Committee approved the revised Policy.

6.6 Review of Senate Committees' Effectiveness

The Committee noted the findings of the internal effectiveness review carried out over the summer, and approved the recommended actions. However, concerns were raised about the Committee continuing to cover within its remit matters relating to the student experience. The governance of the student experience would be given further consideration over the coming year.

7. Standing Items

7.1 Curriculum Transformation

Members noted that there would be significant School and College engagement in the coming months with a view to producing the 'vision for the Edinburgh Graduate' by the end of the year. The Convener would discuss with the Students' Association Vice-President Education the best way of engaging students with the project.

<p>Action: Convener and EUSA Vice-President Education to discuss student engagement with the Curriculum Transformation project.</p>
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7.2 Student Experience

Members noted that the Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling would be leaving the University at the end of October 2021. They were thanked for their significant contribution to the work of the Committee and the University.

The Committee discussed the following in relation to the 2021 student survey results:

- COVID-19 had not raised new issues in relation to the student experience: it had exacerbated issues the University was already aware of.
- There would potentially be benefit in separating the results for on campus and online distance PGT programmes.
- Using performance metrics to drive forward improvement in the student experience was likely to be of limited benefit. The University should instead be aiming for culture change.
- There was unlikely to be a single, transferable mechanism for assisting those Schools with the most disappointing results.
- In relation to mental health support, many students are unaware of the existence of Mental Health Mentors, and others are discouraged from seeking Mental Health Mentor support because of the service being based within the Student Disability Service.

In relation to the Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) undertaken in February and March 2021, the Committee noted that:

- the University had been judged to have “effective arrangements for managing academic standards and the student learning experience.” This was a positive judgement and the best possible outcome for an ELIR. The University had also received a robust set of recommendations, which would only be addressed through culture change.
- in a number of areas of the University, volatility in student numbers was having a significant impact on the student experience. It was recognised that this was a complex issue that was not entirely within the University’s control. However, it was agreed that the University needed to continue to take steps to even out some of the volatility.

Members were supportive of the approach to addressing the ELIR recommendations and the draft Action Plan outlined in Paper M. It was agreed that the Action Plan would be made available to Schools to enable them to see what action was being taken and by whom.

7.3 Doctoral College

7.3.1 Postgraduate Research Admissions Working Group Report

The paper was provided for information, having been considered at the May meeting of Student Recruitment and Fees Strategy Group. It was noted that widening access for PGR was a hugely important issue, but a difficult one to tackle. Actions relating to data collection and policy and practice had been identified by the Working Group and consideration was now being given to the way in which these would be taken forward. An EDI intern would be recruited to assist with the work, and widening access for PGR would be the focus of a Doctoral College forum in October.

8. For Information

8.1 Student Partnership Agreement 2021-22

The Committee approved the Agreement for 2021-22, noting that small pots of funding were available for colleagues to undertake projects under the Agreement's themes.

8.2 Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy – Update on Review

Members were advised that the Policy was in the process of being reviewed. The review would include consideration of the way in which the Policy might dovetail with a University Learning and Teaching Strategy as recommended by the ELIR. In the meantime, the principles of the existing document remained good and should be adhered to.

8.3 Committee Guidance and Review

Members noted the Committee guidance and review documents provided and that the work of the Support for Curriculum Development Group would be paused until June 2022.

Philippa Ward
Academic Services
26 September 2021