

# Minutes of the Meeting of the Senatus Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) held at 2pm on Wednesday 18 November 2015 in the Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House

## 1. Attendance

### Present:

Dr Elaine Haycock-Stuart	Director of Learning and Teaching, School of Health in Social Science (co-opted member)
Professor Peter Higgins	Representative of Social Responsibility and Sustainability
Ms Melissa Highton	Convener of Learning Technologies Advisory Group (ex officio)
Professor Charlie Jeffery (Convener)	Senior Vice-Principal
Ms Nichola Kett	Academic Governance Representative, Academic Services
Ms Tanya Lubicz-Nawrocka	EUSA Academic Engagement Co-ordinator (ex officio)
Dr Margaret MacDougall	Medical Statistician and Researcher in Education (co-opted member)
Dr Antony Maciocia	Senior Lecturer, School of Mathematics, CSE (co-opted member)
Dr Gale Macleod	Dean of Postgraduate (Taught), CHSS
Dr Velda McCune	Deputy Director, Institute for Academic Development (Director's Nominee) (ex officio)
Professor Graeme Reid	Dean of Learning and Teaching, CSE
Professor Neil Turner	Director of Undergraduate Teaching and Learning, CMVM
Mrs Philippa Ward (Secretary)	Academic Policy Officer, Academic Services
Mr Tom Ward	University Secretary's Nominee, Director of Academic Services (ex officio)

### In Attendance:

Mr Barry Neilson	Director Student Systems
Mr Jonny Ross-Tatam	EUSA President

### Apologies:

Professor Sarah Cunningham-Burley	Assistant Principal (Research-Led Learning)
Mr Gavin Douglas	Deputy Secretary – Student Experience
Ms Rebecca Gaukroger	Director, Careers Service (co-opted member)
Ms Shelagh Green	Director, Careers Service (co-opted member)
Professor Tina Harrison	Assistant Principal (Academic Standards and Quality Assurance)
Ms Erin Jackson	Distance Learning Manager, School of Law, CHSS (co-opted member)
Mr John Lowrey	Dean of Undergraduate Studies, CHSS
Professor Ian Pirie	Assistant Principal (Learning and Development) (ex officio)
Professor David Weller	Director for Postgraduate Taught, CMVM
Professor Wyn Williams	Director of Teaching, School of GeoSciences, CSE
Ms Imogen Wilson	EUSA Vice President (Academic Affairs) (ex officio)

## 2. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2015 were approved.

## 3. Matters Arising

### 3.1 Innovative Learning Week (Item 5.8)

Members were advised that a sub-group had been established to consider the purpose of the week between Teaching Blocks 3 and 4 in 2016/17. The group would meet in January 2016.

### 3.2 Annual Planning Round Guidance (Item 5.9)

Guidance on the Learning and Teaching-Related Content of School Annual Plans had been circulated to all Colleges with the request that Schools take it into consideration when preparing their Annual Plans.

#### **4. Convener's Communications**

##### **4.1 Course Evaluation and Online Submission and Return of Feedback**

It was reported that Principal's Strategy Group (PSG) had agreed that all undergraduate and postgraduate programmes within all Schools must be using EvaSys (Course Evaluation Data Automation) by academic session 2016/17.

PSG had also agreed that all areas must move to using online submission of assessed work and return of feedback. The timescale for this remained to be determined.

LTC confirmed that it supported the way forward agreed by PSG.

##### **4.2 Outcome of Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR)**

The Committee was advised that the ELIR meetings were now complete. The University had been given a judgement of 'effectiveness' in its ability to assure and enhance academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience. This was the best possible outcome for an ELIR.

The following areas of positive practice had been identified:

- Online distance learning
- The Edinburgh Award
- The University's strategic approach to teaching and learning
- The work of the Institute for Academic Development (IAD)
- The University's approach to monitoring and review of both academic and support areas
- The External Examiner project
- Internationalisation
- The use of data to enhance the student experience
- The University's approach to self-evaluation

Specific aspects of the following areas of activity required some development:

- The Personal Tutor system
- School-level student representation
- Feedback, focussing specifically on scheduling and sequencing of assessments

More substantial development was required in the following areas:

- Ensuring adequate and consistent resourcing for major projects
- The PGR student experience

##### **4.3 Update on Work on the Student Experience, Teaching and Learning**

Members noted that Learning and Teaching Policy Group was now active. The minutes of the Group's meetings would be brought to LTC routinely.

The Convener had attended 11 meetings with Schools, typically with the Head of School and the Director of Teaching, to discuss the student experience, teaching and learning. There were

many examples of positive practice, but deep-seated challenges remained to be addressed in several Schools. Developing an understanding of what constitutes good performance in teaching and recognising and rewarding this was key. A sub-group of Learning and Teaching Policy Group was giving this further consideration. Sub-groups had also been established to consider communications and curriculum innovation.

It had been agreed that the University's Vision for Learning and Teaching would not be progressed at the current time. Instead, the focus would be on the level of priority the University attached to learning and teaching. Ways in which aspects of the Vision might be progressed would be considered in due course.

An Academic Strategy Group meeting early in 2016 would discuss the development of a set of values around the University's commitment to teaching. It was hoped that these could be embedded within the next Strategic Plan.

The Director of the Learning, Teaching and Web Services division of Information Services asked for members to provide her with information about areas in which technology is lacking and with a strong steer on direction of travel to enable her to plan accordingly.

## **5. For Discussion**

### **5.1 Use of Student Data to Help Enhance Learning and Teaching, the Student Experience and Operational Effectiveness**

Prototype dashboards were shown to the Committee and were very positively received. The dashboards demonstrated were School-level, but it was noted that it should also be possible to produce College-level dashboards.

The ambition was to make the dashboards open to all University staff members via the web. Some systems development would be required to facilitate this.

### **5.2 Grade Point Averages (GPA) – Proposal for Minimalist Adoption**

Members were reminded that at the previous meeting, it had been agreed that the University should seek to develop an on-demand GPA service based on a minimal adoption model. As such, a simple system using an algorithm that could be applied across the University had been developed. In order to avoid unnecessary complexity, Schools would not be permitted to vary the algorithm used at this stage. The Committee approved the proposed system and approach to communication, and also agreed that a regulation should be added to the Taught Assessment Regulations summarising the University's approach to GPA.

It was noted the Higher Education Green Paper (discussed later in the meeting) strongly encouraged institutions to adopt GPA. Significant additional work would be needed if the University were to consider introducing GPA for all students. The on-demand service would provide the University with an opportunity to undertake modelling for the future.

### **5.3 Assessment and Feedback**

#### **5.3.1 Measures of Quality and Approaches to Assessment**

The Assistant Principal Assessment and Feedback attended the meeting to present her initial thoughts on developing measures of feedback quality and approaches to assessment. The importance of sharing and encouraging best practice and simplification where possible were highlighted. Members also discussed viewing feedback not as a separate entity, but as a dialogic aspect of the learning process that was embedded within curriculum design.

Developing assessment literacy and ensuring that students were clear about what feedback was also considered. It was noted that useful definitions of feedback were contained within the course descriptors developed as part of the Programme and Course Information Management Project.

**Action:** Ms Kett to pass definitions of feedback contained within course descriptors to Assistant Principal Assessment and Feedback.

Members welcomed proposals to build an Assessment Feedback Network / Community of Practice with IAD, and discussed the potential to use this Network to encourage peer to peer professional development in this area.

### 5.3.2 Turnaround Times Systems Analysis

The Director of Student Systems provided LTC with a high level update on the systems analysis being undertaken to help Schools measure assessment and feedback turnaround times more effectively. Whilst a University-wide move to online submission of assessment and return of feedback and marks, as agreed by Principal's Strategy Group in October 2015, would greatly facilitate the collection and use of assessment and feedback data, it was recognised that there was not a one-size-fits-all solution in this area, and that variation in practice across Schools needed to be taken into account. Some assessment types were not suitable for electronic submission and feedback, and alternative solutions would need to be developed in these cases.

### 5.3.3 Opt Outs

The Convener reported that opts outs from the agreed 15 working day feedback turnaround time were the responsibility of College Committees. Opts outs would be approved where strong pedagogical reasons for being unable to comply with the prescribed turnaround time existed. Opts outs requested on the basis of workload would only be permitted for one academic session, the expectation being that resourcing issues would be resolved in advance of the next session.

The structure of the academic year, and specifically the timing of the examination of Semester 1 courses was discussed. It was agreed that a working group would be established to give this issue further consideration.

**Action:** Director of Academic Services to establish a working group to consider the timing of the examination of Semester 1 courses.

## 5.4 Student Survey Unit Priorities

Members noted that the Student Survey Unit was now part of Student Systems. The paper provided an update on the Survey Unit's priorities for the next 12 to 18 months. The key priority would be to support the roll out of EvaSys to all Schools and for all courses by the start of academic session 2016/17. There would be a number of practical challenges associated with the roll out. LTC was content with the identified priorities set out in the paper, but requested that, in light of the focus placed on the PGR student experience in the recent ELIR, further consideration be given to the way in which the University used the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES).

The importance of continually informing students of what the University had done in response to their survey feedback was discussed.

## 5.5 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)

The importance of this survey in a competitive postgraduate market was recognised, and members discussed ways in which better use might be made of the data it generated. The Student Survey Unit was investigating the relationship between responses and student demographics, and the value of separating out online and on site student responses was highlighted. Heads of Schools would be consulted about the information they would like obtain from PTES. The potential to produce PGT versions of the undergraduate dashboards discussed under 5.1 was considered.

## 5.6 Information Services Group Strategy to Support Learning and Teaching

LTC considered the Strategy, noting that whilst it was a five to ten year plan, it would be updated year on year. Members were broadly positive, whilst recognising that, at the present time, there were not clear mechanisms in place for linking the student experience, the requirements of teachers, planning around teaching spaces and Information Services' planning. This issue would be given further consideration.

**Action:** Convener and Director of Academic Services to discuss ways in which Information Services' planning might be informed by the student experience, the requirements of teachers and planning around teaching spaces.

The Committee discussed the potential value of and costs associated with lecture capture.

## 5.7 Student Recruitment Strategy – What is Our Offer?

The Committee was advised that the 'Portfolio, Development, Innovation and Review' workstream was considering Edinburgh's offer, and specifically, that which is distinctive about Edinburgh's provision. This would be discussed in more detail at the January 2016 meeting of LTC.

# 6. For Approval

## 6.1 Higher Education Achievement Record – Proposal for Change to Categories of Wider Achievement

Learning and Teaching Committee approved the recommendation that 'PALS Student Leader' be added to the categories of wider achievement included in the HEAR, subject to the Peer Support Project Co-ordinator providing further information about specific threshold requirements and their monitoring and evaluation. The addition of 'Peer Support Leader' was not approved on the basis that significant variability can exist in the volume, level and quality of engagement involved. It was agreed that the decision could be revisited if the Peer Support Leader were able to provide more information and greater clarity around thresholds and validation.

The Committee agreed that a broader discussion about the role of the HEAR and its relationship with the Edinburgh Award would take place at the January 2016 meeting.

## 6.2 Code of Practice for Taught Postgraduate Programmes Task Group Report and Proposals

The Committee approved the proposal that the Code of Practice for Taught Postgraduate Programmes be discontinued from 2016/17, it being agreed that this was consistent with current discussions about the simplification of policy, regulation and processes. Members noted that the majority of the information currently contained within the Code could be

accessed in other ways. Alternative locations would be identified for the content that was not currently available elsewhere.

## **7. For Noting / Information**

### **7.1 Piloting Learning Analytics (LA) with Fully Online Masters Programmes**

LTC noted the paper which outlined the case for the implementation of a Learning Analytics pilot focussing on fully online Masters programmes and courses and had been endorsed by Principal's Strategy Group. Members were advised that a Learning Analytics Policy, informed by this pilot, would be developed and brought to LTC for discussion in due course.

### **7.2 Fulfilling Our Potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice**

Members considered the UK Government Green Paper. It was noted that it provided some clarity on the Teaching Excellence Framework but that questions still remained. Whilst the Paper was mainly aimed at English institutions, it was likely that it would also have implications for Scottish institutions. The University would therefore be preparing a response to the Green Paper.

**Action:** Convener and Director of Academic Services to discuss the University's response to the Green Paper.

### **7.3 Report from LTC Distance Education Task Group**

LTC welcomed the report, noting in particular progress in relation to providing early life support for online distance education programmes, staff development and distance education marketing.

The Vice Principal Digital Education would be consulted about future plans for the Distance Education Initiative.

**Action:** Distance Learning Manager to discuss future plans for the Distance Education Initiative with the Vice Principal Digital Education.

It was also agreed that the Convener and the Director of the Learning, Teaching and Web Services Division of Information Services would discuss the potential to mainstream Principal's Teaching Award Scheme funding into core budgets.

**Action:** Convener and Director of the Learning, Teaching and Web Services Division of Information Services to discuss the potential to mainstream Principal's Teaching Award Scheme funding.

### **7.4 Enhancement Themes – Update**

Members were advised that 'resilience' was a key theme for the forthcoming session. Strong applications for Enhancement Themes funding had been received and would be considered in the near future. Given the imminent retirement of the Assistant Principal Learning and Development, a replacement University representative to serve on the Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee would be sought.

**Action:** Ms Kett to identify a University representative to serve on the Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee.

## **7.5 Knowledge Strategy Committee Report**

The Committee was reminded that this was a joint Committee of Senate and Court. The need for the Senate Committees to have greater influence on the business of KSC was discussed, and the potential for the Distance Education Task Group to take ideas relating to online distance education to the Committee was considered.

**Action:** Distance Education Manager to consider ways in which the Distance Education Task Group might feed into the work of KSC.

## **7.6 Interdisciplinary Teaching**

The item, remitted to LTC by QAC, would be addressed through the Student Recruitment Strategy 'Portfolio, Development, Innovation and Review' workstream.

## **7.7 Consultation on Changes to the National Student Survey, Unistats and Information Provided by Institutions**

Members were advised that the four Higher Education funding bodies were consulting on changes to the National Student Survey (NSS), the Unistats website and the Key Information Set (KIS). Responses needed to be submitted by 4 December 2015. The Committee discussed the NSS Student Unions question.

## **7.8 Draft Corporate Parenting Strategy**

It was reported that the University was in the process of developing a Corporate Parenting Strategy to ensure that it upheld the rights and safeguarded the wellbeing of care leavers studying at Edinburgh. Members discussed the importance of assigning to these students the most experienced Personal Tutors, and ensuring that 52-week accommodation was available.

## **8. Date of Next Meeting**

Wednesday 27 January 2016 at 2.00pm in the Board Room, Chancellor's Building, Little France.

Philippa Ward  
Academic Services  
November 2015