

Minutes of the Meeting of the Senatus Learning and Teaching Committee  
(LTC) held at 2pm on Wednesday 25 January 2017  
in the Board Room, Chancellor's Building, Little France

**1. Attendance**

**Present:**

Professor Sarah Cunningham-Burley	Assistant Principal (Research-Led Learning)
Ms Shelagh Green	Director, Careers Service (co-opted member)
Professor Judy Hardy	Director of Teaching, School of Physics and Astronomy, CSE
Professor Tina Harrison	Assistant Principal (Academic Standards and Quality Assurance)
Dr Elaine Haycock-Stuart	Director of Learning and Teaching, School of Health in Social Science (co-opted member)
Ms Melissa Highton	Convener of Learning Technologies Advisory Group (ex officio)
Professor Peter Higgins	Representative of Social Responsibility and Sustainability
Professor Charlie Jeffery (Convener)	Senior Vice-Principal
Ms Tanya Lubicz-Nawrocka	Edinburgh University Students' Association, Academic Engagement Co-ordinator (ex officio)
Dr Antony Maciocia	Senior Lecturer, School of Mathematics, CSE (co-opted member)
Dr Velda McCune	Deputy Director, Institute for Academic Development (Director's nominee) (ex officio)
Professor Anna Meredith	Director for Postgraduate Taught, CMVM
Professor Neil Mulholland	Dean of Postgraduate Studies (CAHSS)
Professor Graeme Reid	Dean of Learning and Teaching, CSE
Professor Neil Turner	Director of Undergraduate Teaching and Learning, CMVM
Mrs Philippa Ward (Secretary)	Academic Services
Mr Tom Ward	University Secretary's Nominee, Director of Academic Services (ex officio)

**Apologies:**

Professor Sian Bayne	Director of Centre for Research in Digital Education (co-opted member)
Mr Patrick Garratt	Vice President (Academic Affairs), Edinburgh University Students' Association (ex officio)
Ms Rebecca Gaukroger	Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions (ex officio)
Mr John Lowrey	Dean of Undergraduate Studies (CAHSS)
Ms Nichola Kett	Academic Governance Representative, Academic Services

**In attendance:**

Dr Catriona Bell	Senior Lecturer in Veterinary Education
Professor Helen Cameron	Director, Centre for Medical Education
Mr Gavin Douglas	Deputy Secretary Student Experience
Dr Lisa Kendall	CAHSS Head of Academic and Student Administration
Professor Susan Rhind	Assistant Principal Assessment and Feedback
Ms Katie Scott	Peer Learning and Support Manager

## **2. Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2016 were approved.

## **3. Matters Arising**

### **3.1 University Learning and Teaching Strategy**

Following consultation, the Learning and Teaching Strategy had been approved. A launch event was planned for 15 March 2017.

### **3.2 Peer Observation of Teaching Guidance**

Positive feedback from Schools and Colleges had been received by the Institute for Academic Development on the guidance. The final versions of the guidance were in the process of being designed and would be published in the near future.

### **3.3 Student Partnership Agreement**

Finalisation of the Agreement had been postponed to allow further work to be done on the 'Partnership in Practice – Our Priorities' section and to capture the priorities of the incoming Sabbatical Officers.

### **3.4 Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)**

Court had agreed that the University would not make a provider submission to the Teaching Excellence Framework in year two. Sector discussions concerning subject-level TEF were ongoing.

### **3.5 Status of MOOCs Advisory Group and Learning Technologies Advisory Group**

It was reported that the MOOCs Advisory Group would report to LTC annually on strategic matters. The Learning Technologies Advisory Group would no longer report to LTC.

**Action:**

Secretary to discuss timing of the MOOCs Advisory Group annual report with the Director of the Learning, Teaching and Web Services Division.

## **For Discussion**

### **4. Student Mental Health Strategy**

Professor Helen Cameron advised the Committee that a Student Mental Health Strategy Group had been established in 2015 to consider issues around the mental health of students at Edinburgh. It had been agreed that a strategy that aimed to both promote positive mental health amongst all students and support those with mental health difficulties would be developed. The Group also recognised the importance of staff mental health, but did not have the capacity to address this within the scope of this project.

LTC was positive about the Strategy and keen for it to be implemented as soon as possible. The following issues were discussed:

- the importance of knowing that any action taken was having an effect, and therefore of relevant Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The proposal to use the Warwick-Edinburgh Wellbeing scale to assess student wellbeing was noted. Some concerns were raised about the potential negative effects on the student population of surveying students about their mental health, particularly if the survey revealed large amounts of sub-optimal mental health, and the Committee emphasised that a survey should be handled with care. It was proposed that further consideration be given to proxy measures that might be used to assess outcomes.
- the importance of ensuring that students with mental health difficulties were directed to appropriate NHS services and that the University did not aim to act as a therapeutic institution.
- the importance of avoiding stigmatisation, and in this context, the wording of the 'Vision' section of the document: this should be revised, to make it clear that individuals with sub-optimal health can nonetheless manage to work productively and realize their potential. It was agreed that the focus of this section should be more on Edinburgh as a positive mental health-promoting institution and less on the individual.
- the achievability of the actions proposed. It was noted that further work needed to be done on resource implications, and that this would be addressed when developing an implementation plan.
- the Support for Study Policy. While disappointment was expressed that the Policy did not allow for mandatory interruptions of studies, and that only the University's student discipline processes could be used for this purpose, LTC agreed that there should be ongoing monitoring of the implementation of the Policy.
- the role of the Sports Union within the Strategy. Members were concerned that many of the University's sports halls become unavailable during examination periods and that this may be impacting negatively on students' wellbeing.
- communications around the Strategy. It was agreed that careful thought needed to be given to the way in which the Strategy was communicated to staff to ensure that they were aware that the University was also mindful of their mental health.

The Committee agreed to approve the Strategy subject to it being amended to take account of its comments.

**Action:**

Deputy Secretary Student Experience and Professor Cameron to amend the wording of the 'Vision' section of the document to take account of LTC's comments.

**5. Update on the Continuing Professional Development Framework for Learning and Teaching**

Members were advised that the Framework was approaching reaccreditation and that the Committee's input was therefore being sought. It was noted that there were three main pathways through the Framework. Participation numbers were increasing and feedback was very positive. Introduction of new routes through the Framework had not affected participation numbers on existing routes. The main limiting factor on increasing participation was workload for both staff who were studying for the Award and potential mentors.

Dr Catriona Bell, Senior Lecturer in Veterinary Education, presented on the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies' experience of running a subject-specific version of the Teaching Award. The Committee heard that this model had proved extremely successful. The Award had been built into the School's workload model, and mentors were working in pairs. Vet School staff had appreciated the subject-specific nature and local delivery of the content. Participation in the Award had been made compulsory for all teaching staff recruited from January 2016 onwards.

LTC discussed the following:

- the feasibility of running subject-specific models in smaller Schools;
- the potential value of setting ambitious targets for participation in the Edinburgh Teaching Award, including making participation in the Award compulsory for all new academic staff;
- ways in which the Award might be built into workload models and mentors might be identified. It was agreed that Heads of Schools should be encouraged to consider this.
- links between the Edinburgh Teaching Award and the Clinical Educator Programme.

It was agreed that the matter would be referred to the April 2017 meeting of Academic Strategy Group (ASG) for further consideration, and that this would provide an opportunity to secure Heads of Schools' support for staff participation in the Framework.

**Actions:**

- 1) Convener, Director and Deputy Director of IAD, and Senior Lecturer in Veterinary Education to prepare to discuss CPD for Learning and Teaching at the April 2017 meeting of ASG.
- 2) Deputy Director IAD and Director, Centre for Medical Education to discuss links between the Edinburgh Teaching Award and the Clinical Educator Programme.

## **6. Peer Learning and Support**

Katie Scott, Peer Learning and Support Manager, provided the Committee with an update on the work of the Department of Peer Learning and Support. It was noted that the work was running very successfully and with significantly increased participation year on year. A recent highlight had been the introduction of the PALS Leadership Development Course.

The Department was now seeking guidance from LTC on future strategic direction as it was no longer possible to meet all demand for support, for example the emerging demands for support from taught postgraduate (PGT) students.

The Committee made the following points:

- 'Under-Prepared Students', those arriving at the University with lower than average grades, were highlighted. It was recognised that the numbers of widening participation students would increase over time given growing widening participation imperatives, and that peer mentors could be of great benefit to such students.
- It was important to access data regarding student outcomes to assist with evaluation of the work.
- There was evidence of demand for peer support from postgraduate research students (PGR). It was agreed that there may be benefit in Researcher Experience Committee giving this matter further consideration, although the need was thought to be greater amongst PGT students.
- There was a possibility of PGR students acting as mentors for PGT students within Schools. The success within the Vet School of providing online peer support for PGT students was highlighted.
- There were potential benefits to taking an opt-out approach to timetabling peer support sessions for students in Schools where a Peer Learning and Support Scheme had already been established.

**Action:**

- 1) Peer Learning and Support Manager and Director of Academic Services to discuss further and agree how practical issues would be taken forward.
- 2) Peer Learning and Support Manager and Dean of Students, CSE to discuss increasing support for 'under-prepared students'.

**7. Proposal for Future Monitoring of Feedback Turnaround Times and Quality**

Members were reminded that, in 2014-15, it was agreed that Schools would be required to report to LTC on feedback turnaround times. However, Schools had become increasingly dissatisfied with this arrangement on account of the staff time involved in preparing the reports. In addition, variation in the data collected from different Schools resulted in the data being of limited value centrally.

Information Services Group had reviewed the arrangements for online assessment and feedback and concluded that it would be challenging to provide an effective systems solution to the measurement of feedback turnaround times. However, the recently introduced Course Enhancement Questionnaire (CEQ) did include a question on feedback in the core question set, which may provide an alternate mechanism for monitoring feedback turnaround times: 'Feedback so far has been helpful and informative'.

The Committee considered whether or not the question would allow adequate monitoring of both the quality and timeliness of feedback. The following points were made:

- Response rates for the CEQ would need to be high if the Questionnaire was to provide meaningful data.
- There was a risk of Schools ceasing to prioritise the prescribed 15 working day turnaround time if they were no longer required to report on this.
- It was desirable to move towards a more qualitative understanding of the effectiveness of our feedback whilst not disregarding Taught Assessment Regulation 16 on turnaround times.
- 'Timely' may or may not equate to a 15 day turnaround time.

It was agreed that:

- from Semester 2 2016-17, Schools would not be required to report centrally on feedback turnaround times. (In addition, Schools would not be asked to report on data collected for Semester 1 2016-17.)
- Head of Schools would remain accountable for implementing Taught Assessment Regulation 16 and ensuring that there were systems in place to identify and address breaches.

**Action:**

Assistant Principal Assessment and Feedback and Director of Academic Services to send communication to Schools outlining the changes.

**8. Engaging with the New National Student Survey (NSS) Question Set and Core Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) Metrics**

The Director of Academic Services advised members that the new NSS Question Set included questions that covered three new areas, and that it was important that the University provided a positive student experience in these areas. In addition, the TEF

introduced core metrics in relation to non-continuation and aspects of employability which it would be important for the University to perform well in, regardless of whether or not it chose to participate in the TEF.

An analysis had been carried out to ascertain what activities the University was undertaking in relation to the new NSS areas and those areas measured by the TEF. In general, the Committee was content that the University had a reasonable range of institutional activities in place that contributed to a positive student experience in the areas covered by the new questions. Since School-level activity was also required to guarantee a positive student experience, a communication would be sent to Heads of Schools to ensure that they were aware of the new question areas.

In relation to the TEF metrics, the University was performing well, although it would be important to ensure that non-continuation rates remained low, particularly in the context of increasing widening participation.

**Action:**

Director of Academic Services to send communication to Schools advising them of the new NSS question set and the core TEF metrics and highlighting the positive activities underway at University level.

## **9. Space Strategy Group and Learning and Teaching Strategy**

The Convener of the Space Strategy Group outlined the Group's remit and noted that it aimed to better align the University's Space and Learning and Teaching Strategies. The Committee was asked to identify and advise the Group of any issues relating to the teaching estate. Further information would be gathered by asking all those involved in the allocation and delivery of teaching to complete a short survey about the teaching estate.

LTC raised the following points:

- there may be background evidence about aspirations regarding the teaching estate available from projects that were already underway
- the importance of thinking about the estate in its totality. This would include consideration of study and social space, as well as green space.
- it would be important not only to build new facilities but also to ensure that existing facilities were of a high quality.
- the importance of changing the culture to limit the 'clumping effect' whereby rooms are used less on Monday and Friday mornings.
- the importance of having good transportation between campuses in place.

## **10. Development of a Policy on Learning Analytics**

LTC considered the initial thinking of a task group established to develop a Policy on Learning Analytics. The Committee was broadly supportive of the principles outlined in the paper, and raised the following points:

- the importance of using the data to enhance the student learning experience and not to monitor staff performance.
- the importance of being transparent about the way in which data would be used.
- the importance of the principles stating clearly that the University would never give students' data to third parties.
- the importance of the principles being clear about the circumstances under which the University would use the data for research purposes.

- the importance of the University using predictive analytics cautiously to avoid reinforcing negative patterns of engagement.
- the importance of ensuring that students were keen to engage with learning analytics and to self-reflect before developing the approaches that would facilitate this.

The Students' Association view was that the University should proceed with caution, ensuring that students were not asked to reflect in ways that induced anxiety.

#### **11. Embedding Social Responsibility and Sustainability Issues into Learning and Teaching: an Optional On-Line Undergraduate Course**

The Committee commended this newly introduced course which was running for the first time as a pilot with 38 students, and was proving to be a very positive experience for both staff and students. Members considered some of the issues that had been encountered whilst developing this cross-University course including funding models, curriculum flexibility, ownership and accountability. It was noted that these issues would be considered more thoroughly by LTC's 'University-Wide Courses Task Group'.

#### **12. Lecture Recording Policy Task Group**

Members were advised that a policy officer had been appointed to help with the development of the Lecture Recording Policy. In addition, a number of School Learning and Teaching Committees had been consulted about the Policy and helpful input had been received. The procurement process for the lecture recording equipment was proceeding well.

The Committee emphasised the importance of adopting a consistent approach across Schools wherever possible, and strongly favoured an 'opt-out' not an 'opt-in' approach. Notwithstanding this, the importance of ensuring that the technology did not become the driver for the pedagogical approach was recognised.

### **For Information and Formal Business**

#### **13. Progress with Committee Priorities 2016/17**

The Committee welcomed the paper and noted that good progress was being made against the agreed priorities for 2016/17.

#### **14. Proposed Enhancements to the Personal Tutor System**

LTC endorsed the proposed enhancements.

#### **15. Knowledge Strategy Committee Report (14 October 2016)**

The report was noted.

#### **16. Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)**

##### **16.1 PTES 2017: Institutional Questions and Start Date**

Members raised concerns about the number of Library-related questions, and sought clarity regarding the rationale for including these questions. The matter would be discussed with the Student Surveys Unit.

<b>Action:</b>
----------------

Secretary to discuss Library-related questions with Student Surveys Unit and seek approval by correspondence.

## **16.2 Terms of Reference for PTES Working Group**

The terms of reference for the PTES Working Group were approved.

### **17. Final Report of the University of Edinburgh Panel to Review National Student Survey (NSS) Promotion and Guidelines**

It was noted that this report was for information and would be signed off by Central Management Group. The report was already informing practice in some areas.

### **18. Enhancement Themes Update**

It was reported that there had been an excellent response to a call for contributions for the University's Gearing Up for Transitions conference. The focus of the University's work this semester on the 'Transitions' Enhancement Theme was producing a student-facing multimedia resource on the theme of resilience (which would be renamed 'adapting'). A PhD intern, supported by the Institute for Academic Development, had been appointed to review the case studies and associated resources gathered through the current Enhancement Theme with the aim of producing a staff resource identifying important transitions and showing what good transitions look like. The Enhancement Theme would come to an end in June, and the University would contribute to a sector-wide review of Enhancement Themes through Senior Vice-Principal Charlie Jeffery.

Philippa Ward  
January 2017