

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Senatus Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC)
held at 2pm on Wednesday 20 September 2017
in the Board Room, Edinburgh College of Art Main Building**

1. Attendance

Present:

Ms Bobi Archer	Vice President (Education), Edinburgh University Students' Association (Ex officio)
Professor Sarah Cunningham-Burley	Assistant Principal (Research-Led Learning), Dean (CMVM)
Professor Iain Gordon	Head of School of Mathematics (Co-opted member)
Ms Shelagh Green	Director for Careers and Employability (Ex officio)
Professor Judy Hardy	Director of Teaching, School of Physics and Astronomy, CSE
Professor Tina Harrison	Assistant Principal (Academic Standards and Quality Assurance)
Ms Melissa Highton	Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Services Division (Ex officio)
Professor Charlie Jeffery (Convener)	Senior Vice-Principal
Ms Tanya Lubicz-Nawrocka	Edinburgh University Students' Association, Academic Engagement Co-ordinator (Ex officio)
Dr Velda McCune	Deputy Director, Institute for Academic Development (Director's nominee) (Ex officio)
Professor Neil Mulholland	Dean of Postgraduate Studies (CAHSS)
Professor Graeme Reid	Dean of Learning and Teaching, CSE
Dr Sabine Rolle	Dean of Undergraduate Studies (CAHSS)
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 Rowena Arshad	Head of Moray House School of Education (Co-opted member)
Professor Sian Bayne	Director of Centre for Research in Digital Education (Co-opted member)
Ms Rebecca Gaukroger	Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions (Ex officio)
Ms Nichola Kett	Academic Governance Representative, Academic Services
Professor Anna Meredith	Director for Postgraduate Taught, CMVM

In attendance:

Ms Laura Cattell	Head of Widening Participation, representing Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions
Mr Barry Neilson	Director of Student Systems

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2017 were approved.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Plan (item 3.4)

A first draft had been produced, but further work was required on prioritisation. It was hoped that the document would come to the November 2017 meeting of the Committee.

3.2 Task Group to Review the Code of Practice for Tutors and Demonstrators (item 10.3)

Members were advised that, in relation to discussions around the number of hours of University work to be undertaken by postgraduate research students, a mandatory cap of nine hours on average per week across the academic year had been agreed and included in the final policy.

For Discussion

4. Student Survey Results

4.1 National Student Survey (NSS) 2017

4.1.1 Initial Analysis and Suggested Follow-Up Actions

Members noted the paper.

4.1.2 Results

The Director of Student Systems outlined the key points in relation to the results, namely that:

- new methodologies had been used this year;
- overall satisfaction was up 3% this year as compared with last, but was broadly flat over a five year period;
- assessment and feedback scores had continued to improve, but remained low in comparison with sector figures;
- scores for academic support and organisation and management were poor in comparison to sector results;
- the University had not performed well in the newly introduced themes.

4.2 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)

Key points were as follows:

- Results were broadly similar to those for 2016.
- The University was performing well and was in or close to the upper quartile for most benchmark-able measures.

- Scores for Personal Tutor measures had dropped, but this was an internal measure only.

4.3 Course Enhancement Questionnaires (CEQ) 2016/17 Results

- There was significant variation across Schools, both in terms of the way in which the questionnaires were run and response rates.
- Staff-related questions generally scored more highly than course-related questions.

In relation to the 3 surveys, members were advised that the Student Surveys Team was using free text comments to add deeper context to the quantitative data. Further work was also being done to better understand results around the student voice. Planned work for the future included the development of an improved standard survey reporting suite incorporating common requests received from Schools, improved use of free text comments, and increased exploration of CEQ data. It was agreed that best practice and case studies would be gathered from Schools achieving high CEQ response rates. The Committee thanked the Student Surveys Team for the high volume and quality of work it had produced on the survey results in a short period of time.

Schools would continue to be supported as they reviewed practice in areas where improvement was required. It was agreed that more needed to be done to feed back to students on ways in which their feedback was being used by the University. This would be achieved in part through work being undertaken by the Deputy Secretary Student Experience on student communications and through the mid-semester feedback exercise.

Actions:

- 1) Student Surveys Team to gather best practice and case studies from Schools achieving high CEQ response rates.
- 2) Deputy Secretary Student Experience to consider ways in which the University might feed back to students on ways in which their feedback was being used as part of broader work on student communications.

5. Teaching Excellence Framework: Learning From the First Year

Members were advised that the paper provided background information on the first year of operation of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). Whilst the University's current position was not to participate in the TEF, the information would become of relevance to the University if, in the future, it changed its position. Those institutions that had performed particularly well in the TEF had been able to demonstrate:

- a clear sense of institutional purpose
- a link between policies, practice and outcomes.
- an ability to explain core metrics
- investment in the physical learning environment and digital learning resource, with a clear rationale for the investment
- that they were delivering stretch and challenge
- involvement of students in research activity
- engagement of teaching staff in Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

It was noted that the Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance would be happy to discuss these issues further with individual Schools and would attend a meeting of the Directors of Teaching Network.

The importance of ensuring that any new University initiatives demonstrated a clear sense of institutional purpose, and a link between policy, practice and outcomes was recognised.

6. Reducing the Pressure on Students in Semester 1

Members noted that LTC had agreed in July 2016 not to change the structure of the academic year. In this context, the Committee considered the proposals outlined in the paper to provide sensible approaches to reducing the pressure on students in Semester 1. The following points were raised:

- Given that Semester 1 is a week shorter than Semester 2, it will always be difficult to find solutions that resolve all of the issues regarding pressure in Semester 1.
- Schools have previously been asked to keep the Thursday and Friday of Week 11 clear of new material. The extent to which this has been implemented is not known.
- It would be important to ensure that there was no overall reduction in the number of teaching weeks during the year. Week 11 would therefore need to become a structured revision as opposed to a reading week, were it to be kept free of new examinable material.
- If Weeks 6 or 7 were kept free of regular assignments, it may be viewed by some as a reading week. Weeks 6 or 7 may not be the most appropriate weeks to keep free of assignments in all areas. As such, it was proposed that Schools be asked to set assignments in only 9 of the 11 available weeks, rather than proposing that weeks 6 or 7 in particular be kept clear of regular assignments.
- There could be benefit in gathering feedback from students in Weeks 9 and 10 on topics they found particularly challenging, and offering structured revision of these topics in Week 11.
- As not all Semester 1 courses have exams, it may not be necessary to keep Week 11 clear of new material for all courses.
- The University already permits students to arrive up to two weeks late, and may extend this to accommodate issues with visas. In this context, reducing the number of weeks in which new material is taught during Semester 1 could make it challenging for such students to achieve the learning outcomes for their courses.
- A broad move towards introducing more 20 credit and reducing the number of 10 credit courses will reduce the number of exams in Semester 1, and may in some areas be the optimal solution to reducing pressure during Semester 1. However, some students prefer 10 credit courses.

Although it was broadly supportive of the paper, the Committee agreed that it would be difficult to introduce University-level measures that were appropriate for all areas. As such, it was agreed that the paper would be taken to College Learning and Teaching Committees for consideration at College level and local implementation.

Action:

Edinburgh University Students' Association Vice-President Education to take the paper to College Learning and Teaching Committees for consideration at College level, with assistance from the Director of Academic Services.

7. Strategic Issues Regarding the University's Undergraduate Degree Programmes

LTC welcomed the paper, which aimed to summarize current and proposed developments relating to the University's undergraduate degree programmes, and to open up discussion regarding the merits of taking a more coordinated and strategic approach to these developments. Members discussed:

- the balance between maintaining flexibility within the curriculum and ensuring that programmes include sufficient subject-specific content;
- the distinctive 'Edinburgh offer', and the importance of ensuring that the University makes best use of its 4 year undergraduate degree structure;
- the definition of an 'outside subject';
- whether the University should be aiming to develop fully integrated, interdisciplinary programmes, or whether students should be expected to take a range of subjects and be the agents of the integration;
- the importance of adopting a cautious approach to offering additional credit, particularly in Semester 1 where the timetable is already very full, and when some students find the transition to University study challenging in year one;
- the constraints of the teaching estate;
- the additional student support that would be required if the University were to offer additional flexibility;
- the importance of agreeing the University's overall strategic aims for the curriculum, in discussion with Schools and the incoming Principal, before opening up wide discussion regarding any possible changes.

The Committee agreed that Learning and Teaching Policy Group (LTPG) would discuss the matter further before undertaking consultation with the incoming Principal and Schools.

Actions:

1. Matter to be discussed further by LTPG – Director of Academic Services
2. Incoming Principal to be consulted – Senior Vice-Principal

8. Draft University of Edinburgh Widening Participation Strategy

The Committee welcomed the paper, noting that, since circulating the document, amendments had been agreed by the Widening Participation Strategy Group. Learning and Teaching Committee's input was being sought on the principal ideas and direction outlined in the paper. The following was discussed:

- The importance of being bold when thinking about widening participation. The University had been pioneering in this area, and was keen for this to continue.
- There was potential to make better use of the 4 year degree structure and to offer greater transition support in first year.

- The value of starting widening participation-related activity at primary school level.
- The importance of the University working cooperatively with other institutions and organisations in Scotland.
- The importance of using all external engagement, including City Deal, to further the widening participation agenda.

It was agreed that the paper would be revised and circulated to the Committee electronically for further comment.

Action:

Head of Widening Participation to revise the paper and circulate to members electronically for comment.

9. Supporting Personal, Professional and Career Development

The Committee considered the paper, which outlined the high level actions proposed to support enhanced personal, professional and career development and positive destinations outcomes for the University's graduates. The links between this paper and those already discussed during the meeting, particularly those relating to metrics used in the TEF, the National Student Survey, and strategic issues around the University's undergraduate degree programmes were noted.

There was scope to improve the University's performance in this area, particularly in the extent to which students are aware of how employable they are. It was agreed that employability should be viewed as an intentional by-product of our high quality learning and teaching and that it required a subject-specific approach. The Director for Careers and Employability would be meeting with some individual Schools to define and discuss their approaches to employability.

10. Lecture Recording

10.1 Lecture Recording Update

Members were advised that, 3 days into the Semester, lecture recording was working extremely well: 280 items had been recorded, and around 2000 hours of content – mainly video - had been watched by students. Microphone use had increased significantly. It was hoped that it would be possible to complete roll-out in less than three years as originally planned.

The positive start to the initiative would be communicated to students, whilst reminding them that rooms with being equipped for lecture capture in phases.

10.2 Lecture Recording Policy Development Update

Good progress was being made with development of the Lecture Recording Policy, although uncertainty around the University's status under new data protection legislation was causing delays.

11. Senate Committee Planning

Members noted that the paper outlined the way in which the 2018-21 Planning Round would operate and some initial thoughts on priorities for the student experience, learning and teaching. A more substantive paper would be brought to the November meeting of the Committee.

The Committee was content with the list of priorities, though noted that it was primarily focussed at School-level. Members discussed the importance of developing high quality learning and teaching spaces, and the potential resource implications of emerging work around the undergraduate curriculum, employability and widening participation. Developing employability skills through the curriculum would be added to the list of priorities.

Action:

Director of Academic Services to add developing employability through the curriculum to the list of priorities.

For Approval

12. Learning Analytics – Proposals

Noting that it had not been possible to develop a detailed policy on learning analytics at this stage due to uncertainty around the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation, the Committee approved the proposals to delay developing the detailed policy until later in 2017/18 and to introduce interim governance arrangements with immediate effect. In particular, it agreed that a review group would be established to scrutinise plans for new, substantial learning analytics activity.

Action:

Director of Academic Services to establish a review group to scrutinise plans for new, substantial learning analytics activity.

For Information and Noting

13. Edinburgh University Students' Association Priorities 2017/18

The Students' Association Vice President Education outlined her key priorities around reducing the pressures of Semester 1, improving support for those undertaking joint degrees, and establishing clearer representative structures and transparency in communications to amplify the student voice within the University and the Students' Association.

Members discussed timetabling issues experienced by joint degree students, and the student population more generally. There were currently some issues with both timetabling and availability of rooms. Members were asked to refer specific issues to the Convener of the Space Strategy Group for further consideration.

Action:

Members to refer specific issues around availability of rooms to the Convener of the Space Strategy Group for further consideration.

14. Student Partnership Agreement

The document had now been finalised, with key priorities being the student voice, academic support – developing a transparent system to ensure that it is clear to students what support is available – and positive mental health and wellbeing. Further thought would be given to ways in which Schools might be encouraged to engage with the Agreement and ensure that they were working in partnership with students at a local level.

The document would now be taken to Senate for final approval and published. An implementation plan would be developed incorporating means of measuring impact. It was agreed that implementation should become a standing item on the LTC agenda.

Action:

Secretary to make implementation of the Student Partnership Agreement a standing item on the LTC agenda, once the Agreement has been approved and an implementation plan developed.

15. Reports

The Committee received reports from Knowledge Strategy Committee (meeting held on 2 June 2017) and Learning and Teaching Policy Group (meeting held on 17 August 2017).

16. Guidance for Committee Members 2017/18

Members noted the guidance and the Committees' agreed priorities for 2017/18.

17. Any Other Business

Members thanked the Edinburgh University Students' Association Academic Engagement Coordinator for her valuable contribution to the work of the Committee and wished her well in her new position.

Philippa Ward
Academic Services
4 October 2017