

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Senatus Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC)
held at 2pm on Wednesday 15 November 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 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 Megan Brown	Edinburgh University Students' Association, Academic Engagement Co-ordinator (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
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:

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 Gavin Douglas	Deputy Secretary Student Experience

Mr Neil McCormick
Professor Susan Rhind
Mr Scott Rosie

Educational Technology Policy Officer
Assistant Principal Assessment and Feedback
Head of Timetabling and Examination Services

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 September were approved.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Plan (item 4.3)

The Director of Academic Services advised members that improving feedback to students on the way in which their feedback was being used was being considered within broader work on student communications being undertaken by the Deputy Secretary Student Experience. A report on this work would be brought to the January meeting of LTC.

Action:

Director of Academic Services and Deputy Secretary Student Experience to report to January meeting of LTC on student communications work.

4. Convener's Communications

Members noted that this was a period of significant change in the external environment. Uncertainties existed for the University around Brexit, tighter regulation of English universities (which may impact on the Scottish sector), and intensification of the outcome agreement process in Scotland.

5. For Discussion

5.1 Global Offline Timetable Modelling Project

The Head of Timetabling and Examination Services presented on this Project. It was noted that there were five key Project deliverables:

- i. Delivery of greater spread across the teaching week
- ii. Keeping Wednesday afternoons clear of teaching
- iii. Modelling flexibility in course choice
- iv. Modelling some rationalisation of course choice
- v. Modelling for growth by allowing for increased repeat lecture scheduling

The overall aim was to deliver a timetable that was flexible and dynamic and worked well for all.

Modelling would:

- use the 2017/18 timetable as a template;
- factor in programme 'core' courses;
- factor in programme optional courses deemed 'de facto core';

- take account of 'whole-class' teaching;
- take account of courses where all sub-group teaching must take place simultaneously;
- use existing course choice combinations.

Modelling would not:

- include Medicine and Veterinary Medicine timetables (separate modelling would be undertaken here);
- take account of sub-group teaching eg. tutorials;
- consider staff allocations: modelling would be on the basis of student and estate availability.

The following points were raised during the discussion:

- A significant number of teaching staff with school-age children attending City of Edinburgh Council Schools are not contracted to work on Friday afternoons to enable them to fulfil their childcare responsibilities. It would however not be possible to factor this into the modelling if staff allocations are not considered.
- Most laboratory-based courses cannot run past 5.00pm on account of technical staff being unavailable.
- Some staff teach more than one course per Semester, and it will therefore be essential that these courses are not scheduled simultaneously. It will be difficult to factor this into the modelling if staff allocations are not considered.
- The importance of capturing travel time for both staff and students between the University's various sites was noted. Members were advised that travel time for students could be factored into the modelling, provided Schools supplied Timetabling with accurate and sufficiently detailed information. It was noted that, for those students with a travel constraint, there was often a degree of choice involved regarding which courses to enrol on.
- Schools also needed to provide Timetabling with sufficiently detailed information about core and optional courses (eg. cases where one of two possible courses was core) and equipment required for classes etc. Good communication between Schools, Colleges and Timetabling at all levels was essential.
- The impact on timetabling of recruiting students above intake targets was recognised.

5.2 Course and Programme Design: Update and Proposal

The Assistant Principal Assessment and Feedback reminded members that work around course and programme design had stemmed from discussions around ways in which feedback quality might be improved. The paper provided an update on the course and programme design resources currently offered by the University, and proposed two options:

1. moving to a position where for new programmes (and ideally courses), engagement with the continuing professional development opportunities outlined in the paper (or an appropriate alternative) was required and built into the project planning.
2. strengthening support for Boards of Studies Conveners to ensure that all had not only the necessary training in the mechanistic aspects of course and programme approval, but also training in the underlying pedagogy.

The following points were raised during the discussion:

- There is significant variation in the ways in which Boards of Studies Conveners are recruited across the institution, and the University does not currently have a forum to bring all Conveners together. In this context, option 2 was considered valuable, in that it would lead to greater professionalization of the role of Board of Studies Convener.
- It was noted that there may be benefit in offering the training outlined in option 2 to a slightly wider group and not just to Boards of Studies Conveners. In addition to covering mechanistic and pedagogical issues, the training could also be used to cover issues such as Competitions and Markets Authority requirements and developing business cases for courses.
- Option 2 could be introduced this academic year, but was unlikely to result in rapid culture change in this area.
- More rapid culture change could be brought about by introducing option 1, which was considered best practice. It was recognised that this would be easier for new than for existing programmes and courses. In theory it may be possible to review existing provision through Internal Review processes, although in practice, Teaching Programmes Reviews and Postgraduate Programme Reviews cover large numbers of individual programmes, making it difficult to focus on the design of individual programmes.

In light of the discussion, it was agreed that the Assistant Principal Assessment and Feedback would work with IAD, Academic Services and Colleges to introduce option 2 as soon as possible. The Assistant Principal would also give consideration to ways in which option 1 might be introduced for both new and existing programmes and courses. It was recognised that this may require additional resource.

Action:

Assistant Principal Assessment and Feedback to:

1. work with IAD, Academic Services and Colleges to introduce option 2 as soon as possible.
2. work with IAD, ISG and Colleges to consider how option 1 might be introduced for both new and existing programmes and courses.

5.3 Class Representatives System

Members were advised that the aim of the changes proposed in the paper was to reduce the total number of class representatives in order to introduce a higher quality and more consistent service. This would be achieved by introducing a programme-level system. It was reported that students consulted by the Students' Association were content with the proposed changes.

Learning and Teaching Committee was supportive of the changes, and raised the following points:

- Members were supportive of the programme-level approach. It was felt that it would make it much easier for students to have their voice heard.
- The changes were considered to close many feedback loops, although there may still be benefit in providing Senate Quality Assurance Committee with an annual report of

issues arising at Staff Student Liaison Committees that could not be resolved at School-level.

- It would be important to focus on quality of representatives and not just quantity. A focus on building a community of representatives would be key.
- Communication with Schools about the changes should provide a holistic picture of the ways in which the University was listening to students, including mid-Semester feedback etc.

Action:

1. Students' Association Vice-President (Education) to work with Director of Academic Services to take forward the proposals, in consultation with Schools.
2. Senior Vice-Principal to raise the issue with Heads of Schools.

5.4 Draft Lecture Recording Policy

The Director of the Learning, Teaching and Web Services Division of Information Services (IS) thanked those members of LTC who had been involved in the work of the Lecture Recording Policy Task Group. Opinion was now being sought on whether the draft Policy was ready to be sent out for wider consultation. It was hoped that consultation would take place between November 2017 and February 2018, and that the finalised Policy would be in place for the start of Academic Year 2018/19 (when lecture recording would integrate with the timetabling system).

Two issues required particular consideration:

1. management of opt outs;
2. new data protection legislation.

In relation to changes to data protection legislation, although the outcome of discussions in Parliament on the UK implementation of the EU General Data Protection Regulation was not yet known, LTC agreed that consultation on the draft Lecture Recording Policy should not be delayed.

Concerning opt-outs, the Committee agreed that the University should be aiming to introduce a model that was as simple and as consistent as possible in order to ensure that it enhanced the student experience. It was noted that at least one School had already agreed that all lectures would be recorded, and that opt outs would not be permitted. In order to deliver the desired model, LTC expressed strong support for consulting on an approach based on lecturers 'agreeing with' Heads of Schools that an opt-out was required, rather than 'informing' Heads of Schools that an opt-out was required.

Members discussed the potential value of the Policy including a statement of the University's position on the use of lecture recording in cases where classes were too large for the allocated lecture theatre. The value of extracting from the Policy a list of key principles that could be easily communicated to students was also discussed.

Wide consultation would now be undertaken, including consultation addressed specifically to Heads of Colleges and Schools and asking specifically for their responses.

Action:

Director of the Learning, Teaching and Web Services Division of IS to:

1. amend the draft Lecture Recording Policy to state that lecturers will agree with Heads of Schools that an opt-out is required;
2. consider the potential value of including within the Policy a statement of the University's position on the use of lecture recording in cases where classes are too large for the allocated lecture theatre;
3. consider extracting from the Policy a list of key principles that can be easily communicated to students;
4. proceed with wide consultation on the draft Policy.

5.5 Report from University-Wide Courses Task Group

The Assistant Principal Research-Led Learning reminded members that the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy committed to providing University-wide courses, while the Strategic Plan 2016 referred to the development of flexible study pathways. In this context, the University-Wide Courses Task Group had undertaken benchmarking with comparator institutions, and had used the findings from this to develop a set of underlying principles for University-wide courses at Edinburgh. 3 different types of offering had been identified and discussed by the Task Group:

1. Existing, subject-based courses
2. Themed, interdisciplinary courses
3. A single common course – the Edinburgh Experience

LTC welcomed the paper and was positive about the idea of introducing more interdisciplinary courses, particularly those with an element of co-creation. Concerns were expressed about the idea of introducing anything compulsory on the basis that this may impact on students entering with direct entry to year two and be problematic for those on programmes with constrained timetables. It was also noted that any development of University-wide courses would need to be accompanied by broader thinking regarding the future of the University's undergraduate curriculum, and that any broader discussions would need to take account of the views of the incoming Principal. In order to stimulate thinking regarding the curriculum, the Committee agreed that the Assistant Principal Research-Led learning should undertake wider consultation on the paper's recommendations with a view to presenting on findings at the University's planned 2018 Learning and Teaching Conference.

Action:

Assistant Principal Research-Led Learning to initiate wider consultation on the paper's recommendations with a view to presenting on findings at the University's Learning and Teaching Conference.

5.6 Virtual Learning Environment Minimum Standards Project: Information

The Committee strongly supported the proposal to undertake a project to review the current use of the University's main virtual learning environment, Blackboard Learn, and to support the adoption of a minimum standard course presentation across the institution. LTC members were invited to propose members for the Project governance and steering groups.

LTC would receive periodic reports on the Project's progress.

Action:

1. All to propose members for the Project governance and steering groups.
2. Director of Learning Teaching and Web Services Division of IS to provide LTC with periodic reports on the Project's progress.

5.7 Computer-Aided Assessment – Service Overview and Governance

The Committee was supportive of the paper and agreed that additional governance of this area would be useful. Members raised the possibility of using the existing Assessment and Feedback Enhancement Working Group as a service board, and the idea would be given further consideration.

Action:

Additional governance to be introduced in the area of computer-aided assessment. Assistant Principal Assessment and Feedback and the Director of the Learning Teaching and Web Services Division of IS to consider the possibility of using the Assessment and Feedback Enhancement Working Group as a service board.

5.8 Planning Issues

5.8.1 Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Plan

Members were advised that there were many strands to the Learning and Teaching Strategy, and that priorities for implementation between 2017/18 and 2018/19 had therefore been identified. Different Assistant Principals would take responsibility for each of the priority areas identified. The identified priorities and progress against them would be reviewed by LTC in Autumn 2018. The Committee approved the proposed priorities, noting the importance of considering equality and diversity issues when taking forward each strand of activity.

5.8.2 Senate Committee Planning

The Committee agreed that additional resource was likely to be required to fund the University's widening participation agenda, and that a focus on developing sufficient high-quality learning and teaching spaces – both formal and informal – was essential.

5.9 Widening Participation Strategy

Members noted that this was a revised version of the draft Strategy it had considered at its September meeting. This draft included more on personal tutoring, postgraduate bursaries, flexibility at masters level, the importance of links with local colleges, and increasing the numbers of students from widening participation backgrounds taking part in international experiences. Costings would now be revised for the January meeting of Central Management Group and February meeting of Court, and it was hoped that the Strategy would be launched in March or April 2018. The draft being considered would be used as an internal guidance document, and a more user-friendly document for external use would also be produced.

LTC discussed:

- the importance of considering both long-term aims and widening participation initiatives that would bear early fruit, for example enhanced scholarships for a specific number of students that would make a significant difference at an individual level;
- the importance of not only providing resources to support students, but of also bringing about widespread culture change within the University;
- the need to provide additional support for widening participation students in their first year, particularly mathematics and English language support. However, this support should supplement the curriculum rather than reduce the level of choice available to these students.
- the potential to work with other institutions in the proposed secondary and primary school partnerships.
- the fact that the proposals around student support and personal tutors pointed towards more professionalization of the personal tutor role, and therefore had implications beyond the Widening Participation Strategy.
- the fact that many of the initiatives discussed would require additional resource.

5.10 Student Mental Health and Academic Policy

It was noted that this was a discussion paper at this stage. Members recognised the importance of considering the potential mental health implications of any new policy introduced, and also noted the complexities around the relationship between mental health and academic work.

The Committee recognised that assessment arrangements had potential to have adverse impact on student mental health. It was advised that the Assessment and Feedback Enhancement Working Group would shortly discuss the benefits and disadvantages of exams. LTC also raised particular concerns about the pressures that assessment could place on taught postgraduate students, recognising that an accelerated pace of learning was expected as compared with undergraduate study, many students were from overseas, there was no opportunity for students to resit and limited opportunity to have poor performances discounted. It was agreed that these points would be fed into ongoing Curriculum and Student Progression Committee discussions on PGT assessment.

The importance of good communication, fair and robust processes and procedures for dealing with special circumstances and extensions, and 'good housekeeping' in courses and programmes to students' overall mental health was recognised.

Action:

Secretary to refer issues relating to taught postgraduate students to the Secretary to Curriculum and Student Progression Committee.

6. For Approval

6.1 NSS Institutional Questions

Members expressed concern about the number of questions proposed in the paper. It was agreed that:

1. Bank B1 should be removed, as these questions overlapped with B15.
2. Bank B12 should be removed as these questions overlapped with core questions.

3. The Students' Association would be consulted about whether the questions in bank B2 should be asked this year or in 2019. (The questions were asked in 2017, and there was some support for the idea of repeating the questions every other year to allow more time for changes introduced in response to the Survey to have a measurable impact.)

Action:

Secretary to discuss with the Students' Association and the Students Surveys Unit the possibility of asking the questions in bank B2 every other year.

6.2 Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) – Proposals for New and Amended Categories of Achievement

The following new categories of wider achievement were approved for inclusion in the HEAR:

- International Student Centre Committee Member
- Edinburgh Nightline Committee Member

LTC also approved the proposal to amend existing category 10 to read 'Student Membership of University Internal Review Team (TPR, PPR and Thematic Review)'.

Concern was raised about the large quoted time commitment for members of the International Student Centre Committee, and this would be discussed with the author of the proposal form.

Action:

Secretary to discuss time commitment for members of the International Student Centre Committee with the author of the proposal form.

7. For Information and Noting

7.1 Leading Enhancement in Assessment and Feedback (LEAF) Themes

LTC noted the report.

7.2 Update on Student Administration and Support Strand of the Service Excellence Programme

LTC noted the report.

7.3 Report from Learning and Teaching Policy Group (LTPG)

LTC noted the report.

Philippa Ward
Academic Services
22 November 2017