

Use of the Week Between Teaching Blocks 3 and 4 in Academic Years 16/17 and 17/18

Guidance for Schools

Introduction

In January 2016, Senate Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) agreed to end Innovative Learning Week (ILW) in its current form. The relevant paper and minute are available at:

<http://edin.ac/1K7CT0X> (Paper D) and <http://edin.ac/1s5apwo>.

An Innovation in Teaching and Learning Working Group was established to consider and make recommendations to LTC on how the legacy of ILW might be secured whilst also addressing the concerns that have been raised about the Week. LTC discussed these recommendations at its May 2016 meeting, and this paper outlines what was agreed:

Securing the Legacy of ILW – Festival of Creative Learning

ILW has supported innovation in teaching and learning in a number of ways: it has provided space in the academic year; access to facilities; infrastructure to support design and organisation; a community of practice; and opportunity beyond the credit-bearing curriculum for low risk experimentation. During academic year 15/16, the emphasis was moved away from a primary focus on running events during ILW to taking a more human-centred design approach: supporting a community of staff and students engaged in innovation and approaches to creative learning. This included the development of a range of practical supports, events and other activities running across the year. The Week itself continued to be the main concentration of events, and this was curated around a theme to give it a stronger focus. Schools were encouraged to offer a smaller number of events. Participation in ILW increased for 2016, with organisers and participants reporting deeper engagement, more meaningful collaborations and more positive impacts.

LTC has agreed that, for Academic Years 16/17 and 17/18, the legacy of ILW will be secured by launching a “**Festival of Creative Learning**”. Like the Edinburgh Science Festival, this will include a programme of events and activities running throughout the academic year, along with a curated, week-long programme of events (potentially themed) in February. The focus on building a community of practice of staff and students keen to innovate and experiment with creative approaches to learning will continue.

The Institute for Academic Development (IAD) will continue to provide support for the Festival of Creative Learning. All Schools, Services, staff and students will be asked to share any plans they have that feed into the Festival (particularly if they are running timetabled or credit-bearing activities) to support the sharing of best practice and institutional learning.

Moving Beyond ILW – Broadening the Purpose of the Week

Recognising the concerns that have been raised about ILW in its current form, LTC has also agreed that the week between Teaching Blocks 3 and 4 will be used for a broader range of purposes in AYS 16/17 and 17/18. One of the key benefits of ILW has been space in the academic year. For many staff and students this space has provided an opportunity to consolidate learning and manage workloads. It has also provided an opportunity to run learning activities over several days (very difficult in our academic timetable that is dominated by long, thin courses); run courses across multiple Schools and disciplines (again, difficult in our busy timetable); and have access to a wider range of learning spaces. The Week has provided an opportunity to undertake activities and events

involving communities and organisations beyond the University and to bring University communities together (across different years of study; across different disciplines; between students and staff).

As such Schools will be encouraged to use the week between Teaching Blocks 3 and 4 in the way that best suits their staff and students.

Schools may choose to contribute to the Festival of Creative Learning (see above), and/or equally to use the week for:

- reflection / consolidation
- community engagement / experiential learning
- social responsibility / sustainability-related activity
- collaborative / interdisciplinary projects including research projects
- employability / development of graduate attributes
- student wellbeing-related activity
- the development of communities of practice around teaching
- fieldtrips

Schools may wish to consider offering some credit-related or credit-bearing activity during the week. Compulsory activity will be permitted where good pedagogic rationale can be demonstrated, and mode of delivery is better suited to a week otherwise free of timetabled commitments eg. field trips.

In order to support the sharing of practice and better evaluate the impact of these changes, Schools will be asked to share their plans in advance (during Semester 1).

The changes made for Academic Year 2016/17 will be the subject of a report to the May 2017 meeting of LTC. Schools will also be asked to report on their experience of these changes and their use of the week between Teaching Blocks 3 and 4.