

**Minutes of the Meeting of Senate Education Committee
held via Microsoft Teams at 2.00pm on Thursday 10 November 2022**

1. Attendance

Present	Position
Colm Harmon	Vice-Principal Students (Convener) – Ex Officio
Tina Harrison	Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance (Vice-Convener) – Ex Officio
Sabine Rolle	Representative of CAHSS (Learning and Teaching)
Lisa Kendall	Representative of CAHSS (Learning and Teaching)
Laura Bradley	Representative of CAHSS (Postgraduate Research)
Patrick Walsh	Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching)
Tim Stratford	Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching)
Antony Maciocia	Representative of CSE (Postgraduate Research)
Paddy Hadoke	Representative of CMVM (Postgraduate Research)
Jo Shaw	Head of School, CAHSS
Jason Love	Head of School, CSE
Sam Maccallum	Edinburgh University Students' Association, Vice President Education
Shelagh Green	Director for Careers & Employability – Ex Officio
Melissa Highton	Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Division of Information Services – Ex Officio; Assistant Principal (Online and Open Learning)
Velda McCune	Representing Director of Institute for Academic Development – Ex Officio
Tom Ward	Director of Academic Services – Ex Officio
Sian Bayne	Assistant Principal Digital Education
Lucy Evans	Deputy Secretary, Students
Marianne Brown	Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling (Interim)
Richard Gratwick	Senate Representative
Susan Morrow	Senate Representative
Philippa Ward	Academic Services (Secretary)
In Attendance	
Teresa Ironside	Director of Data Science Education
Jon Turner	Director of Institute for Academic Development (in place of Velda McCune)
Amanda Percy	Curriculum Transformation
Helen-Rose Wood	Estates Department
Apologies	
Jamie Davies	Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching, UG)
Sarah Henderson	Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching, PGT)
Mike Shipston	Head of Deanery, CMVM
Laura Cattell	Representative of Student Recruitment and Admissions – Ex Officio
Mary Brennan	Senate Representative

The Convener welcomed the newly appointed Senate representatives to the Committee.

2. Minutes of Meeting held on 8 September 2022

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2022.

3. Convener's Communications

All relevant matters were discussed at later points in the agenda.

4. For Discussion

4.1 Examination Format

The paper was presented by the EUSA Vice-President Education. It included recommendations relating to examinations in 2022/23 in response to the results of a University-wide student survey on in-person exams.

The EUSA Vice-President Education advised members that almost 800 responses to the survey had been received. Responses showed that many students were unaware that their exams would be in person in 2022/23 and that there was significant unease amongst students about exam format. Students with disabilities and with widening participation backgrounds were particularly concerned about the return to in-person exams. Some of the free-text comments submitted in response to the survey were distressing. It was the EUSA Vice-President Education's view that the 2022/3 exam diets as currently planned posed a significant risk to student wellbeing and safety. Better communication around exam format was required, and the EUSA Vice-President Education urged the University to recognise and take full account of the disrupted educational experience the current cohort of students had had due to COVID-19. Specifically, it was recommended that:

- the summer diet return to online format for honours-level students only, with this being retained for the pandemic cohort in further years unless otherwise specified through further discussion. The same should be applied to the resit diet.
- the Committee should agree to provide time in February and / or at the beginning of Semester 2 to review the impact of the December exam diet on the current pandemic cohorts.
- all Schools support Special Circumstances applications relating directly to the examination format.

The Convener thanked the EUSA Vice-President Education for the high-quality paper and members discussed the following:

- Members shared or were sympathetic towards many of the concerns raised in the paper, particularly those around inclusion.
- It was noted that there was support available through IAD to help students prepare for in-person exams.
- Members welcomed the idea of a review of the December 2022 exam diet early in 2023. The Committee also discussed the need for ongoing review of exam format and its consequences for inclusion and academic misconduct.
- The Student Association's position was that it was supportive of diversifying assessment overall. The Committee was also keen to use forms of assessment other

than in-person exams where this was appropriate. The recent work done by the University on Assessment and Feedback Principles reinforced this. However, alternative forms of assessment were not appropriate in all cases and had the potential to reduce academic integrity and therefore the value some professional bodies placed on Edinburgh degrees. It was noted that 'in-person exams' did not necessarily mean 'closed book exams'.

- The EUSA Vice-President Education reiterated that concerns around academic integrity should not override concerns around student wellbeing.

Senate members provided the following comments on the paper through the Senate representatives on the Committee:

- While there was sympathy for students and a recognition that a change of exam format can be unsettling, there was general agreement that staff should be supporting students to understand what was to be expected. There was an openness for a more nuanced conversation in partnership with students about assessment practice, even a more formal and routine justification of those practices from Schools. However there was a very firm view that assessment style and exam format must be a pedagogically-informed decision taken by Directors of Teaching and Learning, Boards of Studies, Exam Boards, and Course Organisers within Schools. Some disciplines may well wish to abandon in-person exams, but in-person exams may suit other disciplines. It was noted that 'in-person' did not automatically equate to 'closed-book'.
- The paper focused on uncertainty and anxiety. Anxiety around exam format however was conflated with anxiety around high-stakes final assessments. The solution to the problem of uncertainty was not to make further changes, but to commit to assessment style early to allow good communication and systems to be put in place.
- In relation to the paper's three recommendations:
 - It was not clear what was being asked in paragraph 13 given that there was no formal sense in which Schools supported Special Circumstances applications or otherwise. Insofar as Student Support Teams guided students through the process, this would continue.
 - Senate members questioned the value of the recommendation in paragraph 12. It was not clear that there would sufficient data available to conduct a thorough review, and there would certainly not be sufficient time to implement changes in time for the April / May 2023 exam diet.
 - Senate members firmly rejected the recommendation in paragraph 11. In-person exams offered equity of exam experience: not all students had a home environment with a stable internet connection and conducive study space. There had been endless problems around scan and upload and late submission, which would not be an issue in an in-person setting. Integrity of assessment was the most important issue. The University had knowingly accepted a compromise on this during the COVID-19 emergency. However, that emergency was now over and it was unacceptable to retain that compromise. In-person exams provided confidence that the person credited with the work was doing the work. Online exams provided no such confidence. There was ample evidence that any suggestion of such confidence was misplaced (formally escalated cases of misconduct massively under-represented the real scale of the problem). Assessments, particular at Honours level, were needed for integrity.

Senate Education Committee agreed that:

- While it was appropriate for the Committee to take a view on the matters discussed in the paper, it would not be possible for the Committee to direct Schools in relation to Semester 1 and 2 2022/23 exam format at this stage.
- As recognised in the paper, it was now too late to make any changes to the December 2022 exam diet. The focus would need to be on providing students with appropriate exam support.
- Where students had already been told what the format of their exams would be in the summer 2022/23 diet, it was unlikely to be possible to make further changes. Changes were likely to result in confusion and further unease. Furthermore, those areas that had chosen to use in-person exams in 2022/23 had generally done so because relevant issues had been carefully considered and it had been determined that in-person was the most appropriate format for the exam.
- Changes were more likely to be possible in those areas where students had not already been told explicitly about the format of their exams. (The EUSA Vice-President Education noted however that, even where Schools had communicated with students about exam format, many remained unaware of the arrangements that had been put in place. In addition, the University had been able to pivot very quickly during the pandemic demonstrating that change, even at a late stage, was possible.)
- Arrangements for the August 2023 resit diet had not yet been finalised and this matter needed to be addressed in advance of the January meetings of Exam Boards. There was thought to be strong support for moving towards a resit diet that was primarily online or conducted by means of alternative assessment. However, some in-person resits were likely to be required to satisfy the requirements of some professional or accrediting bodies.
- A review of the December 2022 exam diet would be conducted, although it was recognised that the suggested timing for the review of February 2023 might prove challenging.

Action:

- 1) Secretary to arrange a meeting to discuss the August 2023 resit diet.
- 2) Secretary to draft a communication to be sent to all Schools on behalf of the Vice-Principal Students highlighting the concerns raised in the paper; asking them to engage in open and detailed discussion with their students about 2022/23 exam format; and requesting that they ensure that students were adequately supported to undertake these assessments.
- 3) Review of December 2022 exam diet to be conducted early in 2023.

4.2 Futures for our Teaching Spaces: Principles and Visions for Connecting Space to the Curriculum

The paper's authors, Sian Bayne and Helen-Rose Wood, noted that the University needed to do further work on the relationship between space and the curriculum to understand how physical environments supported pedagogy, and vice-versa. Significant investment in the Learning and Teaching estate was planned in the next five years and it was hoped that the ideas outlined in the paper could influence the development plans.

The paper aimed to take account not only of internal aspirations, for example around the student experience and Curriculum Transformation, but also to factor in issues around

sustainability, planetary health and a desire to create architectures of enduring value to the world.

The Committee strongly endorsed the paper and made the following points:

- The focus on belonging was particularly welcome, and the importance to the student experience of providing students with high quality social spaces was noted.
- There would be value in looking again at the layout of teaching spaces (for example reducing the numbers of desks in rooms) to ensure that these could be used flexibly.
- While it was important to think strategically and ambitiously about our estate, it was also important to ensure that we were being realistic and were not over-promising.

Senate members provided the following comments on the paper through the Senate representatives on the Committee:

- There was no objection to the proposals outlined in the paper per se.
- There was a query about the value of resourcing outdoor teaching spaces given that core undergraduate teaching in Edinburgh is concentrated in Autumn, Winter and Early Spring.
- It was important to prioritize and get the basics right first: adequate core teaching spaces; lectures theatres of appropriate capacity; computer labs with the correct specialist software; lockers and desks for postgraduate students; and office space for staff.
- While the idea of moving away from 'locking down' University buildings was supported, there was uncertainty about a 'museum project' being the correct approach. "Authentic and inviting public programming" was considered key in relation to this.
- How did we envisage our student composition changing under Curriculum Transformation, and how was this informing Estates' discussions?

It was agreed that the Committee's comments and those of Senate members would be fed back to Estates Committee by Helen-Rose Wood.

4.3 Planning for the Future of Assessment and Misconduct

The author of the paper, Sian Bayne, introduced the paper and noted that it argued for:

- Greater awareness of new technologies and the need to make positive changes to assessment practices in response.
- A wider conversation within the University about the use of Turnitin.

The Committee had received feedback on the paper from the three College Academic Misconduct Officers (CAMOs):

- They recognised the threat to the University's assessment practices posed by essay mills and AI tools, and saw assessment re-design as an opportunity to both produce better assessments and reduce assessment vulnerabilities.
- However, in relation to Turnitin, while the imperfections of plagiarism detection systems were recognised, the CAMOs did not consider there to be justification at the current time for not using them for assessments involving written work that were considered to have plagiarism vulnerability. The majority of serious academic misconduct cases currently

considered by the University were flagged through Turnitin, and it was difficult to see how most would be noticed without it.

The Committee endorsed the analysis set out in the paper, and expressed a desire to ensure that there was not a culture of distrust around our assessment practices. It was noted that the ideas within the paper linked well with the recently introduced Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities. The benefits of setting fewer, higher-quality assessments and of using programme-level as opposed to course-level assessment were recognised. It was noted that it would be important to take the needs of calculation-based courses into account when considering the future of assessment.

4.4 Senate Committees' Internal Effectiveness Review 2021/22

The paper provided the Committee with analysis and potential actions drawn from the responses received to the light-touch internal Senate Standing Committees' Effectiveness Review conducted over the summer 2022.

Members did not have any comments to make during the meeting, but noted that they could follow-up with the Committee Secretary after the meeting if they wished.

Senate members noted that point 11 of the paper, which stated that "No comments were received from Senate" was not wholly accurate. While Senate did not have space to discuss this paper at their October 2022 meeting under the paper heading, it was referenced elsewhere in the meeting that Senate recognised the need to improve BAME and student representation in the Senate Standing Committees.

5. Standing Items

5.1 Curriculum Transformation Update

Jon Turner introduced this paper, which provided an update on progress with the development of a proposed curriculum framework for consideration via the appropriate University governance channels, including Senate and other groups, in early 2023.

Appendix 1 provided information about progress with the main elements of the programme, namely development of the Edinburgh Student Vision, Curriculum Design Principles and Programme Archetypes. A second iteration of the Undergraduate Programme Archetypes was presented and members noted that at least one further iteration would be needed before the end of the Semester. Appendix 2 provided a first pass at articulating some of the rules and guidance for how the Curriculum Framework should be applied and used.

Members discussed the following:

- The Vision and Principles were considered to contain many excellent ideas.
- Concerns were expressed about whether the University was in a position to manage another large-scale change project at the current time given the level of appetite amongst staff for further change in the context of the People and Money implementation.
- It was recognised that there were questions amongst staff around 'what problem the University was trying to fix' with the Curriculum Transformation Programme. However, members noted that feedback showed that students wanted an interdisciplinary curriculum that equipped them both to survive and thrive in an uncertain world. Some

aspects of the current curriculum structures and processes inhibited them and students and many staff were looking for change.

- Members agreed that there was a strong case for running some well-funded and well-supported pilot courses, building on existing good practice, as a starting point. These could incorporate innovative assessment, and the Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance was keen to work with anyone who would appreciate support in this area.

In response to members' comments, the paper's authors noted that a co-creation approach was being adopted to ensure that all views were taken into account, and that the project Board would be able to consider adjusting timescales where needed. Learning from other change projects would inform the way in which this Programme was taken forward. It was also noted that additional comments on the paper after the meeting would be welcomed by the authors.

5.2 Student Experience Update

The paper was presented by the Deputy Secretary, Students. A minor correction to point 10 of the paper was noted: the School of Economics had rolled the new Student Support Model out to students in years 1 to 3, not to all years as stated. Feedback at this stage was positive.

6. For Approval

6.1 National Student Survey 2023 – Outcome of Office for Students Review and Optional Questions

The paper confirmed the outcome of the Office for Students (OfS) review of the NSS and the resultant changes to the survey which would be in place for 2023. It also presented the proposed optional questions specifically for students at the University of Edinburgh (Banks 9 and 11).

Senate members flagged concerns about some of the wording of the core NSS questions, but it was noted that the University did not have any control over these questions. Senate members also requested that the University consider asking questions from Banks 2, 7, 10 and 17.

The Committee noted that only two banks of questions could be selected and agreed to the proposal that Banks 9 and 11 be selected on the basis that these questions had been asked of students previously and would allow data to be compared year on year.

7. For Information / Noting

7.1 Learn Ultra

7.1.1 Learn Ultra Upgrade

7.1.2 Learn Ultra Early Adopter Programme

The Committee was advised that the Learn Ultra upgrade was underway and progressing on time and on budget. Most of the existing tools remained in the new system, and the main changes were therefore to navigation.

The paper indicated that the Early Adopter Programme was also progressing well and feedback was positive. Early Adopters were providing information about what it would be most helpful to include in the user support package.

The Committee made the following comments:

- Members had heard very positive feedback about the new system and were grateful for the work that had been done. The improvements to the appearance of the home page in the new system were welcomed.
- While most of the tools previously used by members were still available in the new system, some were not, and the absence of these was causing a degree of concern. Members were reassured that there were ongoing conversations with Schools about what needed to be mapped across. Schools were encouraged to report anything that was missing from the new system. Members requested clear and timely communication from the Learn Ultra team about any features of the old system which were not going to be mapped across.
- In relation to the 'Resource Implications' sections of both papers, members noted that the workload associated with the migration to the new system was perhaps underestimated. In addition to the two hours of training Course Organisers would need to learn the new interface, time would be required to rebuild courses in the new system. In addition, there was likely to be a time commitment for learning technologists and Teaching Office staff.

Senate members provided the following feedback on the papers:

- There was a question around why the University was committing to this platform transformation ahead of a review of digital estates and learning technology within the Curriculum Transformation Programme and elsewhere. How did this major change project align with others?
- Questions were raised about the resource implications described in the paper – the 2 hours of training time quoted was considered to be a significant underestimate. It was further noted that training should be offered in good time: August was too late.
- More emphasis needed to be placed on the risks of ignoring student and staff feedback (17d) and continuity of online learning (17e).
- There were specific questions relating to:
 - Governance: when and how many Learn Ultra project board meetings were scheduled to take place throughout stage 2 (Enabling Learn Ultra Courses)?
 - Resource implications:
 - Did the assumption (2 hours training required) imply learning technologists would be responsible for migrating existing course content into Learn Ultra courses? Or was it expected that course leaders would spend two hours learning the new interface and then build courses themselves? (Note: Sharepoint indicated that courses could not be exported directly without producing a number of error messages).
 - Could there be clarity around the support that would be provided to course teams to handle this aspect of the migration to Learn Ultra?
 - Communication:

- Had this happened? The writer of the question was not aware of any engagement sessions within their area for the purpose of gathering requirements. Who would be asked to feed into discussions and when / how?
- When was an implementation plan expected to be finalised and communicated to staff?

The Assistant Principal Online and Open Learning responded to Senate members' questions directly following the meeting.

Philippa Ward
Academic Services
30 November 2022