

Minutes of the meeting of Senate Education Committee held on 9 March 2023 in the Argyle House Boardroom and via Microsoft Teams

1. Attendance

Present	Position
Colm Harmon	Vice Principal, Students (Convener)
Tina Harrison	Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance (Vice-Convener)
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)
Sarah Henderson	Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching, PGT)
Paddy Hadoke	Representative of CMVM (Postgraduate Research)
Jo Shaw	Head of School, CAHSS
Mike Shipston	Head of Deanery, CMVM
Melissa Highton	Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Division of Information Services; Assistant Principal (Online and Open Learning)
Velda McCune	Representing Director of Institute for Academic Development
Laura Cattell	Representing Student Recruitment and Admissions
Tom Ward	Director of Academic Services
Sian Bayne	Assistant Principal Digital Education
Lucy Evans	Deputy Secretary, Students
Marianne Brown	Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling
Richard Gratwick	Senate Representative
Callum Paterson	EUSA Academic Engagement Coordinator
Mary Brennan	Senate Representative
Stuart Fitzpatrick	Academic Services
In Attendance	
Teresa Ironside	Director of Data Science Education
Jon Turner	Director of Institute for Academic Development (Curriculum Transformation Lead)
Amanda Percy	Curriculum Transformation
Apologies	
Shelagh Green	Director for Careers & Employability
Susan Morrow	Senate Representative
Jamie Davies	Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching, UG)

2. Minutes of Meeting held on 19 January 2023

2.1 The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2023. All 'matters arising' were considered later in the agenda. Members noted a typographical error in the minutes which would be amended prior to publication.

3. Matters Arising

- Evaluation of December 2022 Examination Diet

The Director of Academic Services spoke to the item. At the Committee's November 2022 meeting, it had agreed that an evaluation of the December examination diet would be undertaken in order to inform future examination arrangements, in the context of a return in part to in person examinations. It was noted that data gathering was underway. Student achievement on courses would be examined, noticeable patterns between on campus and online examinations would be explored, as well as any available qualitative data on whether students felt supported and prepared for the examinations. It was noted that there was complexities in joining up the available data. Members of the Committee suggested that the evaluation also consider data regarding absenteeism from examinations.

- Externally facilitated review of Senate and its Committees

The Director of Academic Services spoke to the item. Since the Committee's last meeting, Advance HE had run a survey of Senate Committee members, and the response rates to this had been encouraging. Academic Services were in the process of arranging a focus group of Committee members in the hope that this would take place in the latter part of March or early April.

4. Convener's Comments

The Convener recorded a vote of thanks to Tom Ward, Director of Academic Services. Mr Ward was leaving the University at the end of March. The Convener thanked Mr Ward for his work, knowledge and input, not only in the course of the work of Senate Education Committee and its predecessors, but across the wider University over a long number of years. The Convener noted that Mr Ward's departure would place additional pressure on Academic Services during a transitional period.

The Convener and the Committee extended congratulations to Professor Tina Harrison, who had accepted the new role of Deputy Vice Principal Students (Enhancement). Professor Harrison had previously been Assistant Principal (Academic Standards and Quality Assurance).

Professor Harrison provided a brief update in relation to the evolving matter of Generative AI and its implications for assessment within a Higher Education context. She has prepared guidance on the issue with input from colleagues. She noted that both students and staff, as well as the wider public, had been keen to know the University's position on generative AI. The guidance currently noted that there was still the expectation that students' assessment should be based on their own original work, that the University had procedures in place for dealing with matters of academic misconduct, and that there are limitations to the current state of generative AI. She noted that the guidance reflected the immediate position of the University, and that there were longer term implications for assessment practices and assessment development in light of the growth of generative AI more generally. Ongoing conversations with both students and staff about the use of AI were encouraged. The Committee also noted that there were discussions within the University and the broader HE sector regarding Turnitin's AI writing detection system developments.

Lastly, The Director of Academic Services noted that each May, the Conveners of the Senate Committees provided an annual report to the University Senate on their operation and their priorities for the coming Academic Year. The Committee would be invited to suggest their priorities for the upcoming year in due course.

Action – Director of Academic Services to contact Committee members and invite input.

5. For Approval

5.1 Review of Lecture Recording Policy

Melissa Highton presented the paper, which recommended minor changes to the Policy. The paper had been subject to consultation, and Melissa reported that the UCU representative on the task group was content for the proposed changes to go ahead.

The paper proposed the shortening of the retention period for recorded lectures to 18 months. In order to better align with the Academic Year, there would be a single deletion activity each October following the conclusion of the prior Academic Year.

Melissa confirmed that Course Organisers could opt out of the scheduled deletion, for example if recorded lectures were used for courses to be taken in multiple years, or if students might want to revisit content during revision in Research Methods courses.

The Committee approved the minor changes to the Lecture Recording Policy as set out in the paper.

5.2 Revised Proposals for membership and remit of Assessment and Feedback-related groups

The Director of Academic Services spoke to the paper. At its last meeting, the Committee had been supportive of the establishment of these groups, subject to refining the membership and remit. These were task groups which would report to the Standing Committees with recommendations. The Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee and the Senate Quality Assurance Committee had also considered this paper and had been content with the membership of the second of the two groups, subject to some comments. The paper proposed amendments to the remits and memberships of the groups to take account of this feedback from the three Committees.

Members of the Committee noted that it would be preferential to have members of Estates be party to discussions where relevant, although it was not necessary for them to be formal members of these groups at this point in time. It was noted that previously, the Space Strategy Group would have fed into such discussions and decisions, but this Committee was no longer operational.

The Committee approved the membership and remit as set out in the paper.

Actions:

- 1) **Once operational, Assessment and Feedback groups to seek input from Estates where relevant**
- 2) **Lucy Evans to discuss with Provost and Vice Principal Students whether the University should consider a replacement for the Space Strategy Committee**
- 3) **Academic Services to proceed with setting up the two Assessment and Feedback Groups**

5.3 Schedule of Review for policies, regulation and guidance

The Director of Academic Services presented the paper. He noted that Academic Services' schedules of reviews for the Senate Committees' policies and procedures had been affected by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and this proposed new schedule for cyclical reviews aimed to eliminate the backlog which had built up as a result of departmental resources being shifted to deal with other issues arising from the pandemic.

The Committee were supportive of the proposed approach to the schedule for reviews. It noted that it would be useful for the University, when capacity allowed, to conduct a large scale fundamental review of existing policies and procedures, with a view to presenting this information in a more coherent way.

The Committee approved the proposals as outlined in the paper, although it recognised that it may be necessary to adjust some elements of the schedule once the implications of the Curriculum Transformation Programme for academic policies and regulations are clearer. The Committee also suggested categorising the Support for Study Policy as student support rather than casework, and scheduling an interim review of the updated Academic and Pastoral Support Policy for 2023-24 or 2024-25.

Action: Academic Services will take forward reviews following the schedule outlined in the paper, taking account of the Committee's comments.

6. For Discussion

6.1 Curriculum Transformation Update

Dr Jon Turner introduced the paper on the Curriculum Transformation Project (CTP), and updated the Committee on discussions held at Senate on 8 February 2023. Members of the committee raised questions about how CTP intended to engage with Schools and Colleges in the coming months, and also highlighted difficulties in engaging during this period given the UCU industrial action.

There was also discussion around the value of engagement at a College level as well as a School level. The Committee noted that the formality of approach would change as the project moved away from a broader dialogue into more focussed discussions with Schools about specific proposals for the curriculum framework and about how Schools might develop their programmes in response to CTP.

There was broad agreement from the Committee that it would be helpful for CTP to clarify what Schools could proceed with in terms of developing their own programmes in the meantime.

Action: Project Team to continue to engage with Schools and Colleges, and clarify possibilities for development that could be undertaken in the immediate future.

6.2 Student Experience Update - Closed

The Deputy Secretary (Students) introduced the paper. The Pulse Survey undertaken in December 2022 had highlighted that there had been improvement in student satisfaction in relation to the questions on belonging and experience, and teaching and learning, but that satisfaction with student services remained relatively low. The committee noted that the portal containing the survey data allowed for more granular analysis.

There was also interesting feedback from students around the matter of study space, which was clearly an area of concern amongst respondents. The Committee agreed that it would be beneficial for the appropriate University group have a strategic discussion on the University's approach to study space.

Action: Deputy Secretary (Students) to ascertain the appropriate University Committee or group to consider the University's strategic approach to study space.

6.3 Strategies to optimise postgraduate research student numbers at the University of Edinburgh - Closed

Professor Maciocia presented the paper. The committee noted that the paper covered a range of topics, including remote and distance learning PhDs, part-time study in doctoral education, and the length of the prescribed period for funding.

The Committee had a broad discussion around student well-being, stipends, study space for postgraduate research (PGR) students, and the purpose of PhD programmes to prepare PGR students for a broad range of careers rather than solely a career in academia. The committee acknowledged that there were many dimensions to consider.

Regarding remote and distance learning PhD programmes, the committee discussed various models, including the provision for existing students to transfer to a distance PhD, but external applicants not having this route open to them. The committee noted that the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS) and the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine (MVM) had experience of distance PhDs and areas that were interested in expanding this aspect of their provision.

The committee also discussed the issue of part-time doctoral training and whether it was only open to UK students. There was some discussion around the challenges of

accommodating overseas cohorts, particularly with respect to visa requirements. The committee acknowledged that there was a need to provide a full range of services to support distance and remote PhD programmes, and that different types of supervision were required for these programmes. The committee also felt that distance PhDs worked better when designed for a cohort who could engage with and support each other, and do not work well for isolated individuals.

The committee also discussed issues related to widening participation, including the pipeline into PhD programmes from PGT programmes, recruitment, and the challenges or restrictions posed by asking for MSc qualifications for entrance to PhD programs. There was also acknowledgement of the importance of administrative support for PGR students, which was an area in which there was variance in practice.

The Committee agreed that CAHSS and the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine (CMVM) would continue to discuss these issues within their respective management structures. The College of Science and Engineering (CSE) had already discussed the paper within relevant management structures.

Action: CAHSS and CMVM to discuss paper within respective management structures.

6.4 Postgraduate Research Higher Education Achievement Report

The Director of Academic Services presented the paper. He noted that the University operated a Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) for taught programmes, and had done so for a long period of time. The same provision did not exist for Postgraduate Research (PGR) students

A challenge in introducing an equivalent document for PGR students was that information that individuals would perhaps expect to be included on a HEAR (such as attendance at conferences) were not centrally validated at a PGR level, and would require potentially complex workflows to facilitate. In principle, it was important that anything included on such a document be verifiable.

A Senate Researcher Experience Task Group had examined this issue in 2017, and had noted that provision of such documentation for PGR students across the sector was not consistent but was an area of growth.

The Committee confirmed its support for developing a PGR HEAR, and endorsed the next steps set out in the paper.

It noted that activities such as the Edinburgh Award could become more popular should they become more visible to students through inclusion in a PGR HEAR, and as such resourcing and capacity of these activities would need to be given consideration.

Action: College PGR Deans to create updated specification for the categories to be included within a HEAR. Once specification is available, Student Systems to quantify business analysis and development work involved in delivery of PGR HEAR, and assess availability of resources and priority compared to other potential developments.

Vice Principal (Students) to explore availability of project support.

7 Any Other Business

The Committee noted that the Student Lifecycle Group is considering options for enhancing the course enrolment process, including proposing that Schools remove from their Degree Programme Tables any optional courses that, in practice, their students are unlikely to be able to access (for example, due to quotas or timetabling issues). The Committee did not make a formal decision, but in principle was supportive of the Group taking steps to address this issue. However, it advised that the Group take a careful and nuanced approach, to ensure that it did not inadvertently encourage Schools to reduce genuine flexibility for students to access optional courses, or discourage Schools from addressing resourcing issues in order to allow them to increase quotas.

There was no other business.

Stuart Fitzpatrick
Academic Services
16 March 2023