The University of Edinburgh
Senate Education Committee

Thursday 7th November 2024, 2-5pm
Hybrid meeting: Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House
and via Microsoft Teams

1. Attendance

Present:	Position:
Professor Colm Harmon	Vice Principal, Students (Convener)
Professor Tina Harrison	Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) (Vice-Convener)
Professor Gill Aitken	Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching)
Professor Ruth Andrew	Senate Representative
Professor Sian Bayne	Assistant Principal Digital Education
Professor Laura Bradley	Representative of CAHSS (Postgraduate Research)
Professor Mary Brennan	Representative of CAHSS (Learning and Teaching)
Marianne Brown	Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling
Shelagh Green	Director for Careers and Employability
Professor Patrick Hadoke	Representative of CMVM (Postgraduate Research)
Lorna Halliday	Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching)
Professor James Hopgood	Senate Representative
Dr Lisa Kendall	Representative of CAHSS (Learning and Teaching)
Professor Linda Kirstein	Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching)
Alex Laidlaw	Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching)
Professor Jason Love	Head of School, CSE
Professor Velda McCune	Deputy Director, Institute for Academic Development
Zahid Mushtaq	PGR Student Representative
Callum Paterson	EUSA Academic Engagement and Policy Coordinator
Professor Jo Shaw	Head of School, CAHSS
Dr Tamara Trodd	Senate Representative
Dylan Walch	Vice President (Education), Students' Association
Patrick Jack	Committee Secretary, Academic Quality and Standards
Apologies:	
Dr Shane Collins	Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions
Lucy Evans	Deputy Secretary, Students
Dr Melissa Highton	Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Division of Information Services; Assistant Principal (Online and Open Learning)
Teresa Ironside	Director of Data Science Education, Bayes Centre
Nichola Kett	Head of Academic Quality and Standards
Professor Jamie Pearce	Representative of CSE (Postgraduate Research)
Professor Mike Shipston	Head of Deanery, CMVM
In attendance:	
Dr Adam Bunni	Head of Academic Policy and Regulation, Registry Services
Professor Hannah Chalmers	Co-Chair, CTP Future Skills Working Group
Lauren Harrison	Senior Project Officer (Students)

| Tara Morrison | Co-Chair, CTP Future Skills Working Group |
| Stuart Nicol | Head of eLearning Services, Educational Design and Engagement |

2. Minutes of meeting held on 12th September 2024

It was suggested that some additional context be provided regarding the discussion minuted under the Senate Representative Views sub-section within Matters Arising.

The Committee otherwise approved the minutes of the meeting held on 12th September 2024.

Action: Committee Secretary to draft relevant additional wording and consult with members prior to finalising the minutes.

3. Matters Arising

- **Generative Artificial Intelligence**

The Convener informed members that the student-facing guidance around generative artificial intelligence (AI) has been updated and published online. The Committee noted that updates were required and that a commitment has been made to maintain the guidance as a dynamic document in order to actively respond to issues as they arise. Requests for further clarification within the guidance in relation to PGR students and coursework advice regarding dissertations, as well as pushback relating to data protection, are all being taken into consideration.

The Committee discussed how best to provide feedback on the guidance, as well as mapping out from the work being led by Professor Michael Rovatsos' working group across the wider University. The Committee agreed that a formalised route to gather feedback should be created, particularly as a commitment has been made to review the guidance by the end of January 2025. While the request for a firmer position being provided at an institutional level was noted, the positives of a bottom-up approach were highlighted, particularly as innovative discussions are already taking place across the three Colleges. In the short term, the Convener suggested that if members wish to provide any comments, they should contact the Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) directly.

In terms of training resource, the Convener highlighted that there is an intent to launch a micro-course on the Edinburgh Language Models (ELM). The Institute for Academic Development (IAD) has begun to build the implications of AI into their learning and teaching support offering and will ensure that this aligns with University-level principles, exemplifying where possible. Within CAHSS, members noted that Dr Steve Loughnan has created a Teams platform regarding generative AI and teaching. This has helped secure commitment to a College-wide position on this matter, as well as developing working principles around AI.

The Assistant Principal Digital Education informed the Committee that the first workshop to support staff develop ideas around using AI innovatively within their teaching was held earlier in the month and was very well attended. The workshop generated many positive ideas around building propositions to develop apps over the course of 2024/25, however there is a

concern that there may not be adequate levels of resource to support all proposals. Members noted that a second workshop will be held on 20th November, after which a pitching session will be held in order to allocate resource to support app development.

- **Senate Education Committee Action Log**

The Convener informed members of the following updates from the Senate Education Committee (SEC) action log:

- The Convener has held productive conversations with fellow Senate Standing Committee Conveners and the Senate Task and Finish Group around remits and how to better provide triage advice to members wishing to table or query specific agenda items. All members help set committee priorities and can proactively contribute to the SEC forward agenda. The Senate Task and Finish Group noted the added value that elected Senate representatives have on Senate Standing Committees.
- Extending the Menopause Policy to students has been added to the list of policies being explored by Academic Quality and Standards.
- The Interim Director of Strategic Change has been invited to a meeting of SEC next semester to present on the workings of the University Initiatives Portfolio Board (UIPB).
- The Committee Secretary has uploaded the SEC forward agenda and action log to the SEC Members Portal. These resources are available to all members.

4. Substantive Items

4.1 Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030 and Implementation Plan

The Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) introduced the Strategy, with it being noted that earlier iterations of the document were received positively by SEC. Members were informed that the Strategy has been widely consulted upon, enabling it to be further refined and enhanced. It was explained that approval was being sought for the three broad categories detailed within the Strategy, with the implementation plan being a live working document that members are welcome to comment on in terms of any additional points that should be included. There is a role for Schools and Colleges to articulate actions they would undertake at a local level in order to address any gaps within the implementation plan.

Members were informed of some specific changes made to the Strategy, such as: the removal of the reference to curriculum for the 21st century; a greater focus on interdisciplinarity and encouraging students to explore beyond disciplinary boundaries; altering the wording around skills to increase focus on developing knowledge skills and mindsets; expanding and developing key enablers. Members were further informed that, although information such as how timetabling and student systems will support the strategy is not yet adequately captured within the Strategy, the Deputy Secretary, Students has provided reassurance that this can be worked into the Strategy once relevant project papers receive UIPB approval. The Committee noted that work would continue with relevant colleagues to build on text around career management, a new skills framework and the future need of learning and teaching spaces and how these areas could be factored into the Strategy more strategically.

Members subsequently noted the following comments:

- The Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) required the University to expedite the implementation of a new Strategy, and it would be a positive achievement to fulfil this recommendation during 2024/25.
- The relationship between the Learning and Teaching Strategy and the People Strategy could be better articulated.
- The University's current strengths in this area are not included within the Strategy's introduction. Some text to emphasise these strengths should be incorporated.
- "Student satisfaction" risks being an overloaded term. Could "outcomes" be used more broadly to capture satisfaction, outcomes and attainment?
- "Extraordinary" student experience is referenced. Could this wording be changed? Similarly, the use of "ambitious" students as a term causes concern. Adjectives and adverbs should be reviewed to ensure that EDI and inclusive teaching environments are adequately captured.
- "Teaching staff" ought to be changed to "staff contributing to teaching". While there is a strong training framework for student advisors, the same is required for teaching administration staff.
- While there is an emphasis on research-led teaching, staff who are not paid to provide teaching should be considered. Professional development within the action plan should reference teaching for tutors and demonstrators.
- It is noted that this vocabulary is used in marketing material and Strategy 2030. It was suggested that the bullet points that use Strategy 2030 wording should be removed as they were written in a different context.
- There is a challenge in how activity relating to skills development translates into mapping to support student transitions into employment. It is a missed opportunity if this is not included within the Strategy. There should be a clearer link between careers and the student support ecosystem.
- In terms of challenge-based learning, could this be described as, "within and across" disciplines?
- The Assistant Principal Digital Education will provide wording around various delivery modes for potential inclusion within the digital learning environments section.
- The implementation plan places a high expectation on Schools at a time where they are feeling strain. However, many actions within the plan are already being implemented. Could the implementation plan be reframed to reflect activity that is already underway?
- There is a high focus on courses within the implementation plan. The wider student lifecycle should also be taken into consideration.
- It should be taken into consideration that points which are relevant to Schools also apply to the Edinburgh Futures Institute.

The Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) thanked members for their valuable feedback. It was suggested to members that details within the implementation plan continue to be refined with Schools and that the high-level three categories within the Strategy move forward. Members noted that Communications and Marketing are ready to begin developing a communication plan for the Strategy, once approved.

The Convener highlighted that there was no fundamental disagreement from the Committee towards the Strategy. The Committee agreed that the Strategy undergo a final revision of relevant sections, with final approval being subject to electronic consultation with members.

Action: The Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) to lead on revising the Strategy prior to final consultation with members electronically.

4.2   National Student Survey (NSS) 2025 Optional Questions

The Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling presented the paper, informing members that, while the core NSS questionnaire is composed of set questions, the University is permitted to choose two additional banks of questions. The Committee was informed that there is no scope to alter the wording of the question banks. Members were informed that approval was being sought to approve the proposed question banks from 2025 to 2027.

While considering the suitability of various question banks, the Committee discussed the University's capability to gather useful data via alternative surveys and benchmarks such as the Graduate Outcomes survey and pre-graduation surveys. A rotational approach to using different question banks year-on-year was also considered, however this approach was countered with the benefits of using repeat question banks to gain a better longitudinal understanding of some issues, particularly as some trends are slow to emerge. The use of question banks where the University envisages it would perform well or vice versa was also discussed, as was the opportunity to gather more baseline data which could feed into the Curriculum Transformation Project (CTP) and the ongoing evaluation of the student support model. Student voice was suggested as a proposed option via bank 12, however it was noted that the University can utilise alternative approaches to explore this such as student support evaluation.

The Convener noted the support for bank 9 to be retained for 2025 in order to maintain continuity. The Convener further noted that it would be helpful to have a greater understanding of which question banks are being chosen by fellow Russell Group institutions, as well as revisiting whether there is any scope to compile optional questions internally. The Committee approved bank 9 and bank 15 for use in 2025 and agreed that further discussion should take place at SEC prior to agreeing on the question banks for 2026 and 2027.

Action: The Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling to check if there is scope to compile optional questions internally.

4.3   Skills for Success Framework

The Director for Careers and Employability led in presenting the paper, proposing to update the existing Graduate Attributes Framework with a new Skills for Success Framework. Members were informed that engagement with the existing framework is varied across the institution and has become dated since its inception. A range of drivers have contributed to the growth in the case for embedding and articulating skills over the last decade, such as the advent of new global challenges and the growing use of AI across society.

Members were informed that transitioning towards a skills-first recruitment model would help ensure that the University clearly articulates the skills our students develop, supporting future career mobility. It was highlighted that CTP provides a good opportunity to revisit this framework alongside curriculum design, as well as how skills can be identified within an EDI context. The Committee was further informed that testing of the new framework is ongoing with stakeholders and that confidence has been taken from benchmarking exercises that the new framework is broadly fit for purpose.

During discussion, members raised the following comments:

- Concern was noted regarding the wording of skills and attributes. How certain skills are labelled risks misinterpretation. Utilising skills does not capture the intellectual attributes and rigour of higher education study. This could be expanded to imply the depth of personal agency beyond skills terminology.
- Skills were explored by Nous Consultancy within the context of the Edinburgh Student Vision, particularly around how various forms of assessment can be mapped across to this work. Staff should have opportunities to discuss purposeful inquiry with students.
- Could 'intercultural competence' perhaps replace 'cultural sensitivity'? This would align with the broad diversity of the University's student population.
- Concern was raised around the topic of resilience and how it is framed with the emphasis on the individual and the pressures they face.
- How this framework is incorporated within the wider programme of cultural change to frame and embed these attributes within courses is important.
- Students being able to better articulate their skills and how they can be applied in specific jobs is highly positive.
- Making the wording of attributes overly academic may create some confusion for students when translating their skills to prospective employers.
- The pictured icons within the new Framework could be enhanced.

The Committee was informed that discussions over the past number of years had consistently highlighted difference of opinion around interpretations of terminology. However, members noted that there is a need to shift discussion away from this towards the impact on learning and teaching and the broader student experience in line with the opportunity afforded by CTP being a vehicle of support to more meaningfully engage with capturing skills development. Ongoing work via Nous Consultancy will contribute to refining the use of skills terminology.

The Committee noted that it endorses the direction of travel of this work.

4.4 Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC): Enhancement Themes and Priorities 2024/25

The Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) presented the areas for enhancement of the student experience identified by SQAC. Members noted that the paper summarises areas for development which have arisen via QA processes such as annual quality reporting and internal periodic reviews. Members noted that areas identified for further enhancement and development have been remitted to relevant key areas to take forward. Areas of ongoing focus include: student support and evaluating the cohort lead role; assessment and feedback; student voice and partnership, particularly closing the student voice feedback loop; EDI and

closing awarding gaps; PGR, notably concerns around PhD timelines; tutors and demonstrators.

Members noted that the Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC) is also exploring postgraduate student experience and the Convener of APRC will follow up with the Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) to discuss this further. Concern was noted regarding the robustness of the actions relating to award gap and it was suggested that the Student Lifecycle Management Group (SLMG) could undertake relevant enhancement work. Members noted that the Student Data Monitoring task group is analysing relevant data relation to the award gap, as well a review of what actions have worked well and not so successfully at other institutions.

4.5 Approach to Reassessment

The Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) introduced the paper, asking the Committee to consider the approach to reassessment on courses at the University, and potential options which may reduce the dependency on the August diet for reassessment. Members noted that there has been an upturn in the number of exams being used in the August resit diet. However, demand on student time over the summer has increased considerably, such as via internship opportunities, and there are considerable travel and accommodation costs for students to return to Edinburgh during August.

It was made clear to members that it is not the intention to undermine standards by eradicating assessment or being overly prescriptive around whether exams should be held as a form of assessment, rather the aim is to commence consulting on whether reassessments can be operated differently, such as not in-person, or moved to different points in the academic year. Members noted that 51% of students were absent from the previous round of August exam sittings which is causing systematic issues with progression management. A range of alternative options were presented within the paper, with it being noted that they were not mutually exclusive and that options may be received differently across Schools.

Members raised the following comments:

- Consultation with Schools in terms of their flexibility to implement potential options is critical.
- Some Schools require examinations and summer resit arrangements as part of their accreditation agreements with partner organisations and PSRBs. Some disciplines require in-person assessment in order to examine competency.
- Summer placements and intercalated years need be taken into consideration within CMVM.
- It is important to better understand what the University can do to help reduce failure rates at the first sitting in order to reduce the number of students requiring resits. Could failure rates and exceptional circumstance case numbers be addressed separately from the use of exams?
- Resits and null sits should be more clearly distinguished from one another. It would be helpful to extract from available data what proportion of exams in the resit diet are first sittings due to exceptional circumstances.

- There is a narrative that prioritises the use of exams to prevent misconduct over the pedagogic drivers of exams and alternative forms of assessment. Online examinations led to rises in grade inflation and collusion in some areas. However, research has highlighted that the use of exams does not prevent misconduct.
- It is important to better understand staff perceptions to assessment format within the context of the impact of AI.
- Courses containing exams also often incorporate other forms of assessment.
- There is a lack of acknowledgement of staff experience within the paper and key dates should be considered across the full academic calendar.
- CTP provides an opportunity for transition around assessment practice and a resulting positive impact on student learning experiences.
- Many current issues relate to the inconsistencies around how exam boards are approached across the University. A uniform approach may be challenging to implement, particularly for joint programme students, and could open up complex progression cases. Moving forward, this work should be linked to the exam board review.
- The Overseas Examination Service (OES) option has widespread support within CSE, as does programme-level assessment. However, introducing the OES would be problematic as it would not be available in all locations, and it would still require students to travel.
- Embedding the creative use of oral assessments could be more mainstreamed and managed digitally to help assuage existing challenges. It can however be challenging to provide adjustments for oral assessment.
- The University's regulations offer compatibility to introduce changes to resit assessment, such as making them pass/fail.

The Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) highlighted the importance of Colleges in providing a steer on the pedagogical value of assessment via in-person examinations. While it is agreed that academics should be responsible for assessment format, it is not unreasonable for the University to set guideline parameters around this. There is widespread practice across the higher education sector in determining the rationale of use of exams during course and programme approval processes.

Members noted the intention to provide Colleges with time and space to explore this with their Schools and to identify the level of appetite and flexibility to introduce specific adjustments. College Education Committees were encouraged to discuss this matter further. The Committee further noted that Schools would be welcome to pilot any of the ideas set out in paper and are encouraged to discuss any concerns or implications relating to policy and regulations with Academic Quality and Standards colleagues.

The Committee agreed that this is an important issue that requires further discussion. The Convener highlighted that there would be value in clarifying which options are currently possible and the potential impact on Schools, as well debating this matter more widely at Senate.

The Committee agreed to mandate that work continues on this matter, noting that discussions in Colleges and Schools should take place over the remainder of the academic

year prior to a refined paper which better reflects College views towards proposed options returning to SEC for further discussion. This could additionally serve as a precursor to a wider policy review during 2025/26. Representatives from Colleges and Senate were encouraged to submit any further comments directly to The Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement).

4.6   Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) – Business School PGT Social Committee Representative

The Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) informed members that the HEAR Recommendation Panel recommended that SEC Senate Education reject this proposed activity and to approve the Panel's recommendation for the Business School to consider adopting the Community Champions model.

The Committee endorsed the recommendation of the HEAR Recommendation Panel. It was noted that the Community Champions model would require review should it be rolled out more widely across the University.

5. Items for Information / Noting

5.1   Assessment and Feedback Priorities and Principles – Updated Version

The Committee noted that work to revise the Assessment and Feedback Priorities and Principles had been taken forward in consultation with College Deans. Members were informed that the revised version was subsequently approved via Convener's Action and circulated to College colleagues for wider dissemination. Members further noted that Priorities and Principles are not currently categorised as policy, however this will be considered when the document is next reviewed in 2025/26.

5.2   Online Courses for Learn

Members noted that two proposed new student courses to be added to Learn, entitled *Consent on Campus* and *Gender & Sexuality*, had received approval via Convener's Action.

5.3   External Quality Review Oversight Group Update

The Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) provided the Committee with an update from the External Quality Review Oversight Group's (EQROG) meeting of 1 October 2024. Members received a summary of the priorities for 2024/25 relating to the University's External Quality Review Action Plan and noted the importance of maintaining momentum across these priority areas between now and the next Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER).

5.4   Curriculum Transformation

The Convener provided members with an update from the Curriculum Transformation Programme Lead. The update covered developments relating to the refresh of the CTP Board to enhance focus on governance and strategy, and the establishment of a CTP Implementation Group to have oversight of the management and coordination of the

different elements of CTP. Members noted that the CTP Implementation Group will meet on a monthly basis and its initial meetings will focus on reviewing the status of CTP's six project strands, ensuring that they continue to align with other major projects within the University.

Members were informed that the results of market sensitivity testing with potential applicants and current students, alongside the results of previous consultation work, to prepare an updated version of the Edinburgh Student Vision for consideration by Senate at its meeting in December.

Work is being undertaken to set up College CTP Implementation Groups, membership of the CTP External Accreditation Group has been refreshed and a new Collaborative Provision Group has been created. It was noted that there had been challenges in recruiting to a College Implementation Board within one of the Colleges. The Convener noted this and will explore whether recruitment can be promoted within relevant areas.

Action: Committee Secretary to circulate written update to members.
Action: Committee Secretary to schedule a progress report on the postgraduate taught element of CTP for the next meeting of SEC in February 2025.

6. Any Other Business

There were no items of any other business raised by members.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 27th February 2025, 2-5pm. This will be a hybrid meeting, taking place in the Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House and via Microsoft Teams.