THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

Senatus Academicus

Wednesday 5 February 2025, 1:10-4pm
Main Lecture Theatre, Swann Building, Kings Buildings / Microsoft Teams

Confirmed Minute

Attendees: Peter Adkins, Gill Aitken, Sham Alhousiki, James Andrew, Ruth Andrew, Jonathan Ansell, Mohammad Amir Anwar, David Argyle, Kate Ash-Irisarri, Kasia Banas, Michael Barany, Christine Bell, Matthew Bell, Shereen Benjamin, Philip Best, Ayesha Bibi, Richard Blythe, Barry Bradford, Laura Bradley, Mary Brennan, Paul Brennan, Aidan Brown, Tom Bruce, Mette Cameron, Carol Campbell, Tony Carbery, Jeremy Carrette, Seongsook Choi, Neil Chue Hong, Aurora Constantin, Sam Coombes, Martin Corley, Jeremy Crang, Juan Cruz, Jo Danbolt, Kirsty Day, Afshan Dean, Luigi Del Debbio, Jean-Christophe Denis, Chris Dent, Charlotte Desvages, John Devaney, Simone Dimartino, Kevin Donovan, Julia Dorin, Leonidas Doumas, Claire Duncanson, Susan Dunnett, Tosin Durodola, Olivia Eadie, Andrea English, Mark Evans, Omolabake Fakunle, Tonks Fawcett, Valentina Ferlito, Sue Fletcher-Watson, Emily Ford-Halliday, Chris French, Vashti Galpin, Marc Geddes, Akrit Ghimire, Antonis Giannopoulos, Stuart Gilfillan, Laura Glendinning, Benjamin Goddard, Iain Gordon, Kim Graham, Liz Grant, Richard Gratwick, Ankita Gupta, Patrick Hadoke, Rachel Happer, Colm Harmon, Tina Harrison, Helen Hastie, David Hay, Dora Herndon, Melissa Highton, Jane Hislop, Willem Hollmann, James Hopgood, Jenny Hoy, David Ingram, Julie Jacko, Max Jaede, Jakov Jandric, Amanda Jarvis, Aarrnesh Kapoor, Jim Kaufman, Tobias Kelly, Meryl Kenny, George Kinnear, Linda Kirstein, David Kluth, Andy Law, Steff Lewis, Dawn Livingstone, Jason Love, Sophia Lycouris, Upasana Mandhata, Guangzhao Mao, Peter Mathieson, Sarah McAllister, Hayley McCormack, Mike McGrew, Gavin McLachlan, Avery Meiksin, Kyleigh Melville, Tijana Mitic, Meera Mokashi, Steven Morley, Ben Morse, Chris Mowat, Simon Mudd, Rachel Muers, Zahid Mushtaq, Rupert Nash, Pau Navarro, Bryne Ngwenya, Steven O'Hagan, Richard Oosterhoff, Diana Paton, Cheryl Patrick, Jamie Pearce, Josephine Pemberton, Nick Polydorides, Sarah Prescott, Jon Pridham, David Quinn, John Rappa, Tianyi Ren, Ricardo Ribeiro Ferreira, Ken Rice, Simon Riley, Aryelly Rodriguez Carbonell, Brodie Runciman, Enrique Sanchez-Molano, Giulio Santori, Eberhard Sauer, Bernd Schroers, Pablo Schyfter Camacho, David Smith, Sean Smith, Stewart Smith, Antonella Sorace, Perdita Stevens, Gavin Sullivan, Emily Taylor, Jessica Thackeray, Alex Thomson, Sally Till, Tamara Trodd, Niki Vermeulen, Natasha Vijendren, Julia Voigt, Dylan Walch, Patrick Walsh, Lena Wanggren, Michele Weiland, Charles West, Iain Wright, Benjamin Wynne, Ingrid Young.

In attendance: Nina Bremner, Lisa Dawson, Sinéad Docherty, Arlene Duffin, Lucy Evans, Richard Kenway, Nichola Kett, Dean Pateman, Fraser Rudge (Clerk) Michael Rovatsos.

Apologies: Marialuisa Aliotta, Niall Anderson, Liz Baggs, Christina Boswell, Catherine Bovill, Julian Bradfield, Celine Caquineau, Leigh Chalmers, Kevin Collins, Hannah Crocombe, Kate Davison, Kevin Dhaliwal, Sameer Dhumale, Izzy Drago Ferrante, Murray Earle, Ruth Elliott, Anne-Maree Farrell, Susan Farrington, Thorunn Helgason, Emma Hunter, Gavin Jack, Itamar Kastner, Barry Laird, Ewa Luger, Antony Maciocia, Cait MacPhee, Catherine Martin, John Menzies, Marc J Metzger, Lyndsay Murray, Suvankar Pal, Naraya Papilaya, Wayne Powell, Carin Runciman, Ewelina Rydzewska-Fazekas, Ash Scholz, Matthias Schwannauer, Tobias Schwarz, Jo Shaw, Mike Shipston, James Smith, Jeremy Upton, Shannon Vallor, Philip Wadler, Indigo Williams, Thomas Wishart.

Prior to the meeting commencing, Senate members were reminded that the Senate meeting would be recorded to aid in the production of the minutes as per the Senate Recordings Privacy Statement.

1 Welcome and Apologies

The Convener, Principal Sir Professor Peter Mathieson, welcomed members to the third Senate meeting of the 2024-25 academic session. It was confirmed that Senate had reached quorum.

2 Minutes and e-Senate Reports

2.1 Minutes

Senate received the unconfirmed minutes of the meetings of 22 May 2024 (S 24/25 3A), 18 June 2024 (S 24/25 3B), 9 October 2024 (S 24/25 3C), and 11 December 2024 (S 24/25 3D). The Academic Registrar, Lisa Dawson, provided an update to Senate on the process to consider the minutes held over from previous meetings.

At its meeting of 11 December 2024, Senate voted not to approve the minutes of May, June, and October 2024. Subsequent to this meeting, an out-of-meeting process was conducted to consider the proposed corrections to these minutes. It was reported that 101 Senate members had participated in this process, and that a quorum had therefore been reached. The Academic Registrar gave thanks to those who had participated in this process, advised that all of the proposed corrections had been approved, and reported that the minutes had been updated accordingly. Members were advised that they could access the voting results, and corrections made, on the Senate Members Portal.

For the minutes of 11 December 2024, it was explained that one member had proposed three corrections to the unconfirmed minutes. Following review, these corrections were adopted and updated minutes were issued as part of a revised meeting pack. Members were advised that they could access information on the corrections made on the Senate Members Portal.

Without requiring a vote, Senate approved the minutes of the meetings of 22 May 2024, 18 June 2024, 9 October 2024, and 11 December 2024.

A member observed that the unconfirmed minutes of the December 2024 meeting had been circulated late, and that members would appreciate receiving the unconfirmed minutes of Senate meetings sooner. The Academic Registrar acknowledged the members comment, and confirmed that unconfirmed minutes of the February 2025 meeting would be drafted and shared with Senate members in a timelier manner.

2.2 e-Senate report of 8-22 January 2025 (S 24/25 2E)

Without requiring a vote, Senate approved the e-Senate report of 8-22 January 2025. The Convener congratulated the new Emeritus Professors on behalf of Senate.

2.3   Matters arising

There were two matters arising from the minutes of the previous meetings.

2.3.1   Meeting of 9 October 2024

There was one matter arising from the minutes of the 9 October 2024. Under minute eight, Research Ethics and Defence and Security, Senate was advised that the final report and recommendations arising from the Research Ethics for Defence Working Group would be presented to its meeting of 5 February 2025. Senate was informed that the associated paper would instead be presented to the May 2025 Senate meeting to enable consideration by the Research Ethics and Integrity Review Group and the Research Strategy Group.

2.3.2   Curriculum Transformation

A member commented that they were concerned that work on the curriculum transformation project was progressing without Senate having had the opportunity to vote on its final shape. They added that they were concerned about aspects becoming fixed prior to consideration by Senate; and separately commented that Senate could meaningfully contribute to ongoing work on experiential learning. Another member commented on references within the meeting papers which appear to imply that the postgraduate taught elements of the Curriculum Transformation Programme were in implementation phase, and that information had been cascaded to schools which had implied that approval had been given. Another member reminded Senate of an amendment approved by Senate at its meeting of 22 May 2024 (minute eight, pg. 15):

"Senate thanks the CTP board for the progress and requests Senate Academic Policy & Regulations Committee (APRC) take forward the technical implementation and detail of policy changes for final approval in a future Senate meeting."

In response the Vice Principal Students, Professor Colm Harmon, confirmed that work had been progressing on operational issues and that Senate would be presented with formal proposals on key elements for consideration and approval in due course.

Senate Clerk's Note: following the meeting, the Vice Principal Students advised that consideration was being given to the timing for presentation to Senate of a proposals paper. It was explained that a paper could be presented to the May 2025 meeting of Senate but that further consideration would be required by the Academic Policy & Regulations Committee, which was scheduled to meet two days after Senate's meeting. Further discussion would be held with the Convener of APRC.

2.4   Senate Action Log

Senate noted the status of actions as detailed within the Action Log (S 24/25 3F).

A member noted the update provided to Senate's meeting of December 2024 on the Finance, HR and Research Improvement Programme; and commented that they would like it to be a standing item on Senate's agenda. Professor Kim Graham, Provost, agreed that Senate could receive further updates on the Programme, but did not feel that a standing agenda item was necessary.

3 Convener's Communications

The Convener provided a verbal update and also invited contributions from Dylan Walch, Edinburgh University Students' Association Vice-President Education; and from Professor Richard Kenway, Convener of the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group.

3.1 Financial Context

The Convener commented briefly on recent media coverage which illustrated the challenging financial situation being experienced across the Scottish and UK higher education sector. The Convener also reflected briefly on the changing perception of UK universities by lenders, and the associated implications for borrowing costs. It was explained that UK universities had previously been perceived of as very credit worthy by lenders, and that lenders were now expressing concerns around the sustainability of UK universities.

The Convener reflected on how changing circumstances had put the University at significant risk of entering a deficit position if expenditure continued to grow faster than income, and that a deficit position would occur based on the University's current budgets. It was queried when the University was anticipated to enter a deficit position. In response, the Convener commented that financial modelling indicated that a breakeven position could be achieved for the financial year ending 31 July 2025 and that, in the absence of action, a deficit was anticipated for the financial year ending 31 July 2026. The Convener added that the University would need to increase income, reduce expenditure, or both to avoid entering a deficit position.

Senate received a brief update on the status of the ongoing voluntary severance scheme, and it was reported that the cost savings likely to be achieved were unlikely to close what was a substantial gap between income and expenditure. The Convener commented that the Interim Director of Finance was working on quantifying the cost savings required and how these would be distributed across budget areas; and added that staff would receive further information as it became available. The Convener added that consideration was being given to all potential methods of responding to the University's financial difficulties; with consideration also being given to the protection of the University's strategic priorities, which included the student experience, the staff experience, and the University's research contributions.

A member queried a decision which had recently been communicated that heating would be turned off within the University's buildings after 5pm, and it was observed that the University's teaching timetable ended at 6pm. The member added that they had had sight of the equality impact assessment, but sought further information on the impact on particular categories of staff such as disabled staff, those working out of hours, and those on flexible work arrangements. The Convener commented that they were unaware of the communication, and that the matter would be investigated.

3.2 Visit to Gujarat Biotechnology University

The Convener reported on a recent visit to the Gujarat Biotechnology University, where the University was supporting the provision of a two-year master's program that had benefited from curriculum design support from the University of Edinburgh. Members were briefly informed of the University's partnership arrangements with the Government of Gujarat, and were advised that the partnership was progressing well.

The Convener reflected briefly on media reports about other UK universities establishing branch campuses in India. It was commented that there was demand in India for partnerships with British universities, and that there may be further opportunities for the University to explore. The Convener added that they were not personally interested in pursuing expansion in India via a branch campus model.

3.3 Exascale

The Convener provided a brief update on the ongoing discussions regarding the potential commissioning of an exascale computer by the UK Government.

3.4 Communications from the Edinburgh University Students' Association Vice-President Education

The EUSA Vice-President Education provided a brief update on issues associated with assessment of feedback, the student voice, student systems, and postgraduate research students.

It was reported that the Students' Association would be supporting a review of the Common Marking Scheme for undergraduate programmes, with a view to providing greater differentiation for assessments marked within the range of 70-100. It was explained that the marking scheme currently defined everything marked above 70 as 'excellent'. The EUSA Vice-President Education added that doing so would support associated work on assessment rubrics.

Senate were informed that the Students' Association were developing an options paper on changes that could be made to the Student Voice Policy, and that relevant consultation had taken place on student-staff liaison and on assessment and feedback. Members were informed that a working group was being established to review the Student Partnership Agreement. The Convener commented briefly on data which had suggested significant improvements in the turnaround time for student feedback, which was very positive.

The EUSA Vice-President Education commented briefly on arrangements for a hackathon, comprising staff and students, to be held to facilitate the co-creation of improvements to student facing systems. Separately, it was reported that collaborative work was ongoing to improve students' ability to navigate the University website.

The EUSA Vice-President Education commented briefly on increasing reports received by the Students' Association from postgraduate research students who had reported experiencing financial difficulty, and which had adversely affected their studies.

3.5 Communications from the Convener of the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group

The Convener of the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group provided a brief update on the work of the Group, as detailed within paper S 24/25 3O; and encouraged Senate members to engage with an ongoing survey looking at the relationship between Senate and its standing committees. It was explained that the Group would consider the survey results at its upcoming meeting on 25 February 2025.

Separately, the Convener encouraged Senate members to complete the Staff Survey 2025.

4   Senate & Senate Standing Committee Elections 2025/26

Senate received a paper seeking approval of arrangements for the operation of the 2025 elections of academic staff to Senate; and of the 2025 elections of Senate-elected academic members to the Senate Standing Committees paper (S 24/25 3G).

In introducing the paper, the Academic Registrar explained that Senate's approval was being sought for the following:

- The dates for opening the call for nominations and for submission of nominations.
- The periods for voting.
- The appointment of the Returning Officer and Deputy Returning Officer.
- A standardised term of office of three years.

It was reported that an operational suggestion had been received prior to the meeting, and the Academic Registrar advised that this suggestion would be implemented and thanks were given to the Senate members. It was explained that staff would now be notified, within the nominations period, where fewer nominations had been received than there were open vacancies. Updates would also be posted online, and staff would be able to check an 'if needed' box on the nomination form to indicate their willingness to withdraw their nomination if sufficient nominations are received from other colleagues.

A member queried whether provision could be made within the Senate Election Regulations for staff who were promoted during a term of office. It was observed that the Academic Staff (professorial) membership categories appeared to receive significantly fewer nominations than for the Academic Staff (non-professorial) membership categories. The current iteration of the Senate Election Regulations required staff to remain within the membership category that they were elected to, or to resign and stand for re-election. It was suggested that additional non-professorial members could be elected to Senate if there was a mechanism for transferring academic staff who were promoted to professor. The Academic Registrar thanked the member for their suggestion, and advised that it would be considered as part of the next review of the Senate Election Regulations.

There was a discussion of the proposal to adopt a standardised term of office of three years, rather than to continue with the approach of allocating differentiated terms of one-, two-, or three-year terms of office. Noting the number of vacancies within certain membership categories, a member observed that the conditions that had led to the implementation of differentiated terms remained, and they suggested that differentiated terms remained in use.

There was a brief discussion on whether the arrangements had been intended to be transitional, to support the change to Senate's current composition made in 2020, or had been intended to be used in perpetuity. A member commented that Senate had voted to approve the current mechanism at its ordinary meeting of February 2023, and further commented that they did not consider Senate to have received sufficient opportunity to consider the proposed change to term length. In support of the change, it was commented that adopting the proposal would support continuity and the development of knowledge and experience for members; address concerns around parity, whereby some members would receive a lesser term of office; and support alignment with sector practice.

A Senate member queried why arrangements for the Senate Standing Committee Elections were being finalised at the February 2025 meeting, and suggested that approval of the arrangements be deferred to allow the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group time for review and consultation with Senate. It was observed that the External Effectiveness review did not contain any recommendations relating to Senate election processes. A member proposed a motion to vote on elements of the paper separately. In response, the Convener clarified that Senate would be invited to vote on the arrangements as they were specified within the paper, and confirmed that disaggregated voting would take place if a 'not approve' result was returned.

Senate approved the arrangements for the 2025/26 Senate and Senate Standing Committee Elections, as specified within the paper, by a majority vote. 73 members approved, 47 members did not approve, and 7 members abstained.

During the voting period, reports were received from members who had experienced difficulty in logging onto Wooclap. Senate were invited to vote on the motion twice, and both votes confirmed majority approval.

5   Conferral of Awards

Senate received a closed paper (S 24/25 3H) which requested its approval for the conferment of degrees to the students detailed within the paper's appendix.

The Academic Registrar explained that Senate had approved a proposal to delegate authority to Boards of Examiners, on a trial basis, to confer degrees at its meeting of October 2024. The students listed within the paper had been recommended for award in the period following the Senate graduation meetings, held as part of the 2024 Winter Graduation ceremonies, and before the commencement of the trial period on 1 January 2025. It was commented that the paper detailed transitional arrangements which sought to ensure that the students listed were not disadvantaged by the absence of Senate graduation meetings in 2025.

Without requiring a vote, Senate approved the conferral of awards for the students detailed within paper S 24/25 3H.

6   Report from the AI Adoption Task Force

Senate received the report from the AI Adoption Task Force (paper S 24/25 3I) which had provided information in response to Senate's consideration of a paper (S 24/25 2K) at its meeting of 11 December 2024.

Members were invited to submit questions and comments for response by Gavin McLachlan, Vice-Principal and Chief Information Officer, and Librarian; and Professor Michael Rovatsos, Convener of the AI Adoption Task Force.

A member observed that the AI Adoption Task Force was not responsible for the University's governance of matters relating to generative AI; and it was queried what activity was occurring within the University's committee structure. The Vice-Principal and Chief Information Officer, and Librarian commented briefly on consideration of matters related to AI and sustainability on University committees associated with information technology. Senate members reflected on the relationship between the AI Adoption Task Force, college committees, and Senate and its standing committees. It was queried how the AI Task Force

should best fit into the Senate committee structure, whether its remit should be considered further, and how it should contribute to Senate's priorities. It was also queried whether Senate could request the development of policies related to generative AI by its standing committees. In response, it was commented that Senate could do so, and it was observed that Senate would have the opportunity to discuss standing committee priorities as part of the meeting, minute eight refers. Separately, in response to a query, the Convener of the AI Adoption Task Force clarified that comments relating to a 'reluctance to take action' made within the paper related solely to the piloting of new practices and opportunities that were enabled by generative AI.

Senate discussed how generative AI had affected academic integrity and academic misconduct at the University. It was commented that the Task Force was not overseeing work on academic integrity, but did provide support to the Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group where requested. A Senate member commented that colleagues in schools would appreciate additional guidance and support on how to ensure academic integrity in the context of generative AI. The Deputy Vice-Principal Students (Enhancement), Professor Tina Harrison, reported briefly on ongoing discussions occurring with colleagues across the University, in group meetings, and in college committees. It was commented that development of a university-level policy would be challenging, given the diversity of assessment used across the University. It was commented that consideration was being given to assessment design, how generative AI could be used by students where appropriate, and how to ensure usage of generative AI was not possible when not appropriate. Senate members were invited to provide suggestions for institutional guidance on generative AI by email to the Deputy Vice-Principal Students (Enhancement).

In response to a comment that academic misconduct data did not appear to show a particular issue with AI, a Senate member queried whether the qualitative experience of staff involved with handling academic misconduct cases was being captured. The member added that detecting inappropriate usage of generative AI was challenging, and that there was the potential for AI-related academic misconduct cases to be underreported.

A Senate member reflected on their experience of investigating misconduct cases; and reflected on informal discussions with students where they had asked the student what they had used AI for, why they had used AI, and how the University could help them to learn without the need to use AI. The member reported having observed an increasing disparity between students who used generative AI well, with those who did not. It was explained that some students were able to access good computing resources, were able to afford access to the latest AI models, and who took online tutorials to learn how to use AI effectively. These students had adapted to using generative AI very well. Conversely, there had been examples of students submitting work based upon minimally edited responses generated by AI models. The member expressed concern about the potential for students using AI to bypass crucial learning and skills development; and added that students who did not sufficiently invest in initial learning were likely to struggle as they progressed through their programme of study and then into employment. The member commented on the need for the University to better incentivise students to invest in their learning and, to achieve this, commended the use of in-person assessments to assess students in isolation from AI.

As part of subsequent discussion, a member commented on the risk of appearing to imply that all students were utilising generative AI in an inappropriate manner. It was commented that such a perception could be demoralising for students. Another member observed that students were trying to adapt to new ways of working necessitated by the introduction of generative AI; and was suggested that the University could research the reasons why

students were using generative AI. They commented briefly on students' concerns about not being able to keep pace with peers who were better at using AI. It was further suggested that consideration could be given to developing new teaching and assessment practices to better work with generative AI.

There was a brief discussion on matters associated with equity of access to AI, and the Convener commented that it was imperative that the University acted to prevent disparities between students forming in relation to AI usage. The Vice-Principal and Chief Information Officer, and Librarian commented briefly that a key recommendation arising from the AI Adoption Task Force was ensuring that staff and students had both equity of access to generative AI, and also had a good basic understanding of AI. Reference was made to the universal provision of ELM (Edinburgh (access to) Language Models) and it was reported that the University had recently launched three courses on AI, and that details of these would be shared with Senate.

A member commented on the necessity of in-person exams, and queried the University's provision of support for the delivery of exams, and particularly for resit examinations. The member added that they were aware of colleagues who had felt pressured to offer an alternative form of assessment to an exam for reassessment. The member requested that the University reinstate support for the delivery of exams, and separately suggested that resit exams could occur during September rather than August. In response, the Vice-Principal Students sought clarification on the source of the pressure that colleagues had experienced, and commented on previous commitments made to academic staff regarding their ability to design assessments.

A member commented that a paper to the Senate Education Committee meeting of 7 November 2024 which sought agreement in principle to minimise the requirement for students to return to Edinburgh during the summer solely to take in-person assessments. The member added that staff had been advised by their schools to minimise the use of examinations. The Vice-Principal Students acknowledged that the cost to students of travelling to Edinburgh within the month of August for resits could be significant, and added that this did not preclude academic staff from arranging in-person examinations where there was an appropriate academic justification for doing so. The Vice-Principal Students reflected further on recent discussions with colleagues across the University on the subject of resit examinations, and noted significant variation in opinion across the University. The Deputy Vice-Principal Students (Enhancement) added that there were many ways to design assessments that were authentic and robust, and encouraged colleagues consider a range of options when designing assessments.

7   **Senate External Review Recommendation: Standing Committee Remits Update and Options**

Senate received a paper which provided an update on progress associated with the AdvanceHE External Effectiveness Review of Senate recommendation (R17) relating to Senate Standing Committee remits; and which invited Senate consideration of the student experience across Senate and its committees (paper S 24/25 3J).

Senate noted the update on progress; and were invited to provide input and feedback to the paper authors Professor Colm Harmon, Vice Principal Students, and Nichola Kett, Head of Academic Quality and Standards.

The paper set out the following options for enhancing the consideration of the student experience at the University:

a) Create a new separate Senate standing committee to specifically consider the student experience.

b) Embed student experience within all committees.

c) Address the impact on student experience for each paper through an impact assessment.

d) Enhance and define reporting between groups and committee on matters relating to the student experience.

e) A combination of the above.

The EUSA Vice-President Education commented that, while all of the options would help to improve consideration of the student experience, they considered options A and C to be the most impactful. They commented the Edinburgh University Students' Association were supportive of the creation of a new Senate standing committee, and recognised that consideration would be required on such a committee's remit, terms of reference, and relationship with Senate and its standing committees. A member commented that it had been affirming for students to see student experience being a priority for discussion at Senate; and added that establishing such a committee would help to evidence the University's commitment to enhancing the student experience.

Senate members discussed how the formation of a new Senate standing committee could facilitate more holistic consideration of the issues affecting students. It was commented that a student's academic life was affected by personal issues such as mental health, finance, and belonging to a community; and that such issues were often considered separately. A Senate member commented on the experience of postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students (PGR), who they had frequently heard felt underrepresented and unheard in comparison to undergraduate students. The member reflected on the experience of postgraduate research students, who were often older than undergraduate students and had differing personal, family, and work commitments. It was further observed the PGR students often worked in isolation, and that methods of representation that relied on large cohorts could be less effective in supporting their needs. The member commented that a dedicated Senate committee to consider the student experience would likely help to address such issues; and would provide a platform for students to articulate their concerns and be better able to contribute to the decision-making processes that affect their academic lives.

A member reflected on their experience of the recently formed Student Life Committee within the College of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences. The member commented that they had found it beneficial as a forum for considering issues that affected both students personal and academic lives, and from being able to consider issues from alternative perspectives. The member added that they preferred the term 'student life', over 'student experience', as they felt it better reflected the lived experience of students.

It was commented that, if formed, such a committee should have a membership which was reflective of the student population and which had students in the majority. A member commented that the creation of a dedicated committee could help to address issues caused by the rapid turnover of student representatives, and could help to foster leaders within the student community. Separately, it was observed that 10% of the University's students studied fully online at a distance, and that they would have a very different student

experience and impression of the University's services. It was acknowledged that such a committee could not represent all students fully, but that it was likely the best option for improving representation.

It was observed that a new committee would not be able to consider all issues affecting the student experience, as some matters would be reserved to other bodies within the University's governance structure, and others would reflect operational decisions made at the school and college level. As such, there would remain a need to consider issues affecting the student experience across all relevant University committees and groups, and it was recommended that consideration also be given to improving the current committee structure. Another member commented on option C, the creation of a student experience impact assessment, and reflected briefly on a concern about the potential for variation in completion and contribution to discussion.

The Vice-Principal Students reflected on the discussion, and on the preferred options specified within the paper, a combination of (b) and (d) initially. The Vice-Principal Students further reflected on related work undertaken to date, and the extent of remit a new Senate standing committee might have to address some of the issues raised within the discussion. The paper authors thanked members for their contributions, and it was explained that these would inform proposals to improve the student experience in the short, medium and long term. It was commented updates would continue to be provided to Senate, Senate standing committees, and the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group.

A member of the Task and Finish Group added that the discussion would contribute meaningfully to other issues being considered by the Group, such as external review recommendation 18.

8   **Senate Standing Committees: Mid-Year Reflection on 2024-25 Priorities and Contribution to 2025-26 Priorities**

Senate received a paper which provided a mid-year reflection on progress made against the 2024-25 standing committee priorities; and which invited Senate consideration of potential priorities for 2025-26.

Members were invited to submit questions and comments for response from Professor Colm Harmon, Convener of the Senate Education Committee; Professor Tina Harrison, Convener of the Senate Quality Assurance Committee; and Professor Patrick Hadoke, Convener of the Academic Policy and Regulations Committee.

In introducing the paper, the Convener of the Senate Education Committee reflected on Senate's earlier discussion on generative AI (minute six), and suggested that the Senate standing committees could consider issues associated with generative AI in the next academic year. Separately, the Convener of the Academic Policy and Regulations Committee reported that APRC had met prior to Senate, and had already had a helpful discussion on progress to date.

A member reflected on the discussion as part of the previous agenda item (minute seven), and asked if the student members of Senate felt that committee's current priorities and activities represented what was most important to the student voice and the student experience. The Convener of APRC commented briefly on a task group that APRC had recently formed to consider how postgraduate regulations affected students, and how the University could review and embed the student experience when developing or reviewing

regulations. A Senate member, reflecting on their experience as a student representative, commented on concerns they had relating to the flow of information between Senate's standing committees and Senate, and then between Senate and the wider University community. The conveners indicated their willingness to improve communications, and invited suggestions and feedback on how to do so.

The Provost reflected on relevant discussion by the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group on how Senate could be better informed of how standing committee meetings had considered issues, how decisions had been reached, and which issues should be referred to Senate for consideration or approval. The Convener of the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group added that the Group was considering ways to improve the flow of information between Senate and its committees; to clarify expectations around delegated authority; and to identify topics which Senate, through its unique composition, was able to add value to the consideration of an issue.

Linked to the previous item (minute seven), a Senate member commented on their disappointment that there wasn't a dedicated Senate standing committee to consider the student experience. The Convener of APRC reflected briefly on their experience as a member of the former Researcher Experience Committee, which it was explained had a remit focused on a very narrow proportion of the University community. It was commented that, even with such focus, it was exceptionally difficult to capture the experience of everybody within that small sub-set of the University community. The Convener of APRC commented that the University's overall student community was large and diverse, and that it would be significantly more challenging to represent adequately. The Convener of APRC cautioned that, while they were in favour of a student experience committee, they expected that it would be challenging to ensure effective representation.

9   Budget Working Group

Senate received a verbal update from Professor David Ingram on behalf of the Budget Working Group. It was noted that Senate had approved the formation of the Working Group at its meeting of 11 December 2024.

Professor Ingram reported that, following a call for volunteers, the membership of the Working Group had been established. Senate were informed of the Working Group's members, and were advised that the Vice-Principal Students would act as a liaison with the Senior Leadership Team. It was further reported that an initial meeting of the Working Group had been held, and that a survey had been developed as part of a call for evidence. The Working Group would shortly arrange for the distribution of the survey, and would be writing to Heads of School. Senate was advised that the Working Group planned to report to the next meeting of Senate, on 20 May 2025.

Items for information

10   Court Communications

Senate noted the communications from the University Court as detailed within the paper (S 24/25 3L), and which related to the University Court meeting of 2 December 2024.

A member sought an update on progress associated with the review of the University's Responsible Investment Policy, and contextualised the query by referencing media reports

that Alphabet had ended its pledge not to use artificial intelligence for weapons and surveillance tools.

The Convener and the EUSA Student President, both members of the University Court, commented that work was underway to establish the terms of reference for, and appoint to the membership of, the Due Diligence Review Group. The Convener acknowledged the member's frustration at the speed of the review, but sought to provide assurance that progress was being made. It was commented that an update was expected to go to the April 2025 meeting of the University Court.

It was further commented that work was ongoing in relation to the analysis of responses to the consultation on the Responsible Investment Policy, which would help to inform alterations to the Policy. It was queried whether the survey results would be published. In response, the Convener commented that the University had committed to publishing the survey results. The Convener added that free text comments would not be published, as survey participants had been promised confidentiality.

11   Research Strategy Group Report

Senate noted the report from the Research Strategy Group as detailed within the paper (S 24/25 3M), and which related to the Group's meetings of 20 August 2024, 30 September 2024, and 3 December 2024.

12   Senate Standing Committees – upcoming business

Senate noted the main points of activity and business that the Senate Standing Committees would consider between March and June 2025 (paper S 24/25 3N).

13   Senate External Review Task and Finish Group - Update

Senate noted the update on recent activity by the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group as detailed within the paper (S 24/25 3O); and which related to the Group's meetings of 6 November 2024 and 14 January 2025.

14   Date of next meeting: 20 May 2025