

## 2. Enhancing the student learning experience

### 2.1 Student representation and engagement, including responding to student views.

#### Overview

- 2.1.1 The ELIR 2015 Report confirmed: “The University is committed to student engagement and has a positive and constructive relationship with EUSA.” [paragraph 34]. We have continued to work in partnership with the Students’ Association to strengthen student representation, engagement and the student voice. A number of developments since ELIR 2015 have served to strengthen this, including:
- A new student representative structure
  - Development of our first Student Partnership Agreement
  - Review of student-staff liaison committee principles and operation
  - Improved access and understanding of data for student representatives
  - Introduction of Mid-Course Feedback

#### Student representation

- 2.1.2 The ELIR 2015 Report confirmed: “The University has a positive and constructive relationship with EUSA” but encouraged us “to continue working in partnership to ensure there is more effective student representation at college and school level.” [paragraph 75].
- 2.1.3 We have worked with the Students’ Association to make significant changes to ensure we have consistent and effective student representation across the University. We have moved from a Class Representative system to a Programme Representative system. This is a relatively recent development and is still bedding down. However, initial feedback indicates that this structure is more efficient and effective, in terms of the number of students who are acting as representatives and in terms of the escalation of issues.
- 2.1.4 The reduction in the number of local level student representatives (from 2,260 in 2017/18 to 1,467 in 2018/19) has allowed the Students’ Association to return to an in-person training model and “provide more effective training and preparation for the roles” [paragraph 75] as recommended in the ELIR 2015 Report. A team of Programme Representative Trainers provide the training with support from the Students’ Association’s Academic Representation team and sparqs.
- 2.1.5 The Students’ Association piloted the training in 18 Schools in 2018/19, and we saw an increase both in completion of the training (from 68.5% completing online training the previous year, to 83.5% completing in-person training) and satisfaction with the training (93% of participants in the in-person training said they would recommend it). In 2019/20, the Students’ Association anticipates recruiting approximately 1000 Programme Representatives, all of whom will be trained in-person. Online training is still available for those who need it, such as online learners and students on placement during the training period.
- 2.1.6 The Students’ Association continues to deliver a wide range of development opportunities to student representatives, particularly Programme Representatives. These include regular lunches during term-time where representatives can network,

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discuss their work, learn about the University's work around student engagement, and access support from staff within the Academic Representation team, as well as access to the Students' Association's workshop calendar. The network provides a valuable forum for communication between the University and students, and any of the workshops are delivered and supported by staff from across the University including Information Services, the University Careers Service, and Edinburgh Global.

- 2.1.7 In 2019/20, the Students' Association received funding as part of the University's Student Experience Action Plan to deliver a conference primarily for Programme Representatives. The conference took place in early 2020 and provided student representatives with the opportunity to reflect on their roles, share best practice, and offer constructive feedback to the University on student engagement. **[Need to update on key outcomes after the conference]**
- 2.1.8 The Students' Association continues to support a system of School Representatives, with each School having an Undergraduate and Postgraduate representative. These student representatives are supported by the Academic Representation team and work closely with Programme Representatives and the Students' Association Vice President Education to ensure that issues are escalated effectively. Each semester, School Representatives from across the University come together in a School Representative Forum, chaired by the Vice President Education, where they have the opportunity to discuss their work, share best practice, and hear from the University about opportunities for further engagement.
- 2.1.9 For the last two years, the Students' Association has prepared School Reports giving an overview of student engagement in Students' Association activities for each School across the University. These reports include details of student engagement in elections, student representation, peer learning and support activity, and student-led societies, as well as usage of the Students' Association's Advice Place. These reports have provided valuable insight for staff across the University into the work of the Students' Association, and have formed the basis for introductory meetings between Schools, Colleges and the Students' Association School over the summer.
- 2.1.10 The Students' Association continues to support the recruitment of student representatives on College and University committees from a pool of School Representatives. As the system becomes embedded, the Students' Association is now looking to enhance the support these students receive to ensure they are able to make the most of the opportunities that being a committee member offers. The ELIR Report 2015 encouraged us to "consider the best ways of providing feedback to the wider student body about the action that is taken in response to matters raised through school and college-level committees." [paragraph 76]. The following two key developments are designed to support this.
- 2.1.11 The first comprises a collaboration between the Students' Association and the University's Information Services team to pilot a number of options through the Learn and Microsoft Teams to improve communication between Programme Representatives and support the escalation of issues through the varying levels of the student representation system. The pilots will be evaluated at the end of 2019/20 academic year, and the preferred model will be rolled out across the University. The second development comprises a collaboration between the Students' Association and Academic Services colleagues to enhance the operation and effectiveness of Student-Staff Liaison Committees (SSLCs). This has led to the development of a more robust set of guidance for Schools in the running of Student Staff Liaison

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Committees (SSLCs), providing greater consistency in the operation of SSLCs, as well as acting as a catalyst for Schools to share their own best practice with regards to SSLCs. [Marker – further information on SSLCs later in the chapter] add further information on progress with SSLC Principles, School SSLC remits]

- 2.1.12 Responding to the ELIR 2015 recommendation to provide more effective school level representation, we have been engaging with the Enhancement Theme, “Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience”, to improve students’ access to and understanding of data. The Students’ Association has been working closely with colleagues in the University’s Student Data and Surveys Team to explore the impact of giving School Representatives access to University Survey data.
- 2.1.13 We ran a pilot with three Schools last year, which involved giving School Representatives access to School data and analysis from NSS, PTES and PRES surveys, accompanied by training on how to understand and utilise this data to achieve change. We evaluated whether the data had been useful and, if so, how it had been useful. The School Representatives explained how they felt that having the quantitative data allowed them to better evidence the anecdotal feedback they had gathered from classmates. Following the successful pilot, the decision was taken to extend this to all School Representatives in the 2019/20 academic year. All School Representatives now have access to the full suite of survey reports in the PowerBI suite that staff also have access to.
- 2.1.14 Student Council continues to be the Students’ Association’s primary decision-making and policy-setting body. All students are able to attend, submit motions, and vote on proposals. Following a referendum in March 2016, the Elected Representatives – including Sabbatical Officers, Liberation Officers, Section Representatives, School Representatives, and Activities Representatives – have a weighted vote of 1.5 to signify the responsibility they hold to represent their constituents. Student Council meetings are also an opportunity for students to hold the Sabbatical Officers to account for their work by listening to their monthly accountability reports and asking questions regarding upcoming projects and campaigns.

### Student-led Teaching Awards

- 2.1.15 Since their launch in 2008/09 as the first student-led Teaching Awards scheme in the UK, the Students’ Association’s Teaching Awards<sup>1</sup> have been a phenomenal success, and they represent an extremely positive partnership with the University. The Teaching Awards scheme allows students to nominate teaching staff, support staff, and courses for awards, which are assessed by a student judging panel. In 2018/19, over 2000 nominations were received in over 11 categories.
- 2.1.16 The Teaching Awards scheme provides an opportunity for students to express their appreciation of staff and recognise their contribution to the student experience. The Students’ Association hosts a high-profile annual awards ceremony at the end of each academic year to recognise the award winners and runners-up.
- 2.1.17 The Teaching Awards also provide an insight into best practice in teaching that can be shared across the University. In 2016, the Students’ Association received funding through the Principal’s Teaching Award scheme to conduct a systematic analysis of almost 3,000 Teaching Award nominations, to understand students’ teaching

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<sup>1</sup> <https://eusa.ed.ac.uk/teachingawards>

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excellence from the student viewpoint as a means of informing best practice in student experience<sup>2</sup>

- 2.1.18 The Students' Association continues to place an emphasis on the quality of nominations, as opposed to quantity, and has worked to demonstrate the impact of nominations on staff.<sup>3</sup> We are proud that the University continues to recognise the student voice through Teaching Award nominations as an indicator of teaching excellence, which have been embedded in our Exemplars of Excellence in Student Education used in promotion and grading for academic staff at grades 9 and 10.

### Student-Staff Liaison Committees

- 2.1.19 Student-Staff Liaison Committees (SSLCs) are held in every School and provide a formal mechanism for communication and discussion between student representatives, academic and administrative staff relating to all matters connected with improving the degree programmes (at all levels of study including undergraduate, postgraduate taught and research).

In addition, SSLCs provide an opportunity to escalate issues (to the School, College or University) associated with the wider student experience that may be outside the control or remit of the programme to resolve. Previously, we have not had an agreed process by which such issues could be escalated. **Need to say more about the pilot to escalate issues**. Academic Services has worked in partnership with colleagues in the Students' Association to develop a more robust set of guidance for Schools in the running of Student Staff Liaison Committees (SSLCs). **[marker: add further information on progress with SSLC Principles, School SSLC remits] and update on progress with college SSLC]**

- 2.1.20 Staff and Student Representatives are responsible for ensuring that students are aware of the response or action taken following their feedback at the SSLC meeting.
- 2.1.21 The College of Science and Engineering are introducing a college level SSLC. It is planned that the meeting will take place once a semester and items will be escalated from College Learning Committee and College Quality Committee. The College is keen that this meeting is student led.

### Student Surveys

- 2.1.22 Our student surveys are managed by the Student Data and Surveys Team<sup>4</sup>, which provides a central point of contact for information on student surveying in the University and analysis and reporting on data from student surveys. Detail on the NSS, PTES and PRES surveys is provided in the AIS. In addition to the external NSS, PTES and PRES surveys, all students are provided with the opportunity to give feedback on their course experience via Course Enhancement Questionnaires (CEQs). Students are notified of the surveys towards the end of the course. CEQs operate to a standard core set of questions that are used consistently across all courses, but may also be supplemented by additional question sets according to the

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/representation/campaigns/teachingawards/research/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g7AwUEBAnpk>

<sup>4</sup> Previously known as Student Surveys Unit

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specific context of the course. The core question set provides an opportunity for benchmarking within and across subjects and schools.

- 2.1.23 Our current system of CEQs has been in operation since the last ELIR. The Student Data and Surveys team led a review of end of course feedback collected in Course Enhancement Questionnaires (CEQ) during the 2018/19 academic year. A task and finish group was created to address how to improve staff and student engagement with CEQs and increase efficiency in the process. A number of recommendations were made to improve efficiency, but it was agreed that a more fundamental reflection on the purpose of this exercise was required. The second phase of this work will look at the question set and methods used to collect end of course feedback.
- 2.1.24 The Student Data and Surveys team have been working to improve the analysis of student survey data and access. In 2018/19 new reports were launched in Power BI which provide all members of the university with trends and data visualisations alongside data tables and survey comments with a key word search functionality. Moving to this software has allowed us to release analysis of survey data as soon as surveys close or on results day for the National Student Survey (NSS). The surveys reports are some of the most used in the university (the NSS report is ranked first).

### Mid-Course Feedback

- 2.1.25 Since the last ELIR we have added Mid-Course Feedback (MCF) to our student voice mechanisms. MCF was introduced in XX, reflecting good practice already in operation in a number of schools, and became policy in XX for all our undergraduate courses that run for 10 weeks or longer. Quite simply, mid-way through the course, students are given the opportunity to provide feedback on how the course is going, and staff are expected to respond to the feedback while the course is running. We feel such feedback is crucial to:
- promoting constructive dialogue between staff and students at an early stage;
  - allowing staff to identify and respond to student concerns about a course in a timely way (ideally in a way that resolves the matter for the current cohort);
  - providing staff with an opportunity to explain to students why the course is structured in the way it is, and outlining changes that have evolved in response to feedback from previous cohorts.
- Importantly, existing students on the course can benefit from any actions we may be able to take, which helps to reinforce to students the value of giving feedback. All of this contributes to the ongoing enhancement of the quality of the educational experience for students.
- 2.1.26 Unlike CEQs, that are centrally managed and standardised, Schools are free to determine the best way to conduct MCF for their course, but are encouraged to discuss options or co-design approaches with students. Importantly, MCF should not be viewed as ‘another survey’, but provide an opportunity for discussion and dialogue with students.
- 2.1.27 We have evaluated the effectiveness of mid-course feedback over the last two academic years, via an online survey of undergraduate Course Organisers and through consultation with Schools. Overall, responses are very positive. Key findings from the most recent evaluation carried out during Semester 2, 2019 are that:

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- Use of mid-course feedback is high – 87.5% of the xxx Course Organisers that responded to the survey reported using mid-course feedback in their 2018/19 courses.
- Mid-course feedback is valued by staff– 78% of respondents considered mid-course feedback to be useful.
- Low-tech options involving postcards, or other paper-based approaches, are the most popular method for gathering feedback.
- Most issues identified through feedback are being resolved within the course timeframe and typically communicated to students in class.
- Mid-course feedback highlights issues that Course Organisers would otherwise have been unaware of.
- Where colleagues report not using mid-course feedback, the reasons are primarily due to confusion and lack of perceived value – there is some lack of clarity about the way in which mid-course feedback relates to other student voice mechanisms.

2.1.28 In response to the final point above, we identified a need to communicate further guidance to staff to highlight the role and purpose of MCF alongside other student voice mechanisms and to share examples of how to conduct MCF. We produced a student voice graphic, a blog and ...

2.1.29 Building on the positive experience of MCF for undergraduate courses, we are encouraging the wider use of it for postgraduate taught courses throughout 2019/20, recognising that this is already happening across many courses already, with a view to embedding in policy for 2020/21.

2.1.30 We have curated many positive examples of the use of MCF on the IAD website to help staff in using MCF,<sup>5</sup> as well as a good practice resource for staff on closing the feedback loop.<sup>6</sup> Background information and examples for students on engaging with MCF are available on the Student Voice webpage.<sup>7</sup>

### **Student Partnership Agreement (SPA)**

2.1.31 Senate approved our first Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) on October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017. The SPA replaced our joint EUSA/University student engagement statement that already recognised students as active partners and co-creators of their learning. The SPA was therefore a natural extension of this joint statement and provided an opportunity to develop our partnership in a more planned approach around a set of agreed priorities, and to extend the partnership beyond the Students' Association to the wider community of students and staff.

2.1.32 In developing our SPA, we were clear that we did want it to become a high-level document that had no relevance to students and staff across the University. We wanted it to reflect the priorities of both sides and to serve as a framework for action. We engaged in extensive joint consultation to identify and agree our key priorities. This was informed by:

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/learning-teaching/staff/teaching-feedback/mid-course>

<sup>6</sup> [edin.ac/2wqzrew](https://www.ed.ac.uk/2wqzrew)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/academic-life/student-voice/enhancing-courses/mid-course-feedback>

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- Feedback from students through the main institutional/national surveys
- Consultation with students via the Students' Association Reps Forums
- Consultation with staff via key committees and groups
- Alignment with the University's Learning & Teaching Strategy and the Students' Association's Strategy

2.1.33 The priorities we agreed to work on together during academic year 2017/18 were Student Voice, Academic Support and Promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing. Based on feedback from students, the three key themes remained as priorities for 2018/19, although with specific sub-priorities under each theme. Continuity of the broad themes allowed us to build on the success of the previous year and created potential for greater impact, being taken forward by IAD (see 2.1.35). The three priority themes agreed for 2019/20 are: Community, Student Voice, and Social Justice (see Box).

### **Student Partnership Agreement Priorities 2019/20**

#### Community

- Supporting staff and students to develop, enhance, and support effective communities that promote a sense of wellbeing and belonging

#### Student Voice:

- Continue working to enable student feedback to be shared and addressed, in particular exploring innovative ways to use the new student voice feedback diagram or enhancing aspects of existing mechanisms to close the feedback loop.

#### Social Justice:

- Exploring issues of diversity, sustainability and justice with the aim of empowering students and staff to engage critically and sensitively with the challenges of our contemporary world. This includes engaging with discourses of liberation or embedding sustainability within the curriculum.

2.1.34 We wanted to enable students and staff to work together to address the priorities in a meaningful way. Each year since its inception we have made small project funding of £7,000 available and invited proposals for joint (student-staff) projects to address the priorities.<sup>8</sup> The project proposals must involve both students and staff, and link to one of the key priorities of the SPA. In the first year, we received 27 applications of which 14 received funding. In the second year, we funded XX projects and XX projects in 2019/20.

2.1.35 The funded projects have been diverse in nature, from a student-hosted podcast to a student-staff sports day. Others have created wellbeing resources and School-based community events. Successful applications have come from all three Colleges across the University. At the end of the first year we held a showcase event and produced a booklet<sup>9</sup> to highlight the work of the projects and share the learning. This was distributed to all Schools and School Reps. A collection of projects focused on ways to build community, and the learning from these is being taken forward by IAD as part

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/academic-life/student-voice/partnership-agreement/spa-small-projects>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/spa-booklet.pdf>



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of the ENGAGE Network.<sup>10</sup> Other project outcomes have been shared via Teaching Matters.<sup>11</sup>

- 2.1.36 Our SPA is a living, working document<sup>12</sup> that we review annually, with the newly elected student association officers, taking account of student feedback, to agree and approve the priorities for partnership working in the coming year.

### **2.2 Recognising and responding to equality and diversity in the student population, including widening access and mode and location of study.**

#### **Overview**

- 2.2.1 The ELIR 2015 Report commented: “The University has an effective approach to supporting equality and diversity” (paragraph 27). We are committed to embedding Equality and Diversity (E&D) across all our work, and developing a positive culture that supports inclusion, celebrates difference, challenges prejudice and promotes fairness. Within this context, we are committed to increasing diversity and providing equality of opportunity for all prospective and current students.
- 2.2.2 Equality and Diversity is an integral aspect of our Strategy 2030, which emphasises the values of diversity and inclusivity. Our Equality and Diversity Strategy<sup>13</sup> makes clear our guiding principles for integrating equality and diversity in policy and practice, which is complemented by our Equality Outcomes and Actions Plan.<sup>14</sup>
- 2.2.3 Since ELIR 2015, we have focussed on:
- continuing to promote gender equality through the Athena SWAN charter;
  - promoting a culture of Dignity and Respect through a revised policy, awareness raising campaigns in collaboration with the Students’ Association, and provision of staff and student training in preventing and addressing bullying and harassment;
  - improving the accessibility of our estate for disabled students and staff;
  - reviewing and updating our Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy;
  - addressing inclusivity in the curriculum;
  - reviewing our support for BME students;
  - developing a new Widening Participation Strategy and increasing the range of access opportunities and support for students from WP backgrounds.

#### **Equality and Diversity**

- 2.2.4 We have recently appointed an Executive level University wide lead for Equality Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I), replacing the outgoing Vice Principal People and Culture. This visibly and firmly restates our commitment to leadership in this area and to mainstreaming ED&I across the University. As a member of the University Executive, and reporting directly to VP Students and VP Strategic Change and Governance, this new appointment signals senior leadership support in ensuring our

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/learning-teaching/staff/student-engagement>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.teaching-matters-blog.ed.ac.uk/tag/student-partnership-agreement/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/studentpartnershipagreement.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.docs.csg.ed.ac.uk/EqualityDiversity/Strategy.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/equality\\_outcomes\\_2017-2021\\_action\\_plan\\_final.pdf](https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/equality_outcomes_2017-2021_action_plan_final.pdf)



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commitments to equality, diversity and inclusion are met. A new University level Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee will contribute to strategic development, action planning and the promotion of best practice for and beyond protected groups.

- 2.2.5 Our Equality and Diversity Monitoring Committee reports annually.<sup>15</sup> Our student population is becoming increasingly diverse with year on year increases in Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) students. Our UK domiciled BME entrants made up 10.2% of all undergraduate students in 2018. Non-UK BME entrants accounted for 49.9% of all undergraduate students. Postgraduate Taught (PGT) BME has similarly increased to 13.3% for UK domiciled entrants and 60.4% for non-UK entrants. For Postgraduate Research (PGR) BME UK domiciled entrants stand at 11.5% and for non-UK entrants, 45%. With some evidence of an attainment gap at UG level for UK domiciled BME students, we conducted a Thematic Review of Black and Minority Ethnic student support throughout 2018/19. We published the report in October 2019, during Black History month. The report makes a number of recommendations around four key areas: racial literacy and awareness gap, sense of belonging, accessing support services and curricula and learning. The recommendations are being taken forward under the oversight of Senate Quality Assurance Committee.
- 2.2.6 Our proportion of female entrants regularly exceeds 60%, placing us in the top three Russell Group universities. The University is a proud holder of an Athena SWAN Silver Institution award (awarded 2015 and renewed in 2018). All of our Schools hold departmental awards (22 awards over 20 Schools): 12 Bronze, 9 Silver and 1 Gold award. STEMM disciplines hold one Gold, 8 Silver and 2 Bronze awards; Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, Business and Law (AHSSBL) disciplines hold one Silver and 10 Bronze awards.

### Supporting the development of an inclusive curriculum

- 2.2.7 The University's Learning and Teaching Strategy includes a commitment to "Using the curriculum to promote inclusion, equality and diversity". Over recent years, many of our Schools have undertaken a range of positive activities to open up our curricula to a broader range of different cultures, backgrounds and identities and to make it more relevant to an increasingly diverse student body and society. In order to build on these initiatives, Senate Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) established a task group in 2018/19 to explore how institutional action can assist in promoting inclusion, equality and diversity in the curriculum.
- 2.2.8 The task group consulted with students and staff from across the University and noted a consensus on the importance of finding ways to have ongoing, open conversations about what a diverse and inclusive curriculum would look like and how this may mean different things in each College, School, and subject area. The task group developed a set of principles for promoting inclusion, equality and diversity in the curriculum and some relatively modest potential steps at institutional level which would support and add value to local discipline-specific projects (including benchmarking, practice sharing, and training and development for key staff involved in curriculum development). It was acknowledged that while the task group's recommendations will make a valuable contribution to this agenda (in conjunction with local disciplinary activities), institutional success in developing a curriculum that delivers the principles is dependent on broader institutional issues. For example, the

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.ed.ac.uk/equality-diversity/monitoring-statistics/edmarc>

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recommendations would have greater impact when implemented within a broader institutional curriculum review process. It is also important that academic work allocation models allow staff sufficient time to review and develop the curriculum, and that the University's staff profiles are diverse.

- 2.2.9 The principles and implementation plan are being taken forward during the 2019/20 academic session with oversight by the Senate Education Committee (the successor to LTC). A launch communication, setting out the key recommendations and actions, will be joined-up with a communication announcing the publication of the final report and recommendations of the 2018-19 Thematic Review of Student Support which focused on black and minority ethnic (BME) student's experiences of support at the University. The latter report was approved by SQAC in September 2019.

### **Supporting students with disabilities**

- 2.2.10 We have 11.5% undergraduate students with a declared disability, and have identified an attainment gap.

- 2.2.11 Students raised concerns about our arrangements for supporting disabled students, in particular noting that recommendations made in previous reviews had not been fully acted on. In response, the (former) Principal instigated a review in May 2016 and tasked a review panel to scrutinise priority areas, including the accessibility of the estate and the implementation of adjustments, and recommend options for enhancement. Central Management Group (CMG) endorsed the recommendations of the report in April 2017 and a group was established to oversee their implementation. The group met regularly to consider reports from each area with remitted actions and to determine whether sufficient progress had been made towards the completion of each action/recommendation, providing formative feedback comments where an action was progressing and confirmation when an action/recommendation had been completed. The group reported regularly to CMG until May 2019 when the final recommendation had been completed.

- 2.2.12 The key outcomes of the review included:

- a move from adjustments being recommended to a mandatory requirement, with a change to the academic regulatory framework to reflect this;
- disability systems were integrated into EUCLID, the student record system, to improve the communication and monitoring of adjustments;
- a major review of accessibility across approximately 300 buildings and 600 teaching spaces to guide a programme of improvement works. This resulted in online access guides and mobile apps being made available for each building. A new Accessibility Policy, and accompanying guidance, was approved which establishes a framework to monitor, maintain and improve accessibility across the University estate through development, refurbishment and maintenance activities, with £5m committed over the next 5 years specifically to improve accessibility.

### **Review of Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy**

- 2.2.13 In 2018/19, we took the opportunity to review and benchmark our Accessible and Inclusive Learning policy across the UK and to explore good practice elsewhere to

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help develop further the core content of our policy. We continue to be one of a handful of universities that has implemented a formal Accessible and Inclusive learning policy and continue to be an exemplar to other universities.

- 2.2.14 We used feedback from student forums, benchmarking exercise, student surveys and from feedback from academic staff to consider which elements of the plan worked well and which elements needed further embedding or enhancement. Significant improvements in technology has meant that elements of the plan are more consistently delivered and measurable particularly in relation to microphones use, virtual learning environments and the development and consistent delivery of a new Lecture Capture Policy.
- 2.2.15 It was agreed that we would continue to embed and promote the policy alongside the Lecture Capture policy. The appointment of a new Vice Principal for Students with a remit to review student curriculum gives us an exciting opportunity over the coming years to promote and further embed a Universal and Inclusive course design.

### **Students' Association's work to support Equality and Diversity**

- 2.2.16 The Students' Association supports five student-led Liberation Campaigns representing marginalised communities of students (Black and Minority Ethnic students, disabled students, LGBT+ students, Trans and Non-Binary students, and women students). Each Campaign is led by an Officer elected by self-defining students in a cross-campus ballot. The Campaigns lead on projects and campaigns, building a sense of belonging for students and working to improve the student experience, as well as the Students' Association's programme of Liberation History Months (Black History Month, Disability History Month, and LGBT+ History Month).
- 2.2.17 Alongside these Campaigns we have a number of Section Representatives who represent communities of non-traditional students including mature students, part-time students, student parents and student carers. The Students' Association's Vice President Welfare is also currently exploring establishing a student-led community of low-income, first-generation, and care-experienced students, in partnership with the University's Widening Participation team.
- 2.2.18 Through the Students' Association's Global Students work, including the Global Buddies and Tandem programmes, they have consistently demonstrated a commitment to ensuring that international students feel a sense of belonging to the wider University community and are able to fully participate in student life.
- 2.2.19 In 2018/19, the Students' Association participated in a national Student Representative Diversity project initiated by sparqs, which involved asking all Programme Representatives to complete a demographics survey as part of their induction to the role. The data gathered enabled us to better understand the experiences of our Programme Representatives, benchmark against other institutions in the sector, and in many cases represents a significant quantity of new data on student demographics which has informed the Students' Association's wider work on addressing equality and diversity.

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### Widening participation and access

- 2.2.20 The ELIR 2015 Report confirmed: “The University has an effective approach to widening participation that encompasses a range of activities, including innovative outreach; contextualised admissions; bursary provision; and flexible entry and exit routes into and through the University’s degree programmes.” (paragraph 24).
- 2.2.21 The University is currently working to develop in partnerships with key regional college partners to develop new access and articulation routes for target WP groups including mature students, students from Scotland’s most deprived communities and those who have care experience.
- 2.2.22 The potential for new foundation routes to the College of Science & Engineering and College of Medicine & Veterinary Medicine are currently being scoped. Discussions around access routes are concentrating on developing new routes and reviewing existing routes to ensure they still meet students’ needs to make a successful transition into the University. One new route for 2019-20 is the SWAP Access to Medical Studies programme at Edinburgh College, with students beginning their Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery (MBChB) in academic year 2020-21.
- 2.2.23 Currently, the majority of students accessing the University with an HNC or HND qualification have to repeat at least one year. The University’s initial objective with these college partnerships, is to agree formal articulation agreements for a 1+3 model (HNC to year 2 entry) in a small number of subject areas. The expectation is that the first of these new formal articulation agreements will enable entry for students from Edinburgh College to the University in 2020/21 or 2021/22 to programmes in Health in Social Science and Edinburgh College of Art (ECA).
- 2.2.24 As well as the new articulation routes, we are developing pre- and post-entry support to enable students to negotiate a successful transition into and through the University. This support has three strands comprising generic transition experiences, discipline/programme specific support, and integration or belonging. Generic transition support will focus on key academic skills and the differences between college HN study and the University culture. Discipline/programme specific initiatives prepare students for their academic curriculum, ensuring that they have pre- and post-entry opportunities to engage with key areas or threshold concepts that have not been covered in the HN. The final strand acknowledges that a sense of belonging and community is vital to ensure all students succeed and benefit fully from their time at the University.

### Flexible routes: Centre for Open Learning (COL)

- 2.2.25 The University’s English Language Education unit (ELE) continues to provide in-session and pre-session teaching to students across the University. An integral part of the Centre for Open Learning, ELE works with up to 4,027 (18/19 QA Report figure) undergraduate and postgraduate students who require tuition to further their language proficiency either for admissions or on-course purposes. A review of English Language provision will take place following a paper to the University Executive, this will outline a series of recommendations to include funding models, student experience and revised curricula. The ELE unit is responsible for the Summer Pre-Sessional programme which is required by many students progressing to PG study, the Pre-Sessional programme is validated by The British Association of

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Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes (BALEAP) every two years, the last inspection took place during the summer of 2019, the unit passed.

- 2.2.26 ELE numbers are expected to grow year on year in response to an increased student population and so careful planning and liaison with the Schools must take place. Attention is required to the availability and appropriateness of teaching spaces during the summer period whilst the Fringe Festival is operating. Under new leadership, the Director of ELE and senior leadership team within the Centre for Open Learning still require support from internal systems to track student success, whilst progression can be assumed following a successful Board of Examiners, the access to student data can stop there.
- 2.2.27 The Centre for Open Learning has grown in its offer since the last ELIR in 2015. The home of a large continuing education programme, the International Foundation Programme, Seasonal Provision and English Language, it now provides a Part-Time Access programme for adult returners, focusing on those from a widening participation background. Launched in academic year 18/19 with a cohort of 50 of which 41 completed the two semesters of study (80%). This completion exceeds those of other programmes of its nature (e.g. University of Glasgow 45%). All completing students received conditional offers for undergraduate study, 39 students secured places on UG degrees in the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. Students who did not complete the programme continue to be supported and sign posted to alternative academic provision wherever appropriate. A planned increase in the size of this cohort is expected in response to demand.
- 2.2.28 While a significant number of students enrolled on the Access programme are from SIMD20 areas (40%), all of these adult returner students have faced significant obstacles in achieving their academic goals. Over the course of their year of the programme, many manage their studies alongside full-time employment and family and caring responsibilities.
- 2.2.29 *Maths and GeoSciences engaging with schools Head of School other examples coming through Quality processes? STEM/Engineering? Education/placements or other activities? Business? ECA engagement officer?*

### Supporting students to gain an international experience

- 2.2.30 The ELIR 2015 Report noted: “The University has an effective approach to growing, promoting and enhancing student mobility.” [paragraph 51]. There has been increased participation and interest in student work and study away opportunities internationally. Demand from our students is particularly noticeable with regard to short-term mobility opportunities and work placements. A key area of our activity in this area is our continued support to increase access and inclusion for all of our students. We have focused support on providing opportunities for students from less advantaged backgrounds, those less well represented in learning abroad and delivering increased options for short-term and virtual mobility. The University remains the UK’s leading university for securing competitive external Erasmus+ funding to support student and staff mobility across the University.

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Academic Year	International Exchange	Short-term experiences	Erasmus/Swiss Exchange	Erasmus Work Placements	Grand Total
2011 2012	248	N/A	344	N/A	592
2012 2013	249	99	313	46	661
2013 2014	288	125	368	53	834
2014 2015	293	228	382	93	996
2015 2016	350	317	371	177	1215
2016 2017	395	346	347	216	1304
2017 2018	417	350	375	236	1378
2018-19*	495	360	341	250	1446
*provisional figures					

2.2.31 As part of our focus on providing greater access we have introduced an innovative ‘Global Insights Programme’<sup>16</sup> that enables students from widening participation backgrounds to travel in small groups, both in the UK and internationally, over one week to meet with alumni of the University to build their networks and experience of working and living overseas. The programme has been very well received by students and alumni and has stimulated greater interest in working or studying overseas and making connections between students and alumni along the way. In 2019, students visited London, Boston, Brussels, Hong Kong, New York City, San Francisco, Singapore and Washington DC.

2.2.32 We continue to diversify our portfolio of study and work away experiences for our students, recognising that not all students are able to go abroad for a variety of reasons including disability, caring responsibilities, work commitments and financial issues. As part of our wider response to addressing these barriers we are piloting virtual student exchanges through the Network for Intercultural Competence to facilitate Entrepreneurship, (NICE project), a European Commission Key Action 203 funded project coordinated by the University of Edinburgh.<sup>17</sup>

2.2.33 The project aims to develop soft skills, specifically Intercultural Competence (IC) and Entrepreneurship (ENT), in European students to help them successfully gain employment in their chosen field upon graduation. The NICE project acts as a value-add to traditional courses for students who wish to graduate with a well-rounded suite of skills. The majority of learning students undertake within the NICE project is virtual, resulting in an international experience that is available to all students, including

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.ed.ac.uk/careers/employers/advertise-your-job/employ-edinternshipsprogramme/insights-programme>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.nice-eu.org>

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those who may not be able to undertake the standard semester or yearlong exchange.

- 2.2.34 Recognising the importance of learning abroad to the student experience, whether through study, volunteering or internships, the University has created a new Study and Work Away Service within Edinburgh Global. The new service launched in 2019 following work within the Service Excellence Programme, and delivers excellence in student services and support with regards to study abroad, placements and internships both within the UK and internationally.

### **2.3 Supporting students in their learning at each stage of the learner journey from pre-admission to post-graduation, including outreach, admissions, articulation, graduate attributes, assessment, employability, and enterprise and entrepreneurship**

#### **Overview**

- 2.3.1 Since the last ELIR, we have made a number of developments to the way in which we support students in their learning at each stage of the learner journey, taking a complete student life-cycle perspective from recruitment to post-graduation.

Significant developments include:

- Continued enhancement to admissions policies and practices to recognise diversity and improve access;
- Development of our widening participation strategy;
- Extension of pre-arrival and induction support;
- Development of a new Student Experience Action Plan aimed at significant improvements to the student experience and student support;
- Development of a new Wellbeing Centre, bringing student counselling, disability support, health and wellbeing services under one roof and increasing the capacity of support;
- Review of student support arrangements;
- Implementation of the Service Excellence Programme;
- Expansion of peer support and learning;
- Increased support for personal, professional and career development;
- Increased alumni support.

#### **Recruitment and admissions**

- 2.3.2 We are committed to fair and transparent admissions policies and practices which value the wide range of academic, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds of our students and which enhance the applicant experience. Recognising the benefits that a diverse student and staff population bring to our university, our admissions policies and practices are designed to value diversity. Our policies on the admission of students with disabilities, students with criminal convictions and adult returners are designed to remove barriers, and our policy on the recognition of prior learning in admissions allows us to value experience beyond traditional academic qualifications.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/admissions/policies-procedures>



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- 2.3.3 We took an active part in the Commission on Widening Access review during 2015, and have reflected the recommendations of A Blueprint for Fairness in our Widening Participation Strategy. We have revised our contextual admissions policy to increase offer chances to students from the 20% most deprived postcodes in Scotland, and we have expanded our offer guarantee to all care experienced students.<sup>19</sup> We have developed an online contextual data checker<sup>20</sup> that enables prospective applicants to find out whether they are likely to be considered for a contextual offer, and what this means for them. We have also developed systems to offer additional support to refugees and asylum seekers who apply to the University.
- 2.3.4 We were an active participant in the SFC-funded Attracting Diversity project delivered by the Equality Challenge Unit, and created a pilot project to increase interest in computer science among S1-S3 girls from local schools.<sup>21</sup>
- 2.3.5 We have increased transparency for all applicants with the introduction of an English language policy to clarify our requirements. This is reviewed on an annual basis, to ensure that we are reflecting on new information and changes in requirements. We are carrying out a project to monitor the outcome of requests for English language flexibility. This will allow us to have clear parameters for considering future flexibility requests to ensure fairness across all parts of the University<sup>22</sup>
- 2.3.6 With the increase in our postgraduate student population we have introduced a range of on-campus and online opportunities to support postgraduate student recruitment and admissions. Our postgraduate Open Day is now among the most extensive in the UK, and this has been supported by the development of a virtual Open Week for online students.
- 2.3.7 Using a gathered field for selection to high demand postgraduate programmes has allowed us to ensure that all applicants can be fairly considered even if they apply later in the year, while an increased emphasis on relevant knowledge and experience has expanded opportunities for applicants from less traditional backgrounds.
- 2.3.8 We have increased our postgraduate recruitment presence in the UK and the EU, and are working closely with colleagues to prepare for the possible outcomes of Brexit. We have developed an initiative to engage current University of Edinburgh students with opportunities for postgraduate study – the Postgrad Launch Pad - and we have increased our online portfolio to provide postgraduate study opportunities for students from across the world. These changes have been underpinned by a new postgraduate admissions policy and procedure, and improved communications.<sup>23</sup>

### Pre-arrival and induction

- 2.3.9 Since the last ELIR, in response to the work of the Student Experience Project, the Pre Arrival & Induction team have worked with colleagues across the University to

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/undergraduate/access-edinburgh/widening-access-offers>

<sup>20</sup> <https://admission-checker.is.ed.ac.uk/>

<sup>21</sup>

[https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/equality\\_outcomes\\_and\\_mainstreaming\\_progress\\_report2019-final.pdf](https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/equality_outcomes_and_mainstreaming_progress_report2019-final.pdf), p.17

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/admissions/policies-procedures>

<sup>23</sup> [https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/pg\\_admissions\\_policy.pdf](https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/pg_admissions_policy.pdf)

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improve the pre-arrival information and induction experience for all new students. These improvements include:

- A new webpage<sup>24</sup> for all new students, including online learners, providing key information. A particularly successful section of this webpage is the ‘top 6 tasks’<sup>25</sup> which takes students through the key administrative tasks they should complete before they start and during Welcome Week. The ‘new student’ webpage also includes content from current students on the Student Voices pages.<sup>26</sup> In response to the recent Thematic Reviews of Mature Students, Student Parents and Carers (2018) and Black and Minority Ethnic Students (2019), we are in the process of including the voices and experiences of a more diverse group of students for 2020, including, but not limited to, BAME home and international students, commuter students, students living in University accommodation and mature students.
- The University of Edinburgh events app, which lists all Welcome Week events, including all central administration, Programme/School/College, and Student Association activities. In 2018, the events app was downloaded over 15,000 times and was accessed over 900,000 times. The top viewed/listed events were the “Activities Fair”, “Principal’s Welcome Ceremony” and “Register with a GP (Doctor)”.
- The New Student Facebook group was launched in 2018. This is a student led activity, and in both 2018 and 2019 was developed and moderated by a student intern working in the Pre Arrival & Induction team. In 2018 there were over 4,900 student members, 2,890 of whom were “active”, and by September 2019 almost 7,500 new students had signed up. For the 2019/20 academic year, these Facebook groups will remain open from mid-June to December 2019, to enable a longitudinal approach to sharing timely, transition-related information with new students, for instance support for academic skills development, wellbeing information, or highlighting specific events such as Mental Health & Wellbeing Week.
- The New Student Getting Started Guides and Checklists<sup>27</sup> which enable new students to negotiate the first few weeks of transition to the University and City.

### Gearing Up for Induction

2.3.10 Gearing Up for Induction is an annual event, running for the seventh consecutive year in 2019. Up until 2017, Gearing Up was a one-off annual conference, with an internal focus and limited places for external speakers. Over the last two years and in response to participant feedback, Gearing Up has developed from an annual conference, to a series of events targeting internal academic and professional services staff. Gearing Up also benefited from the QAA Enhancement Theme of ‘Transitions’ by broadening its focus to include transitions into, through and out of University. Discussions and sharing of practice with colleagues from universities across Scotland now happens via the Scottish Induction Professionals Network, which allows for engagement with a much wider community of external colleagues.

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/new-students>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/new-students/getting-started-resources/top-6-tasks>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/new-students/new-student-life/student-voices>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/new-students/getting-started-resources/getting-started-guides>

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2.3.11 The Gearing Up events<sup>28</sup> are timed with the recruitment, admissions and induction cycle to run throughout the year, enabling staff to:

- reflect on the previous year's induction activities;
- hear from students' about their personal experiences and work together to develop new or improve existing induction and transition activities;
- share good practice from across the University and the sector; and
- prepare for the next induction event.

2.3.12 Looking forward to the 2019/20 Gearing Up events, events will link with objectives in the emerging Student Experience Action Plan.

2.3.13 Gearing Up Sharepoint <https://uoe.sharepoint.com/sites/new-students/SitePages/Gearing%20Up%20for%20Welcome%20Week%202018.aspx?web=1>

### Student Experience Action Plan

2.3.14 Despite much good work by many colleagues across the University in recent years, the results of major surveys such as the National Student Survey (NSS) confirm that too many students at the University do not rate their experience as highly as we would wish. At undergraduate level in particular our relative NSS position (compared to our peers and the wider sector) is poor. Satisfaction with teaching and with learning opportunities at Edinburgh is only slightly less than at Russell Group peers, however satisfaction with assessment and feedback, academic support and student voice is significantly lower.

2.3.15 In response to these ongoing concerns, in 2018/19 the University developed and approved funding (just under £15 million over three years) for an ambitious Student Experience Action Plan. This sets out a holistic programme of work to improve the student experience at Edinburgh. It is not a plan to improve the NSS or any other student survey per se but is based on a logic model that sets out six major strands of work to support our goals of:

- Consistently excellent teaching;
- An inspiring curriculum;
- Excellent student support and customer service;
- Excellent facilities (physical and virtual) and inter-campus transport;
- A strong sense of belonging and community, underpinned by a strong student voice in University decision making; and
- An environment in which “things run smoothly” when it comes to the organisation and management of learning and teaching.

### *Excellent Teaching*

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<sup>28</sup> <https://www.edweb.ed.ac.uk/unpublished/students/new-students/induction-resources-for-university-colleagues/gearing-up>

## UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH – DRAFT REFLECTIVE ANALYSIS

- 2.3.16 Our commitment to recognition and reward of teaching excellence by staff has been led by the Teaching and Academic Careers Working Group, established in May 2018 to review processes for recognition, reward and support for teaching in academic careers. In its first phase of work the group developed and consulted widely on a set of Principles to guide the University's approach on teaching and academic careers. In November 2018 University Executive approved these Principles<sup>29</sup> and the task group began a second phase of work focused on ensuring these principles were reflected and enacted effectively in University policies and practices.
- 2.3.17 A central element was a revised version of the University's Exemplars of Excellence in Student Education, originally published in 2013, which sets out examples of achievement in teaching which might be used in cases of promotion at different grade levels, including for the first time cases for promotion from Grade 7 to Grade 8. Opening up the route for teaching-focused promotion from Grade 7 to 8 (and onward to Grade 10) will help to combat the perception that teaching is not valued as highly as other aspects of the academic role.
- 2.3.18 In June 2019 the University also approved the Groups' recommendations around professional development in teaching, including requiring all Schools and equivalent organisational units to produce a strategy and plan for professional development in teaching, and for this to be subject to periodic review and update. It includes setting indicative and aspirational University and School targets for the proportion of academic staff who teach who have a teaching qualification or accreditation.

### *Curriculum Review*

- 2.3.19 Curriculum review at programme, year or discipline level is a constant process across the University, with recent examples including: **Biological Sciences** (need to add stg here about when and what they did); **History** (need to add stg here about when and what they did); **Business Administration year 1?** (need to add stg here about when and what they did)
- 2.3.20 The University undertook a major review of the implications of digital technologies and data driven innovation on its future curriculum in the "Near Future Teaching" project led by Assistant Principal Professor Sian Bayne. This review, which set out a values-led approach to future uses of digital education technologies, is now being taken forward with initial investment in:
- Academic development roles focussed on data fluency and assessment diversification
  - Academic and consultancy roles to take forward initiatives in co-design methodologies and University-wide courses
  - Development of related training and resources for students and staff
- 2.3.21 Building on this, the University's newly appointed Vice Principal (Students) will be initiating a University-wide curriculum review (and potentially thereafter a full curriculum reform programme) starting in October 2019.

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<sup>29</sup> <https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/projects/teaching-and-academiccareers/principles>

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### *Student support*

- 2.3.22 The ELIR 2015 Report commented in relation to our Personal Tutor system that “it was evident that the system was not working effectively for all student groups and there would be considerable benefit in the University revisiting the way in which schools are implementing the system to ensure all students are able to benefit from the arrangements as intended.” (paragraph 44).
- 2.3.23 There has been a steady decline in student satisfaction with our Personal Tutor system as measured in surveys such as the NSS, where satisfaction has dropped from 68% in 2017 to 61% in 2019. In response, we initiated a fundamental review of student support across the University in 2018/19, including the personal tutor system, the school-based Student Support Teams and the wider student support “eco-system”. This work is well advanced, with recommendations expected in December 2019. [\[update\]](#)
- 2.3.24 We provide a wide array of centrally managed high-quality professional support services<sup>30</sup> including: Academic Services, Accommodation Services, Alumni, Careers Service, Chaplaincy, Centre for Sport and Exercise, Edinburgh Global, Institute for Academic Development, Library and Information Services, Student Administration, Student Counselling Service, Student Disability Service, Student Recruitment and Admissions, Student Systems, University Health Service, and the Students’ Association-run Advice Place<sup>31</sup>.
- 2.3.25 Our centrally provided student support services are available to all students throughout their programme of study on campus or at a distance. A key challenge for several services is accommodating the increasing demand for support, particularly for student counselling and wellbeing services. Despite continued, increased investments in services such as Student Counselling, mental health and wellbeing issues continue to be hugely important to our students and we have seen rapid year on year growth in demand for related services. For example the number of students disclosing a mental health disability has risen over the last five years by over 400% to 1,445 students in 2018/19; while the numbers coming forward for support from the Student Counselling Service (SCS) have increased by almost 300% over eight years.
- 2.3.26 In response, a new Health and Wellbeing Centre will open in the centre of the University in February 2020, bringing together the University’s health centre, pharmacy, student disability and student counselling services in one place and significantly increasing the capacity available for the counselling and disability services by 30%. This is accompanied by £2 million investment in delivering the University’s Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy over the next three years.

### *Excellent facilities*

- 2.3.27 We have made significant investment in physical and digital learning environments, student accommodation and social spaces. Section 2.5 details the develops and their impacts.

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<sup>30</sup> Student Services: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/staff-students/students/student-services>

<sup>31</sup> The Advice Place: <http://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/advice/>

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### *Student Community and Student Voice:*

- 2.3.28 We were one of the first Universities in the UK to develop a Residence Life programme which aims to create a residential community that welcomes and supports all students living in our accommodation. The “ResLife” team operates across all University-owned and a number of privately run accommodation sites where our students reside, with over 200 wardens and Residence Assistants whose priority is to welcome and support students throughout the year.
- 2.3.29 In addition, many students tell us that they find themselves at home in one or more of the large number of student-led societies and sports clubs available. However the distributed nature of the University’s estate, and the complexity of the curriculum, mean that in some areas of the University it can be hard to foster academic community between staff and students. A task group, led by Assistant Principal Professor Tina Harrison and Steve Hubbard (Chief Executive, Students’ Association), was established in 2019 to develop an evidence base and a practical plan to enhance student community and a sense of belonging across the University.
- 2.3.30 We have well established student representation structures, including a formal Student Partnership Agreement with the Students’ Association, a well-embedded system of Student-Staff Liaison Committees in all Schools and student representation on all major governance committees and groups, including Court, Senate and University Executive (detailed in Section 2.1). Together with the Students’ Association, the University has been working since 2017 to ensure that there is a more systematic approach to recruitment, induction and training of student representatives so that they are better able to carry out their role.

### *“Things run smoothly”*

- 2.3.31 While the evidence from surveys such as the NSS is that “organisation and management” does not correlate strongly with overall satisfaction, we know from analysis of free text comments that administrative inconsistencies, errors or changes can create real issues for students. In 2017, the University launched an ambitious programme of work to redesign Student Administration and Support as part of a wider Service Excellence Programme. Focussed on the systems, structures and processes that underpin student administration and support across the University, the programme of work aims to:
- Simplify and improve the consistency and accessibility of student administration and support, making it easier for students to access support and
  - Reduce administrative burden for both professional services and academic staff.
  - Generate savings that can be reinvested in other areas of strategic importance.
- 2.3.32 Early “wins” have included bringing together all student-focussed immigration advice and support in one professional team (2018) and providing personalised exam timetables and comprehensive student timetables for all students on the Office 365 platform (2019) (see Section 2.5).
- 2.3.33 Other “in flight” projects are focussed on:
- Delivery of one stop “hubs” on each campus that will provide easy to access services across a range of areas such as library, IT support, student finance and administration.



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- Centralising the administration of the special circumstances process to ensure greater consistency of decision making in this highly sensitive area.
- Developing a single team to administer the majority of “study away” opportunities across the University, including overseas exchanges, professional and industrial placements, providing a better service for students and a better ability for the University to manage the risks in all such cases.

### Peer Learning and Support

- 2.3.34 The ELIR 2015 Report recognised that “the University's promotion of peer-assisted schemes represents positive practice” (paragraph 45) and noted that these schemes are “valued by those who use them and also provide mentors with effective opportunities to develop transferable skills.” (paragraph 76). We were encourage “to continue supporting staff and students in the embedding of peer-assisted learning and to continue working with EUSA to deliver appropriate training for peers.” (paragraph 45).
- 2.3.35 The Students’ Association continues to run successful Peer Learning and Peer Support schemes across the University<sup>32</sup> and we have continued to work with the Students’ Association to support the expansion and embedding of such schemes.
- 2.3.36 Peer Learning and Peer Support schemes allow trained student volunteers to offer academic and pastoral support for newer students, to supplement the teaching and support offered by their School and the wider University. There are currently 52 projects, all running in partnership between the Students’ Association, students, and University staff. As of September 2019 there were projects running in every School, except the School of Divinity and the Centre for Open Learning. [plans for these?]
- 2.3.37 Currently, the majority of Peer Learning and Support schemes are delivered by students in their second, third or fourth year of undergraduate study for students in their first year. Currently, the Students’ Association is piloting a number of postgraduate peer projects which will be evaluated in 2020 with the intention of rolling out successful schemes.
- 2.3.38 The scale and success of the Peer Learning and Support work at Edinburgh has achieved both national and international recognition, as follows:
- receiving a NUS and The UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) Award for Excellence in International Student Support;
  - being shortlisted for a NUS UK Academic Representation Award 2014;
  - winning the University Impact category in the 2019 sparqs’ Student Engagement Awards;
  - the Peer Learning and Support team have been recognised as a best practice case study in an HEA Report on Mapping Peer-led Student to Student Learning;
  - invitations to present at a number of international conferences including in Sydney and Missouri;
  - requests for advice and guidance on setting up and running peer support projects from the universities of Glasgow, Stirling, Strathclyde, Napier, West of Scotland and Skyline Dubai.

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<sup>32</sup> <http://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/peersupport>



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2.3.39 The peer support system is part of the overall framework of student support provided to students and works alongside the Personal Tutor System, Student Support Officers and support provided via central support services. Additionally, for the peer mentors it provides an opportunity for senior (honours) students to grow in confidence and maturity - as they facilitate the learning and a positive experience of pre-honours students - and to be recognised for this achievement via the Edinburgh Award. The University is providing further support to the Students' Association over the next three years as part of the Student Experience Action Plan to continue developing peer support for students. [would be good to include some insight from the evaluation work undertaken to show the impact of peers support on students]

### Employability and Graduate Attributes

2.3.40 The ELIR 2015 Report confirmed: “The University has an effective approach to promoting the development of graduate attributes and employability skills” (paragraph 67) that was also considered to be “creative and dynamic” (paragraph 76). The report also noted the good progress we had made in this area in both the 2011 and 2015 reviews. We have built further on this foundation, developing and innovating within all stages of the student lifecycle, and engaging systematically with the breadth of the student experience and using this to support multiple priorities (Figure 1).

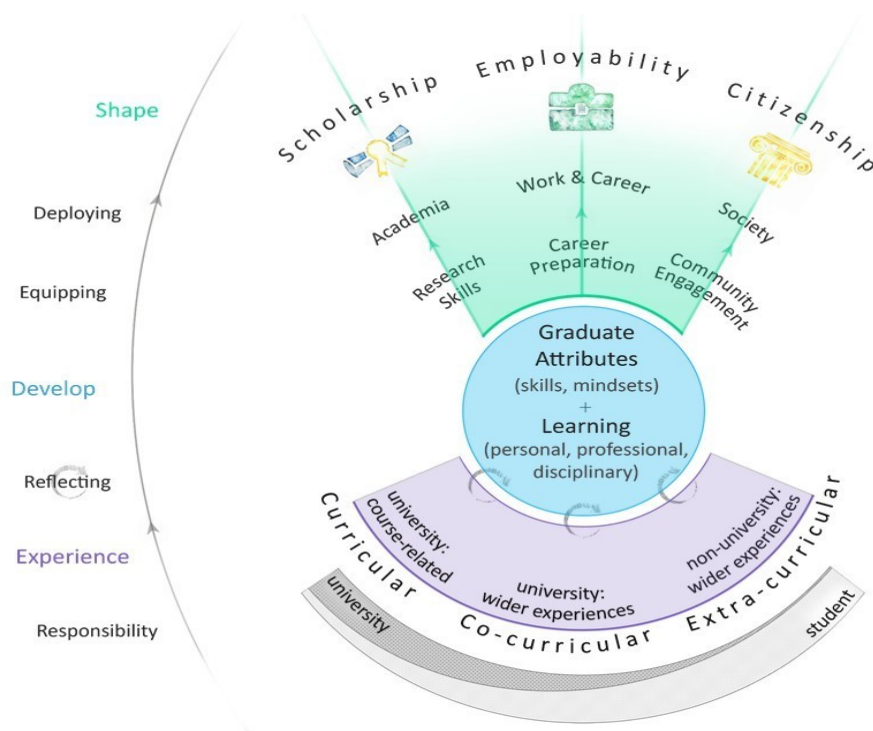


Figure 1: Schema for current University of Edinburgh graduate attributes and employability philosophy

2.3.41 Our approach is collaborative, working to ensure responsibility for employability and graduate attributes is jointly owned by schools and professional services, overseen by our Senatus Education Committee and our Director for Careers and Employability. There has been clear focus in this area since the last ELIR, including a Senate

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Learning and Teaching Committee Task Group in 2017/18. This focus is set to continue under our new Strategic Plan.

- 2.3.42 “The University's Graduate Attributes Framework provides a key reference point for supporting students in the development of their graduate attributes through curricular and co-curricular opportunities” (paragraph 67)

### *Curricular activity*

- 2.3.43 At the curricular level, graduate attributes are included in course approval, monitoring and periodic review. Integrated governance of this agenda is developing across Schools: School Careers and Employability Development Strategies are an evidence-based collaborative process between schools and the Careers Service focused on impact; academic partners with defined employability and careers remit have been established in GeoSciences, ECA and HCA, in addition to industry engagement boards in more vocational areas such as Engineering.
- 2.3.44 We are informing our thinking and action through a mapping of our undergraduate curriculum against sector-informed design principles regarding employability and graduate attributes.<sup>33</sup> This identified a wealth of contributing activity across the institution as well as areas for improvement, including being more explicit to students about how our provision already supports their employability. We are taking concrete steps in response to the findings, including staff workshops for learning and teaching leaders and the development of a toolkit for embedding and surfacing student development, employability and graduate attributes in the curriculum.<sup>34</sup> These complement our existing curricular enhancement activities, such as a special employability funding stream within our Principal's Teaching Award Scheme<sup>35</sup> (many projects delivered in collaboration between schools and our Careers Service) and our investment in and expansion of an institution-wide course model for giving academic credit for reflective, experiential learning – Student-Led, Individually-Created Courses (SLICCs<sup>36</sup>). There are multiple school-owned courses alongside a small centrally-run summer elective for Year 1 and 2 undergraduates. We are considering expanding this into a semester-time option to increase accessibility.
- 2.3.45 We recognise that not all activity falls neatly into ‘curricular’ or ‘co-curricular’ silos and therefore continue to develop our range of enabling structures that support progress holistically. Supporting both staff and students, our Reflection Toolkit<sup>37</sup> was developed in response to the pivotal role of reflection in supporting student development and employability across all parts of the student experience. Our Making Transitions Personal (MTP) Pre-arrival Reviews<sup>38</sup> built on sector activity around career readiness, learning gain, pre-arrival and induction. Three-quarters of our schools now use these self-reflective reviews with incoming UG and/or PGT entrants to surface their aspirations, expectations and concerns, to create a more personalised experience, and to enable targeted and tailored support based on individuals' responses. We look to expand this initiative into further years of study and integrate into our strategy for graduate careers support.

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<sup>33</sup> Paper LTC 18/19 5 C – Careers and Employability Update

<sup>34</sup> [www.ed.ac.uk/employability/curriculum-toolkit](http://www.ed.ac.uk/employability/curriculum-toolkit)

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/learning-teaching/funding/funding>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.ed.ac.uk/employability/slicc>

<sup>37</sup> [www.ed.ac.uk/reflection](http://www.ed.ac.uk/reflection)

<sup>38</sup> <https://edin.ac/MTP>

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- 2.3.46 The Students as Change Agents<sup>39</sup> project is piloting curricular and co-curricular models of interdisciplinary, challenge-led experiential learning. Working with external partners from the private, public and third sector through a two year funded pilot, we are testing different models and approaches with students and partners to develop genuinely scalable and high quality delivery models.
- 2.3.47 Enterprise and Entrepreneurship plays a vital part in the development of graduate attributes and student employability as well as being a career choice for a significant number of graduates. Edinburgh Innovations' Student Enterprise Service<sup>40</sup> leads our work in this area, working in partnership with Student Societies and other university departments.
- 2.3.48 They work to build an enterprising mind-set within our student community where all our students, not just those that wish to set up their own business, can develop creativity, leadership, innovation, negotiation skills and in doing so build their confidence and enhance their employability and student experience. They provide business support systems that inspire, launch and grow student businesses; offering a wide range of workshops and masterclasses, 1-2-1 business support, online resources, collaboration space, investment, mentoring and coaching opportunities that supports the creation and growth of new startups and social ventures.
- 2.3.49 We have seen growing evidence that more students than ever are interested in setting up a business: 37 student businesses were started in 2016/17, 45 in 2017/18 and 54 in 2018/19. We expect that this will reach 100 student startups by 2022. A newly launched Student Enterprise Hub in central campus will allow greater engagement with student community and offers a focus for enterprise activity and collaboration. This is supported by a dedicated team of business advisers and enterprise educators offering a wide range of enterprise learning opportunities, expert support and connections, in addition to curated online resources<sup>41</sup>.
- 2.3.50 We are increasingly aligning the development of enterprise skills with wider employability activity and see this as a necessary approach to engage academic staff and align curriculum development activity, including contextualising the offer for Colleges and Schools. This will also help us address the challenge of raising awareness across the student community so we can support more students to turn their passion into a business.
- 2.3.51 The 2015 ELIR report recognised the Edinburgh Award<sup>42</sup> “as particularly positive practice for its ability to promote student engagement in developing graduate attributes across a wide and expanding range of activities.” (paragraph 67). Over 1000 students now receive an Edinburgh Award each year (more than double the amount at the time of the last ELIR) and we actively work to ensure as wide a range of co- and extra-curricular activities as possible are included. We recognised that the size of our institution can make it difficult for students to uncover the full range of development opportunities available to them; in response we have created MyDevelopmentHub<sup>43</sup> as a central online signpost for students interested in any aspect of their development.

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<sup>40</sup> <https://www.ed.ac.uk/edinburgh-innovations/for-students>

<sup>41</sup> [www.eil.ac/students](http://www.eil.ac/students)

<sup>42</sup> [www.ed.ac.uk/edinburgh-award](http://www.ed.ac.uk/edinburgh-award)

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.ed.ac.uk/my-development-hub>

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- 2.3.52 We continue to grow the range of immersive and experiential learning opportunities on offer, including school-based activities such as ‘Concept to Consumer’ in the School of Chemistry and SIM (Student Insight Meeting) days in Biomedical Sciences and Biological Sciences where interdisciplinary teams tackle ‘real world’ problems set and facilitated by industry partners.
- 2.3.53 To support students from Widening Participation backgrounds to develop their social capital and gain exposure to diverse careers areas, we have introduced the Insights programme.<sup>44</sup> Students are hosted by alumni across the world on fully-funded and supported local and international work experiences. One hundred students took part in 2018/19 and we have ambitious targets to double participation year on year. We have also expanded our Employ.ed internships schemes<sup>45</sup> which provides valuable structured internships within University departments and in SMEs. This includes offering part-time internships to increase access for students with family commitments

### Assessment and feedback

- 2.3.54 The ELIR 2015 Report acknowledged that we had “invested significant time and effort in initiatives aimed at improving students’ experiences of feedback on assessment” (paragraph 55). However, this had not been reflected in the NSS results. [Need something that highlights our position re NSS, PTES, PRES]. Our internal CEQs show a more positive picture with regards to student satisfaction with assessment and feedback Add insight from CEQs on assessment and feedback. Our annual analysis of external examiner reports (from approximately 500 external examiners) consistently commends our assessment and feedback practice. [need to quantify this and add quotes].
- 2.3.55 Since the last ELIR, we have continued to devote considerable attention to ways to improve assessment and feedback. Chapter 1 summarises the follow-up actions taken in response to the recommendations made in the 2015 ELIR report.
- 2.3.56 In response to the ELIR 2015 Report recommendation that we “implement feedback policy and practice in a clear and consistent manner across the University” (paragraph 60), Senate Learning and Teaching Committee approved a proposal in November 2016 that made the Assessment and Feedback Enhancement Group a formal Task Group of the Committee.<sup>46</sup> The Group had previously acted as an informal advisory group to the Assistant Principal Assessment and Feedback since its establishment in April 2016. The formation of a formal Task Group provided an opportunity to report annually on activities to Senate Learning and Teaching Committee and advise the Committee on improvements for enhancing assessment and feedback practice.
- 2.3.57 The Task Group reviewed the existing Feedback Standards and Guiding Principles resulting in the development of a more practical guide linked to an interactive set of resources and case studies. The ‘EngagEd in... feedback and assessment’<sup>47</sup> guide, published in October 2017, is available on the Institute for Academic Development’s

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<sup>44</sup> <https://www.ed.ac.uk/careers/looking-for-work/internships/employed/insights-programme>

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.ed.ac.uk/careers/looking-for-work/internships/employed>

<sup>46</sup> [https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/16\\_november\\_2016\\_-\\_agenda\\_and\\_papers\\_final.pdf](https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/16_november_2016_-_agenda_and_papers_final.pdf) (Paper I)

<sup>47</sup>

[http://www.docs.hss.ed.ac.uk/iad/Learning\\_teaching/Academic\\_teaching/Resources/Student\\_Engagement/UoE\\_IADEngage\\_FeedbackAssess\\_A5\\_V4\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.docs.hss.ed.ac.uk/iad/Learning_teaching/Academic_teaching/Resources/Student_Engagement/UoE_IADEngage_FeedbackAssess_A5_V4_WEB.pdf)

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website. The document, which contains updated principles as well as practical guidance, replaced the previous Feedback Standards and Guiding Principles.

**Marker: What is the status of the document? What have we done with this? It's a really useful document and set of principles, has there been an evaluation of the guide?** The impact of the document is being reviewed by the Institute for Academic Development as part of a wider reflection on the use of the 'EngagEd in...' series of guides.

2.3.58 The Task Group also assumed responsibility for the Leading Enhancement in Assessment and Feedback (LEAF) quarterly meetings, which had been operating since November 2014. Since the last ELIR in 2015, LEAF audits have continued, and to date **[marker: number of audits have taken place across X schools]**. Themes arising from the audits have been reported annually to Senate Learning and Teaching Committee. Year on year and across programmes, LEAF has highlighted a number of themes relating to the assessment and feedback experience of students with sufficient consistency to infer that these may be more generic issues for programmes. The general themes highlighted are:

- Over-assessment and deadline log-jams; disparity in required workload and credit available;
- Consistency in assessment and teaching: 'assessment injustice'.
- Agency / assessment literacy: students are not always sure what is expected of them.
- Aligned authentic assessment: exams and 'traditional' methods dominate.
- Sense of community: peer support and dialogue between staff and students to address perceived distance. This may be addressed by developing feedback as a dialogic process.**[what have we done with these themes? Have they informed any action?]**

2.3.59 Responding to the ELIR 2015 Report recommendation that "all students receive timely, relevant and high quality feedback" (paragraph 60), Senate Learning and Teaching Committee agreed that it would be essential to measure both feedback turnaround times and quality of feedback. Proposals were submitted to Senate Curriculum and Student Progression Committee and then to Senate Learning and Teaching Committee from September 2016. In November 2017, Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) approved changes to annual monitoring, review and reporting processes to monitor feedback turnaround times through the programme monitoring form; specifically monitoring adherence to the feedback deadline set out in Regulation 16 of our Taught Assessment Regulations.<sup>48</sup>

2.3.60 In December 2019, the Sub Group of SQAC that reviews School annual quality reports recommended to the University Executive that we review the 15 day feedback turnaround deadline to determine whether it remained appropriate in all circumstances, and to explore whether a different approach could be taken whilst still allowing for timely and quality feedback to be provided to students, in a clearly communicated timeframe alongside robust marking and moderation processes.

**Marker: update. Monitoring quality of feedback – update**

2.3.61 The ELIR Report 2015 encouraged us to reflect on "the positive experiences of assessment and feedback reported by ODL students." (paragraph 60). **[we did, what did it tell us?]** At the January 2016 meeting of Senate Learning and Teaching Committee, the Senior Vice-Principal communicated that Principal's Strategy Group

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<sup>48</sup> <https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/taughtassessmentregulations.pdf>



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had agreed that all areas must move to online submission of assessed work and return of feedback.<sup>49</sup> In practice many areas across the university have gone further to include marking of assessments online, in addition to the provision of feedback electronically. [do we want to acknowledge examples, and also it's not been without its challenges]

- 2.3.62 Despite these, and other, developments in our approach to assessment and feedback, it is disappointing that our overall position with respect to NSS has not changed significantly at an institutional level. We are increasingly of the view that to address assessment and feedback in a meaningful way requires consideration of the wider relationship between assessment methods, feedback and the curriculum. We have begun to take a more holistic approach to assessment and feedback and are increasingly supporting staff in course/programme curriculum development and approval processes through the Edinburgh Learning Design Roadmap (ELDeR).<sup>50</sup>
- 2.3.63 ELDeR has been operating since June 2016 and was developed by Information Services Group out of a framework called CAIeRO. ELDeR is a learning design process that takes place over two-days involving the course or programme team, administrators and learning technologists. At the heart of the ELDeR process is the design of student learning experiences, where student feedback and assessment literacies are given top priority, and a shared vision of the course/programme is developed between team members. The output of the ELDeR process can be used in making proposals for courses/programmes approvals to Boards of Studies. To date [marker: number of ELDeR workshops have taken place across X schools]. [any evidence that these are having an impact on improving assessment and feedback from the student perspective?] *MVM PGT ask all programmes to go through ELDER ??*
- 2.3.64 In November 2017 Senate Learning and Teaching Committee considered a paper on the current status of course and programme design resources and proposals to expand and embed these.<sup>51</sup> The Committee agreed to strengthen support for Boards of Studies Conveners and training sessions were developed and delivered as outlined in Chapter 4. Five Boards of Studies Conveners and Administrators training sessions have been delivered, covering both pedagogical considerations for developing and reviewing course and programme proposals and clarification of Boards of Studies' roles and responsibilities. Assessment and feedback forms an element of the training, in particular the need for each course to have a formative feedback event and aligning learning outcomes and assessment. Taken together, these developments, including LEAF and ELDeR processes are ensuring increased attention "to the provision of formative feedback opportunities" (ELIR 2015 Report, paragraph 60), in line with regulation 15 of our Taught Assessment Regulations<sup>52</sup> that states: "All students will be given at least one formative feedback or feed-forward event for every course they undertake."
- 2.3.65 In May 2019, Senate Learning and Teaching Committee approved a proposal to amend the name and remit of the Assessment and Feedback Enhancement Group<sup>53</sup>. In line with our wider thinking, the Group considered that assessment and feedback cannot be looked at in isolation but rather is part of a wider context of curriculum design. As a result the name of the Group was changed to the Supporting

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<sup>49</sup> <https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/agendapapers20160127.pdf>

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/learning-technology/learning-design/about>

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/20171115agendapapers.pdf> (Paper B)

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/taughtassessmentregulations.pdf>

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/20190522combinedagendapapers.pdf> Paper K

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Curriculum Development Group and the remit was expanded to cover matters and operational support relating to curriculum, course and programme design, including assessment and feedback.

- 2.3.66 In line with our move to a more holistic approach to curriculum design to enhance assessment and feedback practices, LEAF activity was reduced from 2018/19. A LEAF-lite model was introduced where some elements of the audit are carried by the programme and some remain supported by IAD. In October 2019 a LEAF-lite resource<sup>54</sup> was produced.
- 2.3.67 With the appointment of a new Vice-Principal Students, the University has committed to undertaking a university-wide curriculum review in the near future. Whilst the scope of this review has not yet been decided, it is very likely that assessment and feedback will be a fundamental aspect. [marker: update]
- 2.3.68 Throughout all the developments outlined, we continue to share good practice in assessment and feedback across a range of networks and events. Good practice examples which are identified through quality processes are shared across the University through a variety of mechanisms including Teaching Matters, network meetings and events. Assessment and feedback was a theme of the University-level sharing good practice event in February 2019 and the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine's good practice showcase in March 2020. The Boards of Studies Network event on 11 November 2019 focussed enhancing assessment and feedback. The March 2019 meeting of the Directors of Teaching network included presentations on formative feedback and colleagues will be encouraged to submit contributions to the Teaching Matters blog on the subject.
- 2.3.69 **Internal audit update to be added..**
- 2.3.70 We were encouraged to "engage in further analyses of NSS free text answers". (paragraph 59) [marker: see detail in Chapter 1]

### Post-graduation support

- 2.3.71 **Say something about the ongoing careers service support. Any other post-graduation support we provide?**
- 2.3.72 In July 2018 we launched Platform One, a single online space for all members of the University community, past and present. Platform One aims to provide a single online location where students, alumni, staff and volunteers can share, interact and advise. Over the last year we have focussed on growing the community through a soft launch by sending targeted invitations to specific cohorts of University people. This has resulted in 4,582 sign-ups (August 2019), including members from 107 countries around the world with a variety of different experiences. 450 members are currently offering formal support to our students, including advice via email, work shadowing and advice about building a start-up. In the coming year we will aim to increase activity and interactions, with the view to invite all new matriculated students to join an active and welcoming Platform One community in 2020.



### 2.4 Postgraduate taught and research student experience.

- 2.4.1 Taught Postgraduate students at Edinburgh generally are more satisfied with their experience than undergraduate or Postgraduate Research students. Satisfaction scores in the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) are in line with or slightly above the average across the Russell Group in the majority of the themes covered. Open comments indicate that PGT students think that teaching is of a high quality but that there could be a greater focus on career readiness and the application of learning to real world, practical situations. Comments in PTES echo concerns in the NSS around the quality and timeliness of feedback on assessment.
- 2.4.2 For PGR students, the Postgraduate Researcher Experience Survey (PRES) shows that satisfaction scores at Edinburgh are slightly below the average for the Russell Group in all but one area (access to resources). The gap between us and the rest of the Russell Group is however much smaller than the gap seen in NSS scores. Open comments highlight the importance of a positive relationship between PGR students and their supervisors.

#### Training for postgraduate students that teach

- 2.4.3 Training and development for tutors and demonstrators is provided locally at the discipline level and centrally by the Institute for Academic Development (IAD). IAD employs 1.7FTE staff to provide a range of courses for new and experienced tutors and demonstrators on topics such as effective tutoring and assessment and feedback, as well as provision for online tutors and information to support staff who work with tutors and demonstrators.
- 2.4.4 In 2016, a Task Group of the Senate Researcher Experience Committee (REC), including membership from IAD, was appointed to review our Code of Practice on Tutoring and Demonstrating. The review included external benchmarking and consultation with Tutors and Demonstrators and the staff that support them. In 2017, the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee and REC approved a new Policy<sup>55</sup> for the recruitment, support and development of tutors and demonstrators that came into effect fully at the start of academic year 2018/19.
- 2.4.5 The Policy details, amongst other things, an expectation of specific induction training for Tutors and Demonstrators and resources that Tutors and Demonstrators may reasonably expect to have access to. IAD have been involved in communicating this Policy to Tutors and Demonstrators around the University through newsletters and at every relevant workshop. In supporting Schools to implement this Policy, IAD have been working with staff across the University to adapt, customise and design discipline specific training for their school's inductions and ongoing CPD activities for the Tutors and Demonstrators they support. IAD will support Academic Services in evaluation of impact from this aspect in the future.
- 2.4.6 In addition, the programme of CPD workshops provided by IAD are reassessed after each iteration, taking participant and facilitator feedback into account. Activities and resources are appraised each summer. This allows for the implementation of more specific, targeted activities and the incorporation of emerging literature, and allows facilitators to adjust approaches to better teach a concept if needed. During 2019, IAD also carried out an overhaul of the online resources available to Tutors and

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<sup>55</sup> Insert link to policy

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Demonstrators held on a Learn space, expanding the resource to include topics such as diversity and improved guidelines around accessibility. The Learn space is now a more useful resource for Tutors and Demonstrators, with improved navigability and relevance. IAD are now also able to track usage statistics around this resource.

- 2.4.7 IAD supports PGR students in gaining recognition for their teaching through accreditation with the HEA as part of AdvanceHE. The Introduction to Academic Practice (IntroAP) is aimed at Tutors and Demonstrators, providing a tailored introduction to pedagogical literature and reflective practices to gain Associate Fellowship, with over 80%<sup>56</sup> of all 276 completers since its introduction in 2013 being PGR students. This high concentration of PGR students allows the course facilitators to incorporate structures and content that is relevant and considerate of the specific teaching-PGR experience. 60% of all iterations of the course have run at full capacity since its induction, often with a waiting list. The rate for successful completion on a first attempt is over 98%, with all unsuccessful participants gaining accreditation on their second attempt. PGR participants report increased confidence in their teaching practices, a greater appreciation of their own role within a teaching team leading to increased participation in those teams, and a greater understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of their teaching practice.
- 2.4.8 The network of teaching peers that PGR participants build through their participation on IntroAP are also greatly valued by the participants. IAD also support PGRs to gain accreditation through Level 1 of the Edinburgh Teaching Award. This is a supported mentored pathway for development in learning and teaching blogging based program in which participants are assigned an individual mentor who works with the candidate to provide tailored support and guidance through relevant literature and reflective practice. This differs from IntroAP in the manner in which this support is provided. Given the highly flexible nature of this programme, this is well suited to the wider PGR experience, fitting in with an otherwise busy research and teaching schedule. This allows the programme to enhance and build the PGRs' reflective practice rather than constrain the participant.
- 2.4.9 The mentor-mentee relationship allows the Level 1 participant to closely work with a specifically chosen mentor who is in the position to share appropriate good practice and engage in learning conversations that allow the PGR student to understand and examine their own practice in a way they may otherwise not have the opportunity to at their level of teaching, building confidence at an early stage in their teaching career. EdTA Level 1 is a highly popular programme, frequently oversubscribed. To (in part) address this, the EdTA programme has been rolled out locally to five schools around the University. Additionally, the EdTA Level 1 and IntroAP Programme Leads at IAD are in frequent contact with regards to re-directing PGRs between the two programmes where appropriate to ensure that every applicant is supported in the most appropriate and timely manner for them. Participants on the EdTA programme have reported a particular appreciation of the mentor and group meeting support offered by the programme, as well as the challenging nature of the programme which encourages deeper self-reflection.

### **2.5 Learning environment, including the use of technology**

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<sup>56</sup> This is calculated on application data going back 5 iterations of the course as the data for the 4 courses that ran before this is not easily accessible.

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### Overview

- 2.5.1 Since the last ELIR we have continued to make significant investment in the learning environment. In terms of our physical infrastructure, this has included:
- the development and refurbishment of lecture theatres and other teaching and study spaces, such as the Lister Learning and Teaching Centre that opened in 2018, which serves the central campus area and the redevelopment of Murchison House at Kings Buildings, in 2018, bringing additional group-study and collaborative teaching spaces amongst other benefits;
  - spaces that foster or support student and staff community, including student society spaces (redevelopment of the Students' Association Pleasance site in 2017);
  - common areas and rooms in University buildings (for example, the restoration of Rainy Hall);
  - expansion and development of student accommodation.
- 2.5.2 In terms of our digital infrastructure, developments include:
- Implementation of lecture recording across the University;
  - Our VLE consolidation programme, reducing the number of different platforms in use and consolidating into one major VLE, Blackboard Learn.
  - Development of standards for VLE through the Learn Foundations project.
  - The introduction of Resource Lists, supporting the consistent provision of reading list information and teaching resources.
  - Roll-out of Microsoft's Office 365 suite to all students and staff of the University, combining email, calendar and OneDrive file storage
  - implementation of MyTimetable in Office 365 calendars, providing students with a personalised timetable they can access on phones, computers or other devices.
  - Developments to MyEd, the University's central portal, making it easier for students to find and complete task relevant to them.
  - Development of our online programmes, including Distance Learning at Scale.

### Estates developments

- 2.5.3 Since the previous ELIR, the Estates Vision 2017-2027 has been developed which sets out our ambition to 'create world class estate for a world-class University.' With a commitment of £1.5bn over the coming years to ensure we provide an ever more stimulating environment in support of learning, inquiry, research, innovation and interaction. The aim is to provide an estate which exceeds expectations, responds flexibly to changing student and staff needs and showcases the University. We aim to be responsive and sector leading in the creative use of our spaces to inspire and deliver an outstanding learning and teaching experience.
- 2.5.4 To support our vision the following mission statements enshrine our approach:
- We ensure our Learning and Teaching Spaces Strategy is in dialogue with the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy and the Estates' vision to enable the smooth transformation required by our overall vision.
  - We raise awareness around issues of space and learning and teaching to open up communication across and between different staff and student communities We gather information about new technologies, diverse methods of teaching and learning, and contemporary educational approaches in higher education to make recommendations for improvements to the University's estate.

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- We make sure staff and students have a chance to express their expectations or share their concerns to inform directly the programmes of work in Estates, Timetabling and Information Services Group.
- We make sure students and staff have the best possible information on available physical and digital estate and are aware how they can use it for formal/informal learning and teaching.
- We provide spaces, and information about them, that inspire staff and students to try different approaches to learning and teaching.
- We continuously review our services to ensure all processes involved, from timetabling to new builds, reflect current and future needs deliver an outstanding learning and teaching experience.

2.5.5 The priorities as set out in the Estates Vision are to:

- Develop integrated campuses, hubbed around our exceptional students and staff
- Create outstanding teaching and learning spaces
- Enhancing the student experience
- Delivering inspirational and contemporary research facilities
- Provide attractive places where students and staff can interact
- Support innovation by providing collaborative spaces where industry, public and third sectors and the University can interact and 'breathe the same air'
- Protect our city's heritage
- Accommodate staff in shared spaces to stimulate and enhance collaborative working
- Plan an optimal, accessible estate to meet the future requirements of our students and staff
- Connect our residential accommodation and academic estates with effective transport links
- Align our estate plans to the University's strategic plan

2.5.6 To maintain a complex and challenging estate comprising over 550 buildings, we spend approximately £60m per annum on delivering an effective operation to support the estate. Since the previous ELIR, Estates Operations has continued to develop a student, staff and visitor centred approach to how we effectively maintain our estate. Estates Operations has a clear strategic objective to move towards asset based maintenance, to provide a managed framework around proactive maintenance and replacement, moving away from a run to fail approach, which in turn will improve the down time and outages of plant and kit critical to the seamless operation of the estate. This has seen a shift from reactive maintenance to planned preventative maintenance. Estates Operations are also key in the development of the University's ambition of being carbon neutral by 2040.

2.5.7 Coupled with the capital programme, the Space Strategy Group, a sub-committee of Estates Committee, is charged with developing strategy in relation to how the University effectively uses space to deliver the vision. The Space Strategy Group acts as a conduit in the development of space in line with current pedagogy coupled with student and staff need.

2.5.8 The Learning Spaces Technology team supports AV and Information Technology across the full spectrum of learning and teaching spaces from formal lecture theatres and classrooms to open access computers in cafes and social spaces. Our 2019 Learning and Teaching Spaces strategy<sup>57</sup> outlines our vision: "We aim to be

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<sup>57</sup> [https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/lt\\_spaces\\_strategy\\_2019.pdf](https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/lt_spaces_strategy_2019.pdf)

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responsive and sector-leading in the creative use of our spaces to inspire and deliver an outstanding learning and teaching experience”. Our work is pedagogically led and we engagement closely with staff and students regarding learning and teaching spaces and their use to ensure our Learning and Teaching Spaces Strategy is in support of the University’s Learning and Teaching Strategy. We raise awareness around issues of space, technology and accessibility to open up communication across and between different staff and student communities and gather information about new technologies, diverse methods of teaching and learning, and contemporary educational approaches in higher education. We conduct surveys to understand how our estate is used and we provide spaces that inspire staff and students to try different approaches to learning and teaching.

### Lecture recording

2.5.9 In response to student demand, we introduced a campus-wide lecture recording system,<sup>58</sup> approved by Court in September 2016. Rolling out lecture recording at scale was also one of the key recommendations from the 2016 review of the University’s Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy. The goal of the project has been to enhance the student experience alongside bringing extensive pedagogical and research benefits.

2.5.10 The new lecture recording service, MediaHopper Replay, has been rolled out in three stages, with the first stage of 114 rooms equipped for use in academic year 2017/18. For the academic year 2018/19 this increased to 300 rooms and by the start of 2019/20 had equipped 400 teaching spaces. The capital investment amounted to £2.25 million and the scale of the development amounted to one of the largest digital audio-visual upgrades to take place in the UK.

2.5.11 The rollout of lecture recording has significantly enhanced the student experience and brought a range of new technologies into our teaching rooms. Our approach was based on being widely flexible and enabling choices of formats and pedagogy. The ability to watch lectures again as an aid to revision is immensely popular with our students and capturing video and audio recordings of lectures at scale will supplement the rich set of online resources that already exist to support learning. *[useful to have some statistics of use]*

*“Offering lecture recordings to our students to such a high quality means that the recordings become an easy to view way of checking exactly what a complex equation said, or how a diagram was drawn. I can honestly say this is the best lecture capture chalkboard solution I have seen anywhere.” – Ross Galloway, Senior Teaching Development Officer, School of Physics and Astronomy*

2.5.12 We understand that each lecturer has a different way of working, and the system accommodates this by recording from two sources, which might be a combination of the lecturer’s PC, laptop, the teaching desk, or the chalkboard. This gives us the flexibility to provide students with all the information from a lecture, in whichever method the instructor chooses to deliver it. There is no need for them to adjust their teaching style to suit the technology.

2.5.13 The value of the investment in lecture recording has been seen within the university in a number of ways. Many of our students have complex lives and are balancing study alongside caring responsibilities, or the need to work to fund their studies.

<sup>58</sup> [https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/online\\_learning\\_brochure\\_july\\_2019.pdf](https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/online_learning_brochure_july_2019.pdf)

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Recordings of lectures can lessen anxiety about keeping on top of study and provide a safety net when life circumstances prevail. Lecture recording offers all students an opportunity to watch again to deepen learning and understanding. Students can rewind and review material anywhere, anytime and catch up on points they may have missed to support exam preparation and aid learning.

- 2.5.14 We identified many areas where lecture recording may benefit the wider university community, such as providing new opportunities for research, supporting pedagogical innovation, reducing the risk of lecturing as a ‘high-stakes’ activity, and better supporting students through stressful transitions. It was important to the University that we learn as much as possible from this project, not just in terms of a technical roll-out but also as a learning technology which changes the way we teach and learn. We funded research into the institutional impact of lecture recording as well as a range of smaller discipline-specific projects<sup>59</sup>. The lecture recording service teams supported these research projects through helping to source data from the systems, facilitating dissemination of findings, and identifying overlaps between projects and future opportunities for collaborative research.
- 2.5.15 The scale of the Lecture Recording Programme and the profound changes it brought to the practice of learning and teaching meant that a new and robust lecture recording policy had to be developed, which we implemented in January 2019.<sup>60</sup> This means that lecture recording now happens automatically for everything marked in the timetabling system as a lecture taking place in a room fitted with the Media Hopper technology. Lecturers can however still opt-out of all or some of their lectures being recorded. The growth in use of the service has exceeded expectations. In 2017/18, over 13,000 lecture recordings were made, with 470,000 student views of these recordings. In 2018/19, over 25,000 lecture recordings were captured with over 750,000 student views. The Student Experience Action Plan is supporting the further roll-out of underpinning technologies to support student learning including enhanced AV facilities, electronic reading lists, and subtitling for digital media (following a successful pilot).

### Virtual Learning Environment

- 2.5.16 The University has made use of a number of learning platforms and Virtual Learning Environment (VLEs) over the years. Our VLE consolidation programme has brought sustainability and resilience to learning and teaching by reducing the number of platforms and consolidating the majority of on campus, blended learning activity into just one: Blackboard Learn. This has given us the opportunity to return to the idea of establishing minimum standards of use in order to improve the quality and consistency of the student digital experience.
- 2.5.17 The Learn Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) currently hosts more than 5,000 courses a year and provides access to course materials, assignments, grades and feedback. Feedback from a number of surveys and reviews of our digital systems have highlighted that inconsistencies and poor web usability cause frustration and dissatisfaction for students. Students too often report that they struggle to find important course-specific resources in the VLE, and are spending a disproportionate amount of time on this rather than on the learning activities that they know are important.

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<sup>59</sup> [https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/delivering\\_and\\_evaluating\\_lecture\\_recording.pdf](https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/delivering_and_evaluating_lecture_recording.pdf)

<sup>60</sup> [https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/lecture\\_recording\\_policy.pdf](https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/lecture_recording_policy.pdf)

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- 2.5.18 Our Learn Foundations project is a 3 year service improvement process that we believe will benefit our students and make it easier for staff to use Learn effectively. Our shared vision, as agreed by the project board, is that 3 years from now we hope colleagues will say: “Courses in Learn are accessible and relevant, information is easy to find by students. Staff find Learn easy to use, and are well supported to make and deliver rich courses online.” We have provided a new Learn course structure co-created with staff and students following extensive user research. This includes a template that meets new accessibility legislation requirements and is easy for students to use, and the provision of advice on the use of more consistent terminology.
- 2.5.19 We provide assistance when courses are rolled over to ensure any tasks required to update the new structure which would not normally be undertaken by the School, are supported. This support will be delivered by a team of student helpers who have been trained in content migration. We have engaged with reviewing the accessibility of course content and the provision of a report to support future course design which can be used by Heads of School and programme leaders to inform decisions about the accessibility of courses in line with the introduction of new accessibility legislation.
- 2.5.20 We have embarked on mapping of existing course structures to examine course design from a student experience perspective and the provision of a report on our findings which may inform decisions about future course design. We offer a range of training options to help colleagues get started. Training sessions are available centrally and on-site, in addition to bespoke support and the provision of online resources.
- 2.5.21 **Resource Lists**
- 2.5.22 The Resource Lists service, and the Course Collections programme which supports it, will continue to improve the student experience through improving discoverability of, and access to, essential and recommended readings for taught courses. The overall programme supports the consistent provision of reading list information and teaching resources, purchasing and digitising content where required to provide effective access to students on- and off-campus. The Resource Lists service has been allocated additional funding in 2019-20 through the Student Experience Action Plan, with a target of providing Resource Lists for 60% of taught courses by the end of September 2021.

### Online learning

- 2.5.23 The ELIR 2015 Report noted that we are “The University is recognised as a world leader in digital education, and it has adopted an embedded approach to technology” (paragraph 47), and our “ODL students are already very satisfied with the levels of academic support and personalised access to their academic tutors.” We regard all our online students as very important members of the University community and we do not make a distinction in terms of who is physically present on campus and who is not.
- 2.5.24 We have continued to develop our online learning provision. Over the last 15 years, we have pioneered the delivery of postgraduate degrees online. and have the largest portfolio of online postgraduate programmes in the UK<sup>61</sup> and more than 8,000

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<sup>61</sup> [https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/online\\_learning\\_brochure\\_july\\_2019.pdf](https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/online_learning_brochure_july_2019.pdf)



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students have benefited from the opportunity to study flexibly online from anywhere in the world.

2.5.25 We are very proud of the success of these programmes, which is due to the hard work, enthusiasm and vision of teams across the University. We are constantly scanning the horizon to ensure we can offer subjects that meet the needs of our learners, as well as the very best in academic tuition, technological advantages and personal support. The advancing capabilities of global online communication fitted perfectly with our strategic vision of widening access to our scholarship, learning and teaching to make a positive difference to people's lives globally. We talked to learners to find out what they wanted to study, how they wanted to study it and what they wanted their studies to do for them.

2.5.26 Our academic teams used all their expertise to develop courses that would meet those needs and surpass student expectations. We built the largest team of learning technologists in the country to create digital services that would deliver our online programmes to all students wherever they are in the world. We developed a comprehensive support system to make online learners feel as much a part of our academic community as our students on campus.

2.5.27 **Need text on DLAS developments**

### **Office365 and personalised timetables**

2.5.28 During 2016/17 we rolled out Microsoft's Office 365 suite to all students and staff of the University. This suite combines email, calendar OneDrive file storage of 1TB, Office online apps and other collaboration products. Students and staff can activate up to 5 copies of the standalone Office software on personal computer or mobile devices for the duration of their time at the University.

2.5.29 The Office 365 suite offers many benefits to students, enabling them to create, store and share documents with friends and colleagues both inside and outside the University. Files are automatically backed up and deleted documents can easily be recovered or rolled back to previous versions. Their work is available from any computer, tablet or phone making it easy to work anywhere of their choosing.

2.5.30 In 2017, we added MyTimetable information to Office 365 calendars. We now provide comprehensive teaching and examination timetables to over 32,500 taught students, generating over 5 million automatically-updated calendar entries to their Office365 accounts, allowing students to access timetable information and updates on-the-go, from their mobile devices. This comprehensive information also allows students to plan their wider work/life commitments more effectively. In addition, the Timetabling Unit now also provides a central support service for students to submit requests for changes to tutorial group allocations, allowing them to shape their timetable in a way that fits with wider commitments.

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### MyEd developments

- 2.5.31 The University central portal service MyEd has been updated with a vision to improve the digital experience of applicants, students, staff and alumni, making them feel the University's online environment is centred around them. Key to success was to involve users in the design of the new interface to ensure the language, grouping and presentation of content resonated with the audience. This change enabled a single University to be presented by task rather than by each silo service making it easier for students to find and complete tasks and content relevant to them. A favourites section was added enabling students at the click of a button to group together the content they interacted with most frequently e.g. grades, print credit and bus times. This was further enhanced by the introductions of a call to action notifications service to ensure students do not miss key information such as the publication of exam dates and locations.

### 2.6 Effectiveness of the approach to enhancing the student learning experience

- 2.6.1 The ELIR 2015 Report noted: "There are many positive aspects of the student experience at the University." [paragraph 76] and we had "taken a self-evaluative, proactive, systematic and strategic approach to enhancing the student learning experience." [paragraph 72]. We have continued to develop and enhance the student learning experience in a planned and strategic approach. We have taken a reflective approach to developments, based on analysis and understanding of the student voice and student data, and from working in close partnership with students. Student voice and student partnership underpin much of what we do, and student involvement is fundamental to all our developments to the student learning experience.
- 2.6.2 We have made significant improvements to enhance the student learning experience since the last ELIR. A number of initiatives are contributing to strengthening the student voice, such as the new Student Representation system, development of the Student Partnership Agreement, and strengthened student voice mechanisms. We believe we have an effective approach to working with students to enhance the student learning and teaching experience.
- 2.6.3 We have also strengthened the range of support we provide for students, responding to changing student needs. The new Wellbeing Centre will provide greater capacity to support increasing numbers of students with mental health concerns, as well as provide a more joined up service for all students' health and wellbeing needs.
- 2.6.4 We continue to remain committed to equality and diversity, inclusion and access, now embedded from recruitment, through our contextualised admissions processes and our widening participation strategy, to the curriculum and the entire student experience. We have taken a critical approach to inclusion, through recent thematic reviews relating to student parents and carers and BME student support reviews, openly reflecting on ways in which we can improve what we do to ensure equality of opportunity for all our students.
- 2.6.5 We have remained at the forefront of learning technology development, through the wide scale roll out of lecture recording and through the ongoing development of our online learning programmes, including recent innovative approaches to distance learning at scale.

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- 2.6.6 Notwithstanding the significant achievements, we recognise that we still face challenges, particularly in relation to student support and assessment and feedback. The Student Experience Action Plan sets out a programme of work to improve the student experience at Edinburgh.
- 2.6.7 We are increasingly of the view that we need to take a holistic approach to improving the student experience, rather than addressing individual aspects in response to individual NSS questions. For this reason, the Student Experience Action Plan is taking a broad approach to the review of student support beyond the support provided through Personal Tutors to ensure consistent access to high quality support on academic, personal and pastoral, professional and career issues.
- 2.6.8 We also believe that other issues, notably assessment and feedback, would be best approached as part of a broader curriculum review, to look at assessment and feedback in the broader context of curricula design and development, rather than narrowly in terms of feedback turnaround times. The curriculum review will therefore take a broad perspective, allowing us to focus on a number of interrelated aspects of the student learning experience.