

University of Glasgow

Council of Senate – Thursday 4 October 2018

**Education Policy and Strategy Committee - Report of Meeting held on
19 June 2018
Cover Sheet**

**Professor F Coton, Vice Principal (Academic & Educational Innovation) and
Convener of the Committee**

Brief Description of the Paper

Report of the meeting of the Education Policy and Strategy Committee (EdPSC) held on 19 June 2018.

Action Requested

Council of Senate is asked to **note** the following items:

1. Amendment to the Report of the meeting held on 2 May 2018
2. Academic Writing Skills Programme: Update
3. Similarity Checking Software – Proposed University Position
4. Implementation of Good Cause, Fitness to Study and Fitness to Practise procedures
5. College 3-year NSS Plans
6. Change of Degree title: MSc Global Business pathway degree to Master Global Business
7. Academic Standards Committee: Report of meeting held on 25 May 2018
8. Learning and Teaching Committee: Report of meeting held on 23 May 2018

Recommended Person/s responsible for taking the action(s) forward

As identified in the EdPSC minutes

Resource Implications (where appropriate)

Funding of the Academic Writing Skills Programme roll-out is in place.

Timescale for Implementation (where appropriate)

Academic Writing Skills Programme roll-out would begin session 2018-19.

Return to TURNITIN as sole similarity checking software: User testing session 2018-19 followed by roll out session 2019-20.

Equality Implications (where appropriate)

None identified

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1. Amendment to the Report of the meeting held on 2 May 2018 [for noting]

Following Council of Senate, it was reported that the opening statement of the report at 3.2 *PGT Review: Criteria for award of merit and distinction* was contradictory to the change being made and was likely to cause confusion. The original statement was:

“It was reported that ARSC had considered the regulations governing the award of merit and distinction on PGT programmes in response to concern that the existing criteria made it too easy to achieve these awards.”

EdPSC agreed that this should be clarified by amendment to:

“It was reported that ARSC had considered the regulations governing the award of merit and distinction on PGT programmes. **These were last amended in 2009-10** in response to concern that the criteria made it too easy to achieve these awards. **They and were now being reviewed to ensure they remained fair.**”

It was also agreed that this should be reported to Council of Senate to ensure the record was clear.

2. Academic Writing Skills Programme: Update [for noting]

Dr Andrew Struan, Writing and Study Skills Co-ordinator (LEADS), attended the meeting to present an update on the rollout of the Academic Writing Skills Programme to all incoming student in 2018-19.

EdPSC noted that:

- All incoming undergraduate students in the College of Arts and Social Sciences would take part in AWSP in September/October.
- Incoming undergraduate students in the College of MVLS and Science and Engineering would take part in AWSP in January/February.
- All incoming Postgraduate Taught (Masters) students would take part in AWSP in September/October

EdPSC noted that LEADS were working with SLSD on linking the programme with MyCampus and student records; a new Effective Learning Adviser would be appointed to manage the additional load; and a message would be sent to staff shortly to inform them of the rollout. The Convener reported that the rollout had been subject to funding which had now been put in place. EdPSC welcomed this positive development and agreed that there should be a further report in a year's time detailing the number of students participating, performance at each level and feedback from real users on their experience.

EdPSC discussed a related concern around the capacity of the Moodle Servers in light of several forthcoming developments, including the AWSP rollout, that were dependent on Moodle functionality. EdPSC acknowledged that if server capacity was not sufficient, the user experience would be slow and students (and staff) would disengage. Professor Coton agreed to raise this matter with the Directors of IT Services and LEADS to seek confirmation that Moodle would cope with the additional load created by the rollout of AWSP. Moodle's ability to accommodate forthcoming developments would also be considered as part of the VLE review.

3. Similarity Checking Software – Proposed University Position [for noting]

EdPSC received a paper from Professor Fischbacher-Smith proposing a way forward for the University in its choice of similarity checking software. The proposal was based on the interim report of the Urkund/Turnitin Working Group submitted to Learning and Teaching Committee. In summary, concerns regarding the suitability of the URKUND database remained outstanding, the issues with Turnitin were technical and associated with the Moodle Plug-in, and there was now reasonable certainty that Turnitin was the better option.

EdPSC agreed that, subject to successful testing, acknowledging that it was imperative that the plug-in functioned well, the University would return to using Turnitin as its sole similarity checking software. EdPSC further agreed that the Director of IT Services should coordinate the testing and that, if successful, the subsequent move back to Turnitin should be overseen by the VLE Board, convened by Dr Don Spaeth, and reporting to Learning and Teaching Committee.

Members were reassured that:

- Schools and Subject Areas that had adopted URKUND would be supported to transition back to Turnitin.
- A clear communication would be delivered to students at the beginning of the session.

[Clerk's note: The VLE Development Board subsequently proposed to establish a small working group which would oversee user testing of the Moodle plug-in through semester 1 and 2 of next session, and the development of a policy framework and any support documentation needed. If the user testing is successful, Turnitin will then be rolled out across the entire institution in 2019-20.]

4. Implementation of Good Cause, Fitness to Study and Fitness to Practise procedures [for noting]

At its meeting on 2 May 2018, as part of the report from the Academic Standards Committee meeting of 23 March, EdPSC discussed the PGT College Annual Monitoring Summaries for 2016-17. EdPSC had particularly noted the discussion of mental health issues – specifically, the operation of the Good Cause, Fitness to Study and Fitness to Practise procedures. It was suggested that regular training sessions for staff, with worked examples, to clarify the expectations of evidence required when considering mitigating circumstances and Good Cause and on the application of the Fitness to Study policy for students with mental health problems would be helpful. It was also suggested that a cross-University approach would help to promote better awareness of these procedures and enable consistency of application.

A meeting to discuss these matters took place on 4 June, involving Professor Jill Morrison, Ms Kate Powell, Ms Helen Butcher and Dr Jack Aitken, which resulted in the following:

Issues identified

1. Lack of awareness of the existence of the procedures, sometimes in the case of staff as well as students, and staff uncertainty regarding the potential interplay between Good Cause and Fitness to Practise.
2. Student perceptions that the Good Cause process is bureaucratic, with the effect of inhibiting students from pursuing their cases.
3. The need for students to engage in their own interests with the Fitness to Study procedure and to be aware of the supportive intention of the procedure.
4. Inconsistency in Good Cause outcomes. This was thought to stem partly from the newness of Fitness to Study especially. A key issue was the evidence requirement for Good Cause to be applied, with different thresholds being operated – there were instances noted where students taking joint honours programmes experienced different treatment by the two subjects. It was also noted that there could be difficulties for students in obtaining GP appointments and/or evidence from GPs.
5. Particular challenges for staff related to students who presented at exam time with illnesses, and for exam boards in knowing how to treat cases where a student had presented with an acute worsening of a chronic condition.
6. The need for action by the University and students to mitigate the effects of exam stress.

Proposed Action

The following would form the basis of an action plan to be taken forward by the Senate Office in conjunction with the SRC, Colleges and University Service departments, beginning summer 2018.

1. Further information on issues encountered by students and staff to be sought.
2. To help promote consistency and good practice, the provision of further training and development of additional advice on good practice for Schools and RIs, with extensive numbers of examples to guide on evidence thresholds, etc.
3. Using social media, run campaigns for students at exam times on the existence of the Good Cause procedure.
4. Recommend to the rest of the University that Colleges adopt good practice in operating Good Cause that has been developed using such means as annual review of Good Cause and Good Cause Panels.
5. Additional promotion of the helpfulness of good study skills – specifically being well-prepared for exams – in forestalling extreme stress.
6. Additional material to be developed to guide and advise students in the Fitness to Study procedure – in particular on the need for students to engage with the process.

5. College 3-year NSS Plans [for noting]

Having agreed at the last review of Annual NSS plans in October 2017 that a longer term approach would be more effective, EdPSC received 3-year NSS Action Plans from each of the Colleges. The College plans had been approved by the relevant College Management Groups.

The Convener reported that the plans had been viewed by Senior Management Group alongside a framework of actions associated with the Learning and Teaching Strategy. He would work with Professor Fischbacher-Smith to identify activities in the plans and the strategy that might be more effectively supported at University level and areas where more progress was needed.

Members provided initial comments.

- It was agreed that there should be alignment between the Assessment and Feedback activity in the plans and the Transformation Project.
- Some concerns were raised that PGT experience could be lost or neglected in this approach. Deans (Learning and Teaching) reported that the plans were focussed on teaching practice generally and that most of the activity would be of benefit to both UG and PGT students, e.g. Assessment and Feedback Calendars, support for teaching staff. Dr Ross, Convener of the Deans of Graduate Studies (DoGS) Committee, also provided reassurance that the DoGS were conscious of the PGT community and the potential for them to fall between UG and PGR. They would keep the matter under clear review. The Convener noted that the surveying of the PGT experience was being discussed both within the University and across the sector.
- The Colleges' NSS plans were appropriately focussed on student experience and culture within the Colleges and Schools and there was some consistency between them. Members agreed that culture within each School was a key factor in achieving improvement and discussed the promotion of the desired culture to staff who did not engage with strategy documents, especially those who had not recently engaged in CPD activity. The Deans (Learning and Teaching) confirmed that the plans had been constructed using a bottom up approach but acknowledged that this did not address the issue of reluctant individuals.

SMG would review the plans on publication of the next NSS results to check for new or in-year issues. This would not involve any re-writing of the plans. The work on the broader Learning and Teaching Strategy Framework would be reported to the first meetings of Learning and Teaching Committee and EdPSC of the 2018-19 session.

6. Change of Degree title: MSc Global Business pathway degree to Master Global Business [for noting]

EdPSC received a proposal from the Adam Smith Business School to create a new degree title - "Master of Global Business (MGB) – as part of a collaborative tripartite mobility arrangement with the University of Victoria (Canada) and Chulalongkorn University (Thailand). This initiative was part of the School's work to address accreditation requirements for increased student mobility. In response to a question, it was clarified that the new degree title was not *required* for accreditation purposes but was *requested* in order to differentiate this from existing programme structures.

EdPSC noted that the use of an existing degree title had been considered but that it was desirable to distinguish this new programme from the existing degree in international business, MSc International Business and Entrepreneurship, which targeted a different student segment and did not include mobility. In addition, the proposed degree title of MGB was intended to reflect a positioning closer to an MBA rather than a traditional MSc programme.

EdPSC recognised the pressures of accreditation and wished to support the School. It was therefore agreed to give consent to the development of the new programme using a new degree title, namely "Master of Global Business (MGB)".

7. Academic Standards Committee: Report of meeting held on 25 May 2018 [for noting]

7.1 Proposed amended regulations concerning coursework extension requests, and incomplete assessment and good cause

Over the course of 2017-18, ARSC had considered possible amendments to the Code of Assessment concerning extension requests for the submission of coursework.

EdPSC **approved** the proposed amended regulations. The changes included:

- Increasing the limit on extensions that could be granted locally from three to five days.
- Including a new statement on chronic or long-term issues in the definition of good cause.
- Responses to deadline deferrals should be made as soon as practicable but it could not be guaranteed that this would be before the deadline, especially where requests were submitted close to the deadline.
- Amendment of regulations to use gender neutral language.

EdPSC also noted the following items:

- *Convening of Exam Boards* – a proposal that exam boards should be convened by a member of staff from a cognate area was rejected. Other ways of promoting best practice in impartiality would be considered.
- *Reassessment for Award of Ordinary/Designated degree* – a clarification of the code of assessment.
- *Responses to Annual Monitoring 2016-17* – ASC welcomed detailed responses on a number of issues. Further responses were required in relation to Mental Health and the Moodle Interface for Marking.
- *External Examiners 2016-17* – most issues related to student experience rather than standards. There were 23 comments on inconsistent/inadequate feedback on assessment, 46 on marking/marketing scheme issues and 23 on staff levels (academic and admin). The Convener of EdPSC noted that this report was consistent with NSS outcomes and recent discussions at a University Workshop on the Role of External Examiners.
- *Periodic Subject Review* – ASC received full reports from Law, Management, Music, Physics and Astronomy and update reports from CEES, History of Art, Psychology, Life Sciences
- Items from Edinburgh Theological Seminary
- Items from The Glasgow School of Art
- Items referred from Scotland's Rural College

- Transformation Project Presentation

8. Learning and Teaching Committee: Report of meeting held on 23 May 2018 [for noting]

EdPSC noted the following items not reported elsewhere.

- *Use of English Translation Dictionaries Survey* - Initial observations from the survey on the use of English translation dictionaries were reported: 700 responses had been received; 120 had taken a dictionary into exams, 80 of these confirmed they had not used it. A full report would be made to the next LTC.

Dr Kennedy reported that the Senate Assessors for Student Conduct were pleased to see these results and would welcome a decision to remove all dictionaries from exams. Ms Powell, SRC, disagreed and questioned the validity of the survey. The Convener agreed that the matter would need to be brought back for discussion, recognising that the underlying issue was ensuring students were properly supported. A review of actions taken to provide additional support since the original Senate decision was suggested. The Convener had understood that this was to have been included in the work alongside the survey and agreed to consult with Dr Williamson to ensure that it was taken forward.

- *Compulsory on-line training and testing on Academic Integrity* – discussion was ongoing.
- *Lecture Recording Working Group* – a short life working group had been established to review the current Lecture Recording Policy with a view to moving to an “opt out” approach rather than “opt in”. The group would report to Learning and Teaching Committee by January 2019. The Convener of EdPSC reported that funding had now been approved for the further roll-out of Lecture Recording Facilities across campus over the next three years.

EdPSC received for information:

- An update from LEADS
- Review of Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy – a report of a 1-year review would be submitted to Nov LTC
- Dealing with Students with Mental Health Issues – the Convener of the Mental Health Working Group had provided an overview of the Group’s work.