<u>The University of Edinburgh</u>
Senate Quality Assurance Committee

**Approval sought via correspondence from
Wednesday 16 to Tuesday 22 November 2022**

Industrial action:
External Examiners for Taught Programmes and Courses

Description of paper

1. Following the recent national ballot, UCU have announced that three days of strike action will take place on the following dates at our University and across the higher education sector:

   - Thursday 24 November 2022
   - Friday 25 November 2022
   - Wednesday 30 November 2022

2. UCU has also announced that action short of a strike will start from Wednesday 23 November 2022, until an agreement is reached or the end of the ballot mandate on 20 April 2023. This will include working to contractual hours and duties only and not volunteering to do more, not rescheduling classes and lectures cancelled due to strike action, not covering for absent colleagues, removing uploaded materials related to or not sharing materials related to, lectures or classes cancelled as a result of strike action.

3. As a University we are required to seek to minimise the disruption to our students' studies while maintaining academic standards. In that context, this paper invites the Committee to agree to delegate to the Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC) to consider any requirements for temporary concessions regarding policies and regulations around External Examiners for taught programmes and courses.

Action requested / recommendation

4. The paper invites the Committee to delegate to APRC for the remainder of 2022-23 to consider temporary concessions regarding the External Examiner for Taught Programmes Policy.

Background and context

5. While the industrial action does not relate directly to External Examining, it appears likely that it will have an impact on some Schools' ability to secure External Examiner input. For example, one School has already informed Academic Services that, in the context of the industrial action, they are unable to appoint an External Examiner for one of their programmes.

6. The University needs to be in a position to consider appropriate steps to enable assessment and Board of Examiner activities to operate, while maintaining academic standards. This may include considering temporary concessions to

policies and regulations, for example to put in place additional internal scrutiny where an External Examiner is not available for a particular course.

5. At present, APRC has responsibility for the Taught Assessment Regulations and associated policies that include provisions for external examining for taught provision, along with all policies and regulations that relate to External Examiners for research student programmes. However, the Senate Quality Assurance Committee has formal responsibility for the External Examiner for Taught Programmes Policy.

Discussion
6. In order that the University is able to consider potential concessions in an orderly way in a context in which it may be necessary to make decisions rapidly, we propose that SQAC enables APRC to consider all concessions relating to taught External Examiners, by delegating its power to consider concessions in relation to the External Examiner for Taught Programmes Policy.

Resource implications
7. Delegating these powers on a time-limited basis to APRC will enable the Senate Committees to manage decision-making more efficiently, and will have no other resource implications.

Risk management
8. The proposed arrangements will assist the University to manage the risks associated with maintaining academic standards while minimising the academic impact of the industrial action on students.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals
9. Not applicable

Equality & diversity
10. Not applicable

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed
11. Academic Services will communicate to Colleges and Schools the arrangements for considering concessions relating to External Examiners

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Presenter
N / A – for correspondence

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