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

**Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 19 May 2022
at 2pm in the Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House
and via Microsoft Teams**

Present:

Professor Tina Harrison **(Convener)**	Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance
Marianne Brown	Co-opted member with expertise in Student Systems
Brian Connolly	Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team (Interim), Academic Services
Sinéad Docherty	Academic Policy Officer, Academic Services
Olivia Eadie	Assistant Director and Head of Operations and Projects, Institute for Academic Development
Dr Katherine Inglis	School Representative (Literatures, Languages and Cultures), College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Professor Linda Kirstein	Dean of Education Quality Assurance and Culture, College of Science and Engineering
Stuart Lamont	Edinburgh University Students' Association Representative
Dr Paul Norris	Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Approval, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Dr Claire Phillips	Dean of Quality Assurance, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine

Apologies:

Dr Gail Duursma	School Representative (Engineering), College of Science and Engineering
Tara Gold	Vice President (Education), Students' Association
Dr Jeni Harden	School Representative (School of Molecular, Genetic and Population Health Sciences), College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine
Professor Leigh Sparks	Deputy Principal, University of Stirling

In attendance:

Antony Maciocia	Dean of Postgraduate Research, College of Science and Engineering
Fiona Philippi	Head of Doctoral Education | Deputy Head of Researcher Development, Institute for Academic Development

1.   Welcome and Apologies

The Convener extended particular thanks to Dr Claire Phillips for her contributions to the Committee and noted that her work has greatly enhanced quality at the University of Edinburgh. The Committee noted that Fiona Philippi and Antony Maciocia would be in attendance to discuss the proposed review of the Doctoral College.

2.   Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 28 April 2022

The Committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting, with the following amendment:
- Point 5 paragraph 4 to be amended to "work related to awarding gaps across CSE."

3.   Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

For Discussion

4.   Sector Developments

The Committee discussed the following sector developments:

4.1   Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Review of Coherence and Sustainability

The SFC will update the sector on the Review in due course, with the new framework expected to be implemented from 2024/25. A set of high level principles has been outlined and the SFC is looking for more input as it develops the framework and principles. The Committee agreed that more information is needed on the proposed framework and the University should be willing to offer its involvement for the development and implementation of the framework. The Committee noted that the collaborative nature of the sector in Scotland will be a benefit when working within the new framework.

4.2   External Examiner Principles

External Examiner principles have been developed in response to criticism that the system is not sufficiently independent, nor effectively assuring standards. The principles have been shared with the Convener and relate to the work of External Examiners and institutions. The Convenor noted that the

principles will support the External Examiners working with University, and also colleagues who act as External Examiners in other institutions.

The Committee agreed that there were examples of good practice locally throughout the University in relation to the induction of External Examiners, and that this foundation should be built on at University level. It was also noted that the principles will work to protect the values of enhancement and reflection, as well as assessment metrics.

4.3   UK Quality Code for Higher Education

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) is working with its partners to incorporate hybrid learning into the framework and the SFC is looking to develop a national standard for online learning. The Committee agreed that it would expect to see diversity in the approach to this.

It was also noted that the Office for Students (OFS) had removed the UK Quality Code from institutional requirements in England. The Committee noted concern that this would undermine the strength of the QAA but that Scottish institutions will look to retain the UK Quality Code.

4.4   Subject Benchmark Statements

The Committee welcomed the new statements and noted they will align well with the Curriculum Transformation Project objectives.

5.   Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR): Draft Follow-on Report

The Convener reported that a detailed update on the University's ELIR action plan would be presented to the next meeting of Senate (due to be held on 25 May 2022).

The Committee discussed progress in response to ELIR recommendations. The Committee considered which mechanisms would best demonstrate the impact of the new Student Support system and suggested that response times, wait times for meetings and the student voice survey may be ways in which progress could be measured. The Committee noted that more details were needed on how the changes to Student Support will be evaluated, especially around how the evaluation of phase 1 will impact on phase 2.

The Committee agreed that there is a need for more information and a clearer strategy in regard to Theme 2: Change Management, particularly in relation to ongoing change management projects such as the People and Money system. Learnings from the implementation of this project must be shared and taken forward to future change management projects.

The Committee noted that the ELIR Oversight Group will approve the final version of the follow-up report before it is submitted to the QAA in July 2022

(with the proviso that it will need to be endorsed by University Court in October 2022 before the final version can be published).

6. **Thematic Review 2018-19 - Progress Update**

The Convener noted that since the publication of the final report of this Thematic Review, new structures have been put in place and progress has been made against many of the recommendations. The Committee noted that the recommendation in relation to the Sense of Belonging group had not progressed and suggested that another avenue for this recommendation should be explored if this Group was no longer active. The Committee encouraged the application for the Race Equality Award.

7. **Student Support Services Annual Review**

The Committee discussed the reporting template for this year and agreed that it should be expanded to allow space for reflection that is not explicitly related to Covid and/or industrial action. The Committee approved the use of the template pending this change in format.

Action: Academic Services to update template to include space for reporting on challenges other than Covid and industrial action.

8. **Terms of Reference: Academic Collaboration**

The Committee approved the proposed change to include the following Academic Collaboration clause in the Terms of Reference:

> "In relation to academic collaborations with partner institutions: maintain oversight of development, approval, monitoring and review / renewal processes; receive annual reports on activity and identify any areas where action is required to maintain academic standards and the quality of the student experience."

It was noted that this change will enable the Committee to take on a formal role to provide greater oversight of the processes and guidance relating to the approval of academic collaborations. SQAC would also be asked to review information relating to the University's portfolio of academic collaborations, and data regarding the quality and student experience on these programmes. This additional scrutiny would help to mitigate risks relating to the University's management of academic collaborations, and to identify any gaps or areas for improvement.

9. **Annual Monitoring and Internal Periodic Review Themes 2020-21: University Level Actions**

The Committee noted an update on University level actions agreed in response to issues identified as areas for further development in School Annual Quality Reports 2020-21 and themes that emerged from teaching/postgraduate programme reviews held in 2020-21.

10. **Operation of Senate Standing Committees**

10.1 **Annual Report of the Senate Standing Committees**

The Committee noted the draft annual report to Senate from the Senate Standing Committees: Education Committee; Academic Policy and Regulations Committee; and Quality Assurance Committee. The Committee approved the reported activities in 2021-22 and the proposed priorities for 2022-23.

10.2 **Annual Review of Effectiveness of Senate Standing Committees**

The Committee discussed the importance of the role of the Senate committees in demonstrating engagement, reflection and evaluation in relation to the review. The Committee agreed that the various standing committees reinforce the connection between Colleges, Schools and Senate and the value this holds.

The Committee noted the plans for the annual review of Senate Committees' effectiveness. Senate Committee members will be invited to respond to an online questionnaire during summer 2022 (managed by Academic Services). A report on responses will then be presented to Senate and the Senate Standing Committees in September / October 2022. If the review identifies required actions or enhancement opportunities, these will be taken forward by Academic Service (if directly related to the functioning and support of the Senate Committees) or referred to the appropriate body for consideration.

10.3 **Senate Presentation and Discussion Themes 2022-23**

The Committee was invited to suggest themes for next year's Senate meetings. The following suggestions were noted: change management - what has been learned (particularly in relation to the ongoing People and Money project and the impending Curriculum Transformation Project); a student-led Senate discussion; musical interludes / student showcase; a celebration of successes and inclusive cultures. Members were invited to send any further suggestions to the Committee Secretary by Thursday 26 May 2022.

11. **Proposed Review of the Doctoral College**

The Doctoral College was established early 2020 (coinciding with the start of the Covid-19 pandemic) and currently sits outside the existing QA

frameworks as it is neither a service nor an academic unit. The Doctoral College has proposed the review as it is looking to (i) proactively enhance its work, (ii) support the preparation for ELIR response, and (iii) raise the profile of postgraduate research and the Doctoral College itself. The Doctoral College would like the Committee's approval to initiate this review and guidance on timing and process. The Doctoral College also stated a preference for external involvement in the review.

The Committee discussed the possible remit of the review and the best timing to ensure that the output will be valuable to the Doctoral College. The Committee advised the Doctoral College to allow at least one more year of operating normally post pandemic before undertaking a review to evaluate its work against its original aims.

Action: The Committee requested that the Doctoral College submit a paper/presentation in early 2023 outlining the shape of the review, taking into account their learning and experience of 2022/23.

For Information and Formal Business

12. **Enhancement Themes: Year Two Update**

The Committee noted the updates to the enhancement theme "Resilient Learning Communities".

13. **Internal Periodic Review: Reports and Responses**

The Committee approved the final report for the School of History, Classics and Archaeology and confirmed that it was content with progress in the 14 week response from the School of Health in Social Science.

The Committee noted concern in relation to point 8 in the 14 week response from the School of Law. The response did not adequately address the recommendation for training for PGR tutors nor their involvement in course and programme development. The Committee also queried the response to the recommendation regarding automated captions; the response outlined challenges that the ISG had in resourcing and funding automated captioning services.

Action: Academic Services to investigate requirements around automated captioning and accessibility and to establish if this is the responsibility of ELS.

14. **Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

15. **Date of Next Meeting:**

Provisional meeting dates 2022-23 (all meetings take place between 2-4pm, venue TBC):
- Thursday 15 September 2022
- Thursday 8 December 2022
- Thursday 23 February 2023
- Thursday 27 April 2023
- Thursday 18 May 2023