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The University of Edinburgh
Senate Quality Assurance Committee

**Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 21 May 2020 at 2pm
via Microsoft Teams**

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Present:

Professor Tina Harrison **(Convener)**	Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance
Brian Connolly	Academic Policy Officer, Academic Services
Dr Gail Duursma	School Representative (Engineering), College of Science and Engineering
Olivia Eadie	Assistant Director and Head of Operations and Projects, Institute for Academic Development
Dr Jeni Harden	School Representative (School of Molecular, Genetic and Population Health Sciences), College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine
Dr Katherine Inglis	School Representative (Literatures, Languages and Cultures), College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Nichola Kett	Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team, Academic Services
Dr Linda Kirstein	Dean of Education Quality Assurance and Culture, College of Science and Engineering
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
Katie Scott	Head of Student Opportunities, Students' Association
Steph Vallancey	Vice President (Education), Students' Association
Paula Webster	Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling, Student Systems Partnership

Apologies:

Brian Green	Deputy Associate Principal (Learning & Teaching), University of Strathclyde
Stuart Lamot	Edinburgh University Students' Association Representative

1. **Welcome and Apologies**

The Convenor noted that Brian Green had reached the end of his three year term of office and thanked him for all his work as external member of the Committee. The Convenor and Academic Services would make arrangements for a new external member to join the Committee in the new academic year. The Convenor also thanked Steph Vallancey for all her work this year as Vice President (Education) and welcomed Katie Scott to her first meeting as co-opted member.

2. **Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 24 April 2020**

The Committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting.

3. **Matters Arising**

It was noted (in reference to the previous Convenor's Communications) that the exam board decision trees that were being developed by the University's Resilience Team would not be taken forward.

4. **Convenor's Communications**

The Convenor updated the Committee on the following:

- **Adaptation and Renewal Team (ART)** – The Convenor noted that the University had established an Adaptation and Renewal Team (ART) led by the Principal to lead the work that is needed to respond to the short, medium and longer term challenges caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. ART will report to the University Executive and will function as a team to enable swift decisions to be made in a number of time-critical areas and to ensure that those decisions are well informed and understood. ART has 4 main strands: Research; Students; Estates & Infrastructure; Reshaping. The Students strand will be led by Professor Colm Harmon (Vice Principal Students) and consists of 3 main areas of work: Transition to the University (led by Professor James Smith, Vice Principal International); Delivering Curriculum Resilience (led by Professor Harmon); Rethinking Student Admin & Support (RSAS) (led by Gavin Douglas, Deputy Secretary Student Experience). SQAC will have the opportunity to feed into each of these groups.

- **Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR)** – The Convenor noted that discussions with Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Scotland regarding the rescheduled ELIR were still at an early stage. However, the review visits were most likely to be moved to semester two 2020-21, with the Reflective Analysis (RA) and supporting Advanced Information Set (AIS) submitted towards the end of November 2020. A key factor in rescheduling was the timing of the three internal periodic reviews that were postponed in 2019-20 and the eight reviews that were scheduled for semester two 2020-21. A further update will follow in due course once the details of the review have been confirmed.

- **External Examiner Exceptional Appointments** - The Convenor noted that as Covid-19 impacts were likely to be ongoing it had been agreed with the Colleges that exceptional appointments would be considered by SQAC in a batch either via an eSQAC during the summer or at the first meeting of the next academic year.

- **Annual Monitoring, Review and Reporting: University Level Actions -** The Convenor noted that a report of loop-closing updates for the Colleges and Schools on

University level actions from last year's QA reporting cycle would be considered via an eSQAC during the summer.

For Discussion

5. **Annual Monitoring, Review and Reporting: Changes due to Covid-19 Pandemic**

The Committee considered changes to the annual monitoring, review and reporting process in response to the Covid-19 outbreak.

It was noted that following the discussion of the interim process at the Committee meeting in April, the Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance, the College Deans of Quality and College quality contacts and Academic Services had worked together to develop the report templates and timescale. In response to feedback, the scope of the process had been widened to allow optional updates on actions identified from last year's reporting cycle and a reflection on other aspects of academic standards, student performance and the student learning experience (including industrial action). There would be no requirement to include Massive Open Online Courses in the interim process.

The Committee agreed the following reporting level deadlines with the understanding that there was a degree of flexibility should this be required:

- Programme/programme cluster - Friday 30 October 2020
- School/Deanery - Friday 20 November 2020
- College - Friday 27 November 2020

The SQAC Sub-Group will then meet in early-December to consider the reports and a full Committee meeting to approve the Sub-Group's final report will be held in mid-December.

It was agreed that at the conclusion of the interim process, the Committee would take a decision on when and how to return to normal annual monitoring, review and reporting processes, including on any changes to the normal process.

It was noted that the interim process would likely lead to less consideration of demographic data than the normal process as it was less directive on the range of data which should be considered as part of annual monitoring. The Committee agreed that while the streamlined process needed to encompass all students it would be important to consider demographic data in more detail next year.

The Committee agreed that the reporting templates should include additional guidance drawing attention to the Data Protection Policy and making it clear that reports should not contain information which identified an individual student or member of staff.

Action: Academic Services to amend reporting template guidance to clarify data protection requirements.

The Committee **approved** the suspension of normal annual monitoring, review and reporting processes and the implementation of an interim process in response to Covid-19.

6. **Student Voice**

6.1 **Student Voice Policy – Changes**

The Committee considered changes to the Student Voice Policy to extend the requirement for mid-course feedback to include postgraduate taught courses that run for 10 weeks or longer from academic session 2020-21.

It was noted that at the December 2019 meeting the Committee had approved revisions to the Student Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) Principles and Operational Guidance and that these had been included in the Student Voice Policy to mandate particular approaches from 2020-21.

The Committee **approved** the changes to the Student Voice Policy.

6.2 Work related to the Covid-19 Pandemic – Update

The Committee noted that the Students' Association was working to ensure induction and training was in place to assist the incoming student representatives for the 2020-21 academic session. Guidance was also being developed for staff on ways to support the student voice remotely.

7. Student Support Service Annual Review – Minor Change

The Committee considered changes to the Student Support Services Annual Review (SSSAR) process in response to the Covid-19 outbreak.

It was proposed that SSSAR reporting for 2019-20 be streamlined to focus on impacts of industrial action and Covid-19 which would reduce the reporting burden on services while also ensuring compliance. A revised reporting template would be circulated to services by the end of May with a reporting deadline in mid-November. Services would be invited to submit their reports from the end of August to a new SharePoint site, which would facilitate sharing of experience and practice with other services.

The Committee agreed that guidance and communications to the services must emphasise the need to reflect on impact from the student perspective.

The Committee **approved** the suspension of normal annual reporting processes and the implementation of an interim process in response to Covid-19.

8. Thematic Review Guidance – Minor Change

The Committee considered a minor change to the Thematic Review Guidance. At the meeting held on Thursday 27 February 2020, the Committee agreed that the current approach to Thematic Review should be maintained but that it should be reserved for significant issues requiring in-depth exploration. It was noted that the proposed amendment aligned the guidance accordingly.

The Committee **approved** the minor change Thematic Review Guidance.

9. Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) Accreditation

The Committee noted the annual report of the SRUC Accreditation Committee.

It was noted that in May 2020 the College of Science and Engineering Curriculum Approval Board considered and approved a proposed change of title of the undergraduate programme from "Environmental Resource Management (BSc)" to BSc (Hons) Environmental Management, following feedback from the Internal-led Review of this programme.

The Committee noted that Academic Services would co-ordinate the annual SRUC Accreditation Committee from 2020-21 onwards, including arrangements for a new Memorandum of Understanding.

10. Operation of Senate Standing Committees

10.1 Annual Report of the Senate Standing Committees

The Committee noted the annual report that was approved by eSenate at the meeting held on 13 May 2020.

10.2 Themes for 2020/21 Senate Meetings

The Committee was invited to suggest themes for next year's Senate meetings. The following suggestions were noted: the affordability of education; the Curriculum Review and the new system of student support; transition and attainment. Members were invited to send any further suggestions to the Committee Secretary by Thursday 28 May 2020.

10.3 Annual Review of Effectiveness of Senate Standing Committees

Members were invited to comment on the effectiveness of Committee meetings via email to either the Convenor or Committee Secretary.

For Information and Formal Business

11. Internal Periodic Review – Responses

The Committee **approved** the final reports and **confirmed** that it was content with progress on the TPR Medicine.

12. Knowledge Strategy Committee – Update

The Committee **noted** the update for information.

13. Meeting Dates

The Committee noted that a meeting would be conducted via email correspondence during the summer to enable the approval of items which do not require substantial discussion in order to provide feedback to schools in a timeous manner.

The Committee also noted the following provisional dates for the 2020-21 academic session and that changes may be required in response to the pandemic (all meetings due to take place between 2-4pm, venues TBC):

- Thursday 17 September 2020
- Thursday 3 December 2020
- Thursday 25 February 2021
- Thursday 22 April 2021
- Thursday 20 May 2021