

The University of Edinburgh  
Senate Quality Assurance Committee

**Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 23 April 2020 at 2pm  
via Microsoft Teams**

**Present:**

Professor Tina Harrison <b>(Convener)</b>	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
Brian Green	Deputy Associate Principal (Learning & Teaching), University of Strathclyde
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
Steph Vallancey	Vice President (Education), Students' Association
Paula Webster	Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling, Student Systems Partnership

**Apologies:**

Stuart Lamot	Edinburgh University Students' Association Representative
Katie Scott	Head of Student Opportunities, Students' Association

**1. Welcome and Apologies**

The Convenor welcomed members to the first Teams meeting due to the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

## **2. Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 27 February 2020**

The Committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting.

## **3. Matters Arising**

The Committee noted in relation to minute 4.2 that the Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling (Student Systems Partnership) and the Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Approval (CAHSS) would meet to examine data set and methodological options for monitoring retention, progression, and attainment and report back to the Committee.

The Committee also noted that due to the coronavirus pandemic the lifespan of the Course Enhancement Questionnaires Review had been extended with the aim of implementing proposals for the start of the 2021-22 academic year.

**Action:** Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling to circulate a Course Enhancement Questionnaires Review update to the Committee.

## **4. Convenor's Communications**

The Convenor updated the Committee on a number of changes to quality assurance processes in response to the coronavirus pandemic:

- **Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR)** – it was noted that, at the request of Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Scotland, the University's next ELIR had now been postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic. Key contacts across the University have been informed and new dates for the review would be communicated to colleagues once confirmed. Members suggested that the University could use the contextualisation themes in the Reflective Analysis to frame a reflection on its response to the current pandemic.
- **Internal Periodic Review (IPR)** – it was noted that the postponement of ELIR would have a knock-on effect on the IPRs schedule for 2020-21. Again, the outcome of discussions regarding new dates would be communicated to colleagues in due course.
- **Student Support Services Annual Review (SSSR)** – it was noted that the SSSR for the 2019-20 academic year would be a light touch, streamlined process focused on sharing good practice in response to the coronavirus pandemic.
- **Board of Examiners** – it was noted that updated Board of Examiner guidance had been developed by the Academic Contingency Group and made available on the University's Covid-19 SharePoint site (<https://uoe.sharepoint.com/sites/Covid19>) with a communication sent to staff. It was also noted that the University's Resilience Team, with input from the Head of Academic Policy and Regulation (Academic Services), was working on exam board decision trees and would welcome input from staff before publication. Members agreed that it would be helpful if each College could sense check the decision trees before publication. Members suggested that the decision trees include clarity on exactly what amount of information would be required for Boards to make decisions and whether different students on the same course should be treated differently (i.e. those for which the course is a core requirement vs

those taking it as an option)? The Committee was in agreement that all students should be treated equally.

**Action:** Committee Secretary to forward the Committee's comments to the Head of Academic Policy and Regulation.

- **Survey of Student Experiences of Remote Learning** – it was noted that the Convenor and the Vice-Principal Students were considering a survey of students to understand their experiences of the remote learning in the light of changes in response to the coronavirus pandemic. In the first instance the survey would focus on Pre-Honours students as they would not be undertaking examinations for the remainder of this academic year. Members noted the importance of ensuring that no more surveys than necessary were conducted during this busy period of upheaval and, in particular, of ensuring that a centrally organised survey did not clash with any local surveys that Schools may be planning.

**Action:** College Deans of Quality to check with their Schools to determine if local student surveys had been conducted or were planned in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

The Convenor also updated the Committee on changes to the Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) Accreditation process. It was noted that the report from this year's accreditation process would be submitted to the Committee meeting in May and Academic Services would oversee the process from 2020-21.

#### **For Discussion**

#### **5. Annual Monitoring**

The Committee discussed changes to annual monitoring, review and reporting processes in response to the coronavirus pandemic and the proposal for an interim process to review and reflect on 2019-20.

The Committee agreed that the interim process should be light touch and compliment academic contingency work already underway. The interim process should reflect on the impact of and learning in response to the pandemic. Timescales should be amended to provide the space for this reflection to be meaningful and to recognise the additional workload colleagues in Schools would face in the short-term and at the start of the 2020-21 academic session. Reflection on available data sets using Power BI should also be light touch with clear guidance setting out what is required. The Committee also agreed that the process should allow for the option of updating 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).

**Action:** The Convenor and Academic Services to develop and submit a set of proposals to the May meeting of the Committee.

#### **6. Senate Committee Planning - SQAC Priorities 2020-21**

The Committee discussed priorities for the 2020-21 academic session.

The Committee agreed that it would:

- Continue to contribute to preparations for the University's next Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) and oversee activities in response to the review.
- Review responses to the coronavirus pandemic gathered via the University's Quality Assurance Framework, gather learning for future developments and share good practice across the institution.
- Review the approach to gathering student feedback across the University from Course Enhancement Questionnaires (CEQs).
- Examine data and methodological options for the systematic monitoring of retention, progression, and attainment data.

## **7. Undergraduate Degree Classification**

### **– Undergraduate Degree Classification Analysis**

The Committee received the annual report on degree classification outcomes of successfully exiting undergraduates.

The Committee noted that the proportion of first class and upper-second class degrees awarded by the University remained in line with Russell Group comparators. It was also noted that most subject areas across the University were broadly in line with Russell Group comparators for their discipline and/or with the University average.

### **– Strategic Discussion of Trends in Undergraduate Degree Classification Outcomes **CLOSED PAPER****

## **8. UK Quality Code for Higher Education - Advice and Guidance Mapping**

The Committee **approved** the mapping the University's policies and practices to the advice and guidance that underpins the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

## **9. Work-based and Placement Learning Policy – Minor Changes**

The Committee **approved** the minor changes to the Policy. The Committee agreed that the growing numbers of postgraduate research (PGR) placements should be considered in any future review or processes.

### **For Information and Formal Business**

## **10. Internal Periodic Review – Responses**

The Committee **confirmed** that it was content with progress.

## **11. Guidance:**

The Committee noted the following guidance:

- QAA Covid-19 Support and Guidance <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/news-events/support-and-guidance-covid-19>
- spaqrs (Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland) Information Hub <https://www.spaqrs.ac.uk/page.php?page=886>

- QAA Scotland Focus On 2019-20 Technology Enhanced Learning resource hub  
<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/en/focus-on/technology-enhanced-learning>

**12. Any other business**

**Board of Studies Guidance**

Members suggested that guidance was needed on making changes to courses to adapt to the hybrid mode. It was suggested that a communication be disseminated to remind colleagues of what they can do and what changes could be made after the publication of the Degree Programme Tables (DPTs). It was agreed that there was a need to empower staff to make changes to courses where they feel they need to in order to adapt to a hybrid delivery.

**Action:** Academic Services Committee Secretary to forward comments to Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC).

**13. Date of Next Meeting:** Thursday 21 May 2020 at 2pm via Teams.