The University of Edinburgh
Senate Quality Assurance Committee

**Meeting to be held on Thursday 24 February 2022
at 2pm via Microsoft Teams**

A G E N D A

1. **Welcome and Apologies**

2. Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 9 December 2021   SQAC 21/22 3A

3. **Matters Arising**

For Discussion

4. Data Task Group   SQAC 21/22 3B

5. Annual Reports 2020-21:
5.1 External Examiner Reports - Thematic Analysis   SQAC 21/22 3C
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5.3 Complaint Handling   SQAC 21/22 3E
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For Information and Formal Business

7. Mid-year update on progress against SQAC priorities   SQAC 21/22 2H

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9. Internal Periodic Review: Reports and Responses   SQAC 21/22 3J

10. Sector Summary Outcomes from Institution-led Review **CLOSED PAPER**   SQAC 21/22 3K

11. **Any Other Business**

12. **Date of Next Meeting:** Thursday 28 April 2022, 2pm, MS Teams

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

**Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 9 December 2021
at 2pm via Microsoft Teams**

Professor Tina Harrison **(Convener)**	Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance
Brian Connolly	Academic Policy Manager, 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 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
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
Professor Leigh Sparks	Deputy Principal, University of Stirling

In attendance:

Léopoldine Barde	Quality Assurance Manager, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Linda Bruce	Academic Services
Professor Antony Maciocia	Dean of Postgraduate Research, College of Science and Engineering

Apologies:

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
Nichola Kett	Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team, Academic Services
Stuart Lamot	Edinburgh University Students' Association Representative

1. Welcome and Apologies

It was noted that Professor Antony Maciocia would join the meeting for discussion of Paper F Enhanced coordination of training and support for Tutors and Demonstrators, and that Léopoldine Barde (Quality Assurance Manager, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences) and Linda Bruce (Academic Services) would join the meeting as observers.

It was noted that the following reports would be considered at the February 2022 meeting: Annual Review of Student Support Services; External Examiner Reports Thematic Analysis; Student Discipline; and Complaint Handling.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 16 September 2021

The Committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

For Discussion

4. College Annual Quality Reports 2020-21:

4.1 College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

The College Dean of Quality thanked Alistair Duthie and Léopoldine Barde for their work in enhancing the processes behind the report.

The Committee noted that as part of the College's revised approach, quality assurance actions were now assigned to the broad themes already in train in the College, and to the relevant Deanery team/s or specific leads. The actions were kept under rolling review and update at College level. This had facilitated the completion of actions from the previous report. Among the ongoing actions, improvements to the QA dashboard were highlighted.

It was noted that the new College Quality Assurance Forum will start in summer 2022. Within the College committee structure the Forum will be an avenue for identifying and sharing best practice around quality assurance.

The Forum will give formal sign-off to the annual College quality report for transmission to the College Management and Strategy Committee. Thereafter the College Learning and Teaching Committee will be responsible for taking forward actions. Oversight of actions will be assigned to specific members of the Deanery team, who will provide College with updates on progress. Top level oversight will be via College Strategy Committee. Overall, the new structure will allow enhanced management of progress and review.

From the perspective of the School Director of Quality role, the new structure will give more opportunity to become involved in a wider range of issues and exposures.

The Committee noted that with actions now subsumed within broader headings at College level it will be important to ensure that specific quality action requests continued to drive new activity and that the nuance of the original recommendation is retained. It was agreed that the next College Quality Assurance report should have more emphasis on action by the forum itself on how it supported colleagues in addressing recommendations.

4.2 College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine

The College Dean of Quality thanked Victoria Bennett (Quality Officer) for her work on the report.

Within the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine quality assurance activity is separated into what the College Quality Assurance committee could drive on its own, and actions to be progressed by other areas of the College. Monitoring of the latter is done via a mid-year update. The Committee noted the following positive progress:

- Moderation work;
- Student representation family and learning from each other;
- Considerable work on the postgraduate research student area within the College, including postgraduate representation and its alignment with the Doctoral College;
- Student feedback was positive, although on-line and on-campus provision needed to be disarticulated given the very different cohort experiences. The impact of the pandemic would continue to be monitored, particularly in the case of postgraduate research students;
- Ongoing work on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), with good initiatives.

College actions

- Streamlining/modifying PGT programme/course handbook template
- A College registry for PhD students and post-docs to express an interest in teaching thus helping people find opportunities.

Examples of outstanding practice had been sent to the SQAC committee secretary.

<u>Challenges</u>

- Staffing
- Resources
- More granular data

Overall the College felt it necessary to temper the volume of activity this year and prioritise smart working given the impact of the pandemic on staff.

Regarding College actions for 2021/22, the following were noted:

- Monitor and learn from the implementation of the Student Voice Policy
- Embed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion more explicitly in course approval processes
- Support the development of quality assurance and enhancement processes for non-credit bearing provision across the College

<u>Actions remitted to the University for 2021/22</u>

- Among these was highlighted support for E-assessment tools and exploration of future options to ensure tools were comparable with competitors and met Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) requirements; and identifying and sharing best practice and providing guidance for operating secure assessments online, including evidencing of misconduct.

The Committee supported the need for University guidance on E-assessment in order to avoid unhelpful local variation. It was noted that the University of Stirling was trialling proctored examinations because of PSRB requirements.

In discussion the Committee noted the attainment gap for Scottish students in the early years of undergraduate programmes, and that investigative work would be carried out in the College. A detailed analysis from the School of Biomedical Sciences would be shared with the Committee.

In the context of attainment gaps, the College of Science and Engineering had identified community and curriculum as key areas for attention by a working group, and was carrying out detailed interrogation of BI data. The working group would liaise with PTAS and the Dean of Systematic Inclusion, and activity by Race Equality and Anti-Racist Subcommittee (REAR) would be shared.

It was emphasised that EDI work in all Colleges should link to the work of REAR.

Action: Committee Secretary to raise with University EDI Committee Convenor.

4.3 College of Science & Engineering

The Dean of Quality thanked Heather McNeill, Deputy Head of Academic Affairs and her team for the preparation of the report.

Progress with College level actions

- The Attainment and Progression working group would start in spring 2022 for one calendar year. The intention was to collect and disseminate good practice across Schools.

- Belonging and community in the context of the pandemic was a key theme emerging from School quality reports. Schools had made significant efforts, but concerns remained.

- Schools requested to be kept informed about changes arising from the Student Support Review.

- Work on EDI and Decolonising the Curriculum was underway.

  With regard to Decolonising the Curriculum, it was noted that its application to some STEM teaching was not always obvious. Helpful discussions had taken place with the other two Colleges. College level work would feed into University activity, and to a new EDI statement in the course and programme approval process.

- Exchange due diligence and approval

  It was noted that 9 exchange agreements had been terminated, due to lack of fit with the Edinburgh experience or reciprocity. The Convener stated that School exchange agreements should be reviewed as part of School quality assurance processes.

From School/Deanery reports concern emerged about the disrupted experience of postgraduate research students due to the pandemic. Work was underway, led by the Dean of Postgraduate Research.

Issues for the University

- Learn Ultra had significant implications for Schools and Colleges, with a significant level of disruption. Implementation would run in parallel with plans for changes to student support and the Curriculum Transformation Project. It would be highly desirable to have phasing of the three projects and to consider their resourcing.

In discussion it was emphasised that learning from previous large University change projects should be brought to bear on the current suite. The Vice Principal Students would be made aware of School and College views.

Action: Convenor to discuss with Vice Principal Students.

- Coursework submission after week 11/during exam diet

It was noted that any coursework set at this time had to take into account students' other assessment deadlines. While students' timetabling was managed for exams, this was not the case for coursework. The optimum would be to consider coursework and exams holistically and in terms of preparation time needed for both. No coursework should be set during a vacation period.

The Convener thanked all College colleagues for their input to the reporting process.

5. **Academic Appeals Annual Report 2020-21**

The Committee noted that appeals were up 60%, but accounted for only 0.7% of the student population. It was planned to reduce some of the pressure of volume of appeals on Academic Services by moving some processes to SharePoint.

Learning points:

- Borderlines and Covid-19 mitigation measures: there had been a degree of misunderstanding by students about mitigation measures, specifically around borderlines, and this was reflected in appeal submissions. While the number of appeals had increased, the number upheld was similar to the previous year. It was recommended that further attention should be given to the wording of any similar future communications
- The percentage of late notification of Special Circumstances had gone down
- Changes to the Appeals Regulations did not appear to have affected or prevented students from submitting appeals.

It was agreed that a key learning point was how to increase student understanding of the Assessment Regulations, with particular attention given to international students. This could also be fed into wider work on assessment and feedback.

The Convenor thanked Stuart Fitzpatrick for preparation of the new streamlined report.

6. **Enhanced coordination of support and training for Tutors and Demonstrators**

Professor Antony Maciocia, Dean of PGR, College of Science and Engineering, introduced the paper.

A Doctoral College working group had been set up to review the Policy on Recruitment, Support and Development of Tutors and Demonstrators and address Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR) recommendations regarding the training and support of tutors and demonstrators. This would contribute to a number of areas of Strategy 2030 outcomes.

In discussion it was noted that governance of tutoring and demonstrating required a clear locus. There were challenges in this respect, as not all tutors and demonstrators were postgraduate research students. Training of tutors and demonstrators was very good in most Schools, but some areas required attention, and it was essential to have a set of baseline standards as a main objective of the group.

With regard to the ELIR recommendation that all tutors and demonstrators receive the mandated training, the working group would seek to ensure that this was delivered through a first tranche of work of setting the baseline standards after extensive consultation with Schools. A second tranche of work would establish governance, probably at College level. It would be essential to include the Edinburgh Teaching Award. The working group structure would have an inner working group for high level discussion at a governance level, with a larger networking group drawn from every School and Deanery feeding into it.

Discussion of the working group structure highlighted that it could be useful to consider possible involvement of tutors and demonstrators in the governance group.

With these amendments, the Committee approved the set up and aims of the working group.

Professor Maciocia was thanked for his work on the group to date.

7. **Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCS) Annual Report 2020-21**

The Committee noted that there had been 1 million enrolments on University of Edinburgh MOOCs during the pandemic. A BI universe was being created which in addition to being used by course teams, schools and colleges to understand the number of enrolments and certificates for their courses, would also support reporting to the Strategy Group and the annual report to SQAC. The Committee was asked to nominate a member to contribute the development of the universe.

Action: The Committee Secretary to seek a nominee from the Committee.

8.   **Thematic Review Progress Updates:**

8.1 Black and minority ethnic (BME) students' experiences of support at the University 2018-19

The Committee noted that Dr Emily Sena had taken over from Professor Rowena Arshad as co-convener of Race Equality and Anti-Racist Subcommittee (REAR).

It was noted that resource was required for two roles – a student support role and one for data collection. With regard to the attainment gap and baselines, it was noted that each College had activity underway, but REAR co-conveners were of the view that the work required additional resource from the University. The Committee noted that there seemed to be a lack of communication around the publication of the annual EDMARC report. It was noted that the work of the BME outreach officer was progressing well. It was agreed that Dr Sena should be invited to a future meeting of SQAC for discussion on taking these issues forward.

Action: Committee Secretary to invite the new co-convenor of REAR to a future meeting.

8.2 Mature Students and Student Parents and Carers 2017-18

The Committee noted that some actions had been delayed by the pandemic, but the Committee was pleased to note that the strategic review of childcare provision was moving forward under the Estates department.

For Information and Formal Business

9.   **Enhancement Themes: Year 2 Plan**

The Committee noted that recruitment was underway of two PhD interns to support work on the Theme. The Convener noted that the need had been identified to develop a theory of change for the University to assist with Enhancement Themes work and this would be added to the Plan.

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

The Committee confirmed that it was content with progress in the year-on and 14 week responses.

11.   **Any Other Business**

11.1 Membership

It was noted that Marianne Brown would join the Committee at the next meeting as the new co-opted member with expertise in Student Systems.

11.2 Learn Ultra

In further discussion of Learn Ultra it was noted that Schools involved in the pilot had fed back that it was appreciated that it was needed, but that there was real concern about the amount of work required to migrate material between systems which could only be done by academic staff. Concerns were noted in regard to a lack of understanding about the amount of academic time that would need to be devoted to this and the need for early communication about the proposed change to all academic staff. Teaching materials had only recently been restructured for Learn Foundations and would possibly need to be restructured again for the Curriculum Transformation Project. It was unclear whether the staff training functionality would migrate from People and Money to Learn Ultra. There were potential issues for tutorial sign-up if the self-enrolment function of People and Money were withdrawn. It was noted that some disciplines found platforms other than Learn more suited to their teaching needs. It would be vital to take into account the interdependencies between Learn Ultra and other projects such as the Curriculum Transformation Project and the digital campus. Information was requested on the oversight of the Learn Ultra project in the University's committee structure.

Action: Convener to communicate Committee discussion to Vice Principal Students and Assistant Principal Online Learning.

12. **Date of Next Meeting:** Thursday 24 February 2022, 2pm, MS Teams

The University of Edinburgh
Senate Quality Assurance Committee

24 February 2022

Data Task Group

Description of paper:

1. This paper notes the Committee's previous decision to implement a new system to monitor student retention, progression, and attainment data and invites the Committee to consider the next steps required to achieve this outcome.

Action requested / recommendation:

2. For discussion.

Background and context:

3. At the meeting held on 27 February 2020, Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) agreed to implement a new system for monitoring retention, progression, and attainment data. This decision was made in response to recommendations from the 2017-18 and 2018-19 Thematic Reviews.

4. Specifically, it was agreed that the aim of the new system would be to understand how well the University supports different groups throughout the student life-cycle: the likelihood of different student groups continuing or withdrawing from study at the University; the extent to which the University enables different student groups to fulfil their potential during their time at Edinburgh; and how successful the University is at supporting different student groups transition within their programme of study and afterwards to employment or further study. The Committee also acknowledged the importance of understanding this data in terms of the 'distance travelled' by different groups in order to provide a greater understanding of the 'value added' by the University and the extent to which the needs of different student groups had been supported by the University.

5. It was also agreed that the Committee's existing approach to monitoring Degree Classification Outcome data should be used as the basis of this new system. In April each year the Committee receives an annual report (produced by Governance and Strategic Planning, GaSP) on degree classification outcomes of successfully exiting undergraduates, including sector trends in undergraduate degree classification outcomes. Any Schools/subject areas considered to have diverged substantially from either the University average or comparators in their discipline are then asked to specifically reflect on the issue, and any proposed remediation, in their School Annual Quality Report. The Committee then continues to monitor progress via this annual reporting process until the issue is considered to have been resolved. This approach ensures systematic University oversight whilst also encouraging Schools to engage with the specific data on attainment, reflect on the issues and context, and then seek local solutions.

6. The Committee agreed that this approach should be expanded to include data on progression (as well as attainment) and should encompass more granular data

on a range of different student groups such as Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) students, mature students, and student parents and carers. Any School considered to have significant progression or awarding gaps amongst its students would be asked to specifically reflect on the issue, and any proposed remediation, in their School Annual Quality Report. The Committee would monitor progress via the annual reporting processes until the issue was considered to have been resolved.

7. In February 2020 the Committee established a Data Task Group to examine data set and methodological options for this new system. However during the last two years the pandemic has delayed the progress of this Group, with the maintenance of core requirements the primary focus of activities across the University. Furthermore, a key member of the Group has now left the University.

8. During this period Schools have increasingly engaged with widening participation (WP) and equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) data to identify awarding gaps for different groups of students in their annual reports. However, they have also noted that they are struggling to understand the underlying causes of these gaps or what good practice should be encouraged and cultivated to address the issue. Schools have expressed a desire for the University to establish a set of expectations or baselines in relation to WP and EDI to allow Schools to gauge their relative performance.

9. The need for more baseline expectations was a key recommendation of the University's recent Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR):
"… recognising the decentralised nature of university structures, the institution should establish a systematic approach to enable effective institutional oversight and evaluation of the implementation of policy and practice. As part of this, the University is asked to increase the range and use of institutionally determined baseline requirements to ensure consistency and accountability. The institution should ensure that mechanisms are put in place to adequately evaluate the consistency of implementation of strategic objectives across the institution and act when Schools deviate from institutional expectations."

The ELIR also recommended that the University:
"…consider how to address attainment gaps in student performance through the oversight, coordination and monitoring at an institutional level of school-level actions."

The University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) is now undertaking work to determine the underlying causes of the awarding gaps with the aim of establishing and sharing good practice with Schools to help them address these gaps. The Convenor of the EDIC will be invited to the April meeting of SQAC to discuss this work and the roles both committees will have in overseeing the outcome of this work.

10. There is an increasing emphasis on the use of data to assure and enhance the experience of students across the sector. The final report of the Scottish Funding Council's (SFC) [Review of Coherence and Sustainability](#) (June 2021) included the following recommendation:

    "*Develop a single quality assurance and enhancement framework for tertiary education, to uphold academic standards, and enhance the learning experience of all students.* One of the core principles for the approach to quality assurance and enhancement in the Review report (building on feedback from stakeholders about what is valued in existing approaches) is: "*Evidence-based: data and evidence should inform our understanding of practice and quality assurance, and our plans for enhancement"* (page 70).

    Also, the [UK Quality Code advice and guidance on Monitoring and evaluation, guiding principle 3](#) requires that: "Providers clarify aims, objectives, activities and actions, and identify the key indicators, issues, questions, targets and relevant information/data."

Discussion:

11. Given this background/context, the Data Task Group invites the Committee discuss the following points at its February meeting and agree the next steps required to achieve the outcome (as noted above):

    - **Membership** – does the Group need any additional representation? At present it is comprised of: Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling (Student Systems); Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Approval (CAHSS); Head of Quality and Enhancement (Academic Services); Students' Association Vice President (Education).

    - **Short Term** - the data currently available to support annual quality assurance processes, the support and resources for using and understanding this data, and short term development plans are set out in the **Appendix**. What specific data should we require staff to reflect on in this year's annual monitoring process and what guidance/support should we provide?

    - **Long Term** - what enhancements should we aspire to going forward? What additional data do we need to collect and analyse?

12. Should we plug the new SQAC data monitoring system into the existing [Equality Diversity Monitoring and Research Committee (EDMARC)](#) reporting system?

    EDMARC is a standing committee of EDIC and produces (in collaboration with GaSP) an annual report analysing student and staff data by the key equality dimensions of gender, age, disability and ethnicity. The report provides the University with comprehensive statistical data on protected characteristics to support the monitoring of equality and diversity within the University. However,

staff are not required to systematically engage with the EDMARC data once it has been published on the University's Equality and Diversity website.

SQAC could draw on the data and analysis in the EDMARC Student Report to determine which School may be required to provide a more detailed reflection or remedial action in its Annual Quality Report. This would allow SQAC to make use of an existing reporting mechanism and to benefit from the EDI experience and expertise of the EDMARC membership. This would also benefit EDMARC by providing greater visibility, engagement and traction for its annual report across all Schools and Deaneries.

The EDMARC report is usually published in March so it could be considered at the April meeting of SQAC, alongside the annual Degree Classification Outcome Report (also produced by GaSP). This would provide SQAC with more granular outcome data covering a greater range of different student groups (i.e. ethnicity, gender, age, disability).

In the longer term, SQAC and EDIC would need to explore the scope for an expanded EDMARC Student Report encompassing progression data and more granular data on a range of different student groups (such as student parents and carers). This process could begin by inviting the Convenor of the EDIC to the April meeting of SQAC.

Resource implications:
13. Additional statistical analysis resources may be required to systematically monitor retention, progression, and attainment data. These will need to be costed depending on the methodological approach agreed by the Committee.

Risk management:
14. Poor performance in retention, progression, and attainment metrics is a risk to the University's reputation, increasing as these measures gain more publicity. As these measures gain more profile, it will be an increasing risk to the University's reputation if we do not develop a better understanding of which groups of students are at higher risk of withdrawing or under-achieving and of any underlying reasons.

Equality & diversity:
15. Equality and diversity issues are integral to the development of a new system.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed:
16. Committee Secretary will feedback comments to relevant areas.

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Presenter
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Annual Monitoring Data

This paper confirms what data is currently available to support annual quality assurance processes, available support and resources for using and understanding data, and short term development plans.

Annual Monitoring Dashboards

Data is available through the Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling (SAIM) Insights Hub to support annual monitoring processes.

This comprises Applications, Awards, Course Marks, Outcomes and Progression data at University, College, School and Programme level (as applicable). Data within these dashboards can be viewed across demographic attributes (Sex, Domicile, Ethnicity, Age, and Disability) and across Widening Participation indicators.

Summary Dashboard

The Summary Dashboard, previously Head of School dashboard, provides a holistic view across each School, summarising: student body (high-level demographic and widening participation levels), undergraduate and postgraduate performance outcomes (continuation rates, attainment and graduate outcomes) and student opinions (National Student Survey, Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey, Postgraduate Research Experience Survey).

A School comparison table within this dashboard presents data across the student journey, using the following data milestones:

- Entry tariff
- Continuation rate
- Employment and Further Study
- Highly Skilled Employment and Further Study

There is additional attainment gap outcomes for:

- Undergraduate – BAME, State vs Independent School
- Postgraduate – BAME, Sex

The Summary Dashboard is located alongside the "unrounded" annual monitoring dashboards, and access is agreed by the College.

Data support and resources

To support the quality process in 2021, the Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling team produced individualised School reports, based on annual monitoring data outcomes. This service will remain available on a request only basis. Additional support can be requested, and is as follows;

- Dashboard demos to support users in accessing, navigating and understanding available data (networks and groups)
- Consultative sessions, for bespoke guidance through data, tailored to audience requirements (individuals or small groups)

- [Power BI Help Videos](#) are accessible via the SAIM SharePoint site
- A summary of core data definitions will be developed for reference and made available on the [SharePoint site](#)

SAIM are committed to supporting colleagues across the University in using data, and will tailor support to the audience as required. Requests for support should be sent through student.analytics@ed.ac.uk

Student Parents and Student Carers – Future Development

As noted above, the School comparison table within the Summary Dashboard provides outcomes across the student journey. It has been requested to extend this to provide outcomes specifically across the following additional student groups:

- Student parents
- Student carers

This data is gathered through the Annual Registration process but is currently not available in reporting outputs. Additional work from ISG will be required to progress this. It is estimated analysis on this data could be available within the next 3-6 months, dependent on resource availability.

Marianne Brown,
Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling (Interim),
Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling

February 2022

The University of Edinburgh
Senate Quality Assurance Committee

24 February 2022

External Examiner Reports:
Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught
Thematic Analysis 2020/21

Description of paper
1. An analysis of data from the External Examiner Reporting System (EERS). Covers undergraduate (see section A) and postgraduate taught (see section B) programmes for academic year 2020/21, provides comparison with 2019/20 and trend analysis over the past five years.

Action requested / recommendation
2. The Committee to note the report and identify any University-level actions (assigning to specific areas as appropriate). The Committee to note the comments in relation to resource implications.

Background and context
3. The University's External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy states that the Senate Quality Assurance Committee uses information from External Examiners reports to identify common themes to help shape the strategic approach to quality assurance, quality enhancement and to enhance student experience.

4. The UK Quality Code guiding principles on External Expertise state, "Providers have effective mechanisms in place to provide a response to input from external examiners and external advisers." The University's mapping to the Quality Code states in response that Academic Response coordinators in Schools are responsible for responding to External Examiner reports and that the Quality Assurance Committee receives a thematic report from Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught external examiner reporting. The Committee identifies any institutional actions. Due to current resourcing in Academic Services, the SQAC Convener agreed to the 2020/21 Undergraduate report being submitted in February, and this has been combined with the postgraduate taught report as a single paper.

Discussion
5. Analysis includes major themes arising from commendations, suggestions, issues, comments identified for institutional escalation in the External Examiners' reports and summarises report status. Analysis was conducted based on data available on 7 January 2022 for undergraduate reports and 31 January 2022 for postgraduate taught. Full analysis is attached as Appendix 1.

Resource implications

6. The paper is a report on activity therefore there are no resource implications associated with it. Contextual analysis is done at course, programme, School and College level and report outputs are considered through annual monitoring and Internal Periodic Review. Any actions taken by Schools and Colleges as a result of External Examiner reports are expected to be met from within existing resources.

Risk management

7. The paper is a report on activity and no risks are identified.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

8. This paper does not contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals as it is fulfilling external compliance within the quality framework.

Equality & diversity

9. The paper is a report on activity and an equality impact assessment is not required. Academic Services has not identified any major equality impacts in relation to this report.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

10. The Committee should consider implementation and communication of any agreed action. College representatives should ensure that the outcomes of the Committee's discussions are available for consideration by the relevant College committees.

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Presenter
Brian Connolly
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February 2022

1. Introduction

1.1   This paper provides a thematic analysis of External Examiner reports for undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes. Analysis was conducted based on data available on 7 January (undergraduate) and 31 January 2022 (postgraduate taught). The analysis focuses on high level themes across the University. (See also points raised under "Resource implications" on the coversheet of this paper.) External Examiners often write "N/A" or "not applicable" in their report entries and the analysis does not exclude these remarks.

1.2   **Action requested** The Committee to note the report and identify any University-level actions (assigning to specific areas as appropriate).

A   Undergraduate External Examiner Reports:

       Thematic Analysis 2020/21

2.   Analysis of major themes

2.1   Analysis continues to show a high number of commendations across the University and a low number of issues (see Figure 1). As in 2019/20, External Examiners have reported significantly fewer issues across all three Colleges (see section 2.4). Trend analysis is included in Figure 2 below. The Committee should note that External Examiners can make multiple comments across categories and the analysis reflects the trends shown by the reporting system.
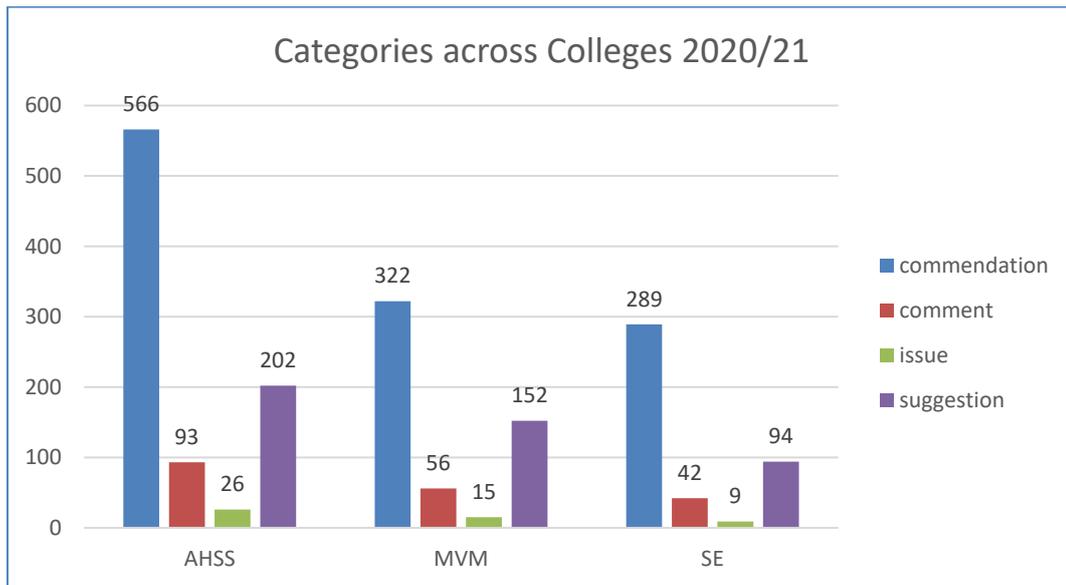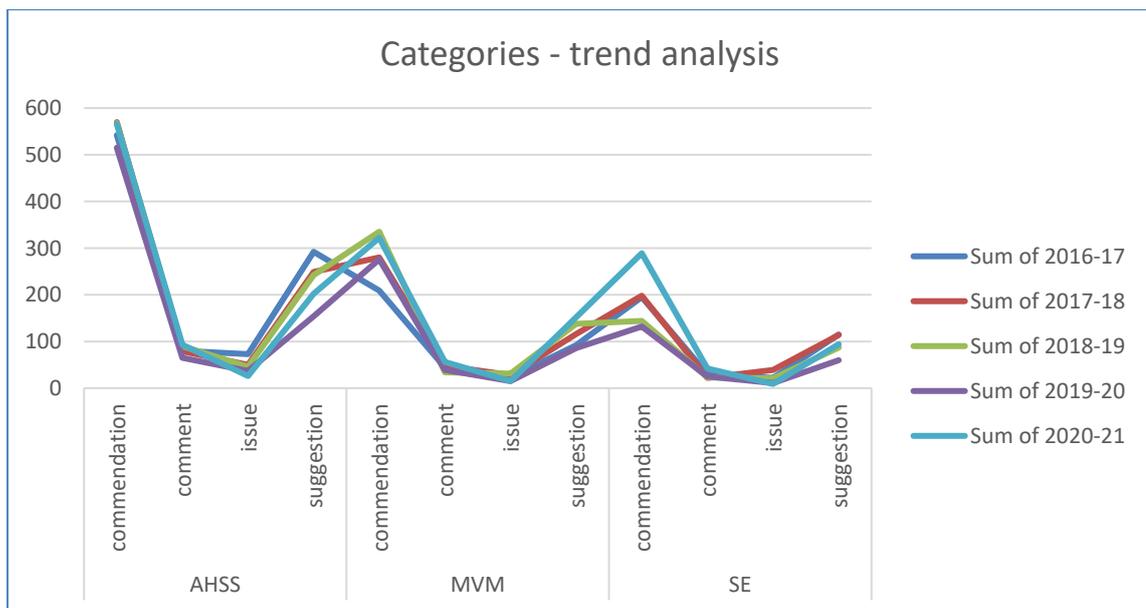
Figure 1

Figure 2 Categories trend analysis over past five years

AHSS (College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences), MVM (College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine), SE (College of Science and Engineering). The number of issues, commendations, suggestions and comments are in the context of the relative size of each college.

2.2   Commendations

Consistent with the previous four years, External Examiners most often commended the main **theme** of "The Assessment Process" across all three Colleges (269 of a total of 893 commendations). The most commendations of a

single **sub-theme** were in "Good practice and innovation" (in the Programme Development theme – total of 170 commendations). Some examples of External Examiners' comments from that sub-theme are:

"This is an innovative programme - and its ability to allow content to 'emerge' based on current events is unusual across a sector often obsessed with pre-defined curriculum journeys. It is an amazingly relevant experience for students, and the capacity for them to interact life experiences with academic knowledge and frameworks is very important."

"This has been an academic year marked above all by pressure. Taking the time to write thoughtfully and carefully, treating each essay as an individual's effort rather than the latest number in a stack, is incredibly trying in such a context. I would like to congratulate all of the markers for the time they take with this. The degree will have so much more value for students as a result of this care. I hope this hard work is recognised in workloads."

"The interweaving of experience and experiential learning through engagement with practitioners, community groups and voices of persons with experience is very impressive and an exemplar for other institutions and programmes of medical education. It recognises the value of 'learning to be a doctor' and provides a way point for the development of sensibility and understanding otherwise hard to access or indeed inaccessible. This is achieved by centring student learning within teaching and also assessment. The work to develop assessments that allow students to integrate learning is commendable."

2.3   Suggestions

The Programme Development **sub-theme** "Enhancing student learning experience" attracted the highest number of suggestions (123 of a total of 347 suggestions across all themes). External Examiners made suggestions in all Colleges. The majority of suggestions were specific to courses or programmes. There were no significant, common themes across the range of suggestions in that sub-theme.

2.4   Issues

2.4.1   Overall, 40 issues were raised compared with 63 in 2019/20 (a percentage difference of 45%). This may be part of a downward trend or External Examiners may continue to be unwilling to raise issues in what has been another challenging year across the sector.

2.4.2   As in the previous four years, the main **theme** was "Provision of Information" with 11 comments made across all Colleges. Once again, the **sub-theme** of "Previous Issues" had the most points raised at eight. There were no significant themes associated with these.

Schools have responded to or are preparing responses to all reports.

3. Overview of the number of Undergraduate External Examiner Reports

3.1   Table 1 shows the total number of undergraduate reports by College compared with the previous academic year.

Table 1: Number of undergraduate reports

	2020/21	2019/20
College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS)	103	157
College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine (CMVM)	65	72
College of Science and Engineering (CSE)	34	40
Total number of reports	202	269

3.2   Table 2 shows the number and stage of undergraduate reports in each College for 2020/21 and 2019/20.

Table 2: Number and stage of reports

	Report Stage	2020/21	2019/20
AHSS	Response Submitted (complete)	70 (complete)	74
	Draft Response (response outstanding)	3 (in progress)	44
	Draft Report (report outstanding)	30 (late)	33
	Allocation		6
	Cancelled		0
MVM	Response Submitted	62 (complete)	56
	Draft Response		6
	Draft Report	3 (late)	6
	Allocation		0
	Submitted Offline		2
	Cancelled		2
CSE	Response Submitted	26 (complete)	19
	Draft Response		12
	Draft Report	8 (late)	8
	Cancelled		0
	Allocation		1

3.3   Figures provide for 2020/21 are from the PowerBI Dashboard. The previous year's figures were obtained from the BI Suite report which is no longer

supported. Student Systems has updated the PowerBI Dashboard to include in progress and due to breach status for reports. No undergraduate reports were recorded as in progress or due to breach for 2020/21 at the data capture point.

3.4　Colleges are continuing to work with Schools to ensure any outstanding draft reports are received and that responses are completed as soon as possible.

4. Comments identified by Academic Response Coordinators as Institutional matters

4.1　Academic Response Coordinators can flag comments for School, College or Institutional escalation. The Committee's primary interest in institutional escalations is to identify any issues that require institutional action. There were no comments flagged for institutional escalation in 2020/21. The table below shows a single commendation flagged for institutional escalation in the previous year.

Table 3: institutional escalation themes 2019/20

Programme Development and Enhancement, sub-theme Good practice and innovation (commendation)	1

B   Postgraduate Taught External Examiner Reports:

Thematic Analysis 2020/21

1. Analysis of major themes

1.1   Analysis continues to show a high number of commendations and a low number of issues across the Colleges (see Figure 3). A trend analysis is provided in Figure 4. The Committee should note that External Examiners can make multiple comments across categories and the analysis reflects the trends shown by the reporting system.
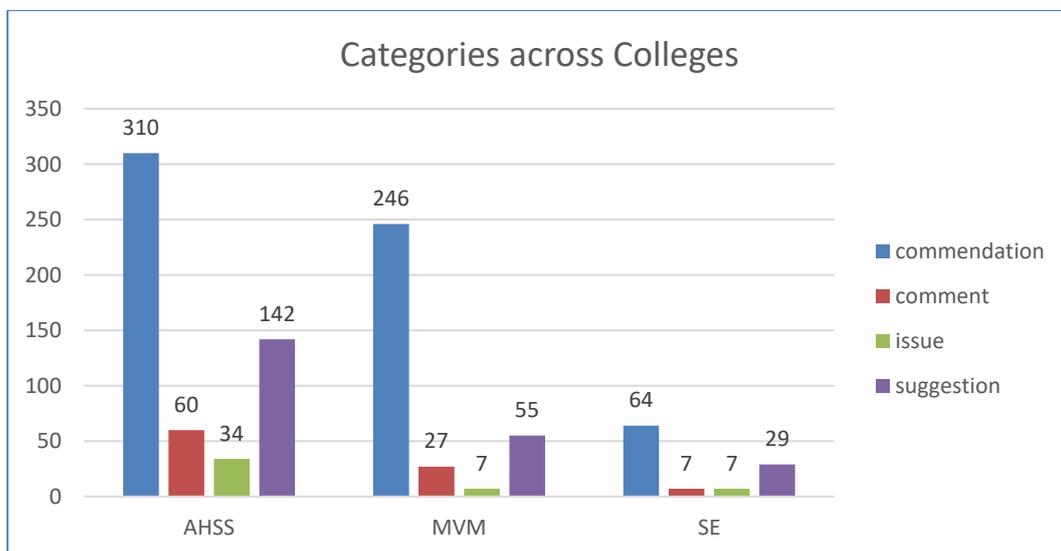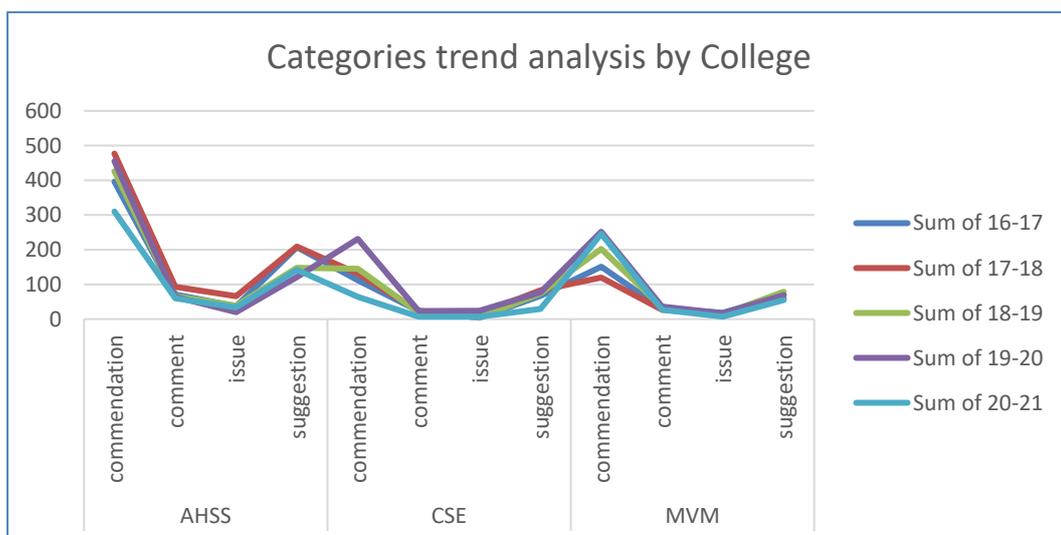
Figure 3

Figure 4

AHSS (College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences), MVM (College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine), SE (College of Science and Engineering). The number of issues, commendations and so on are in the context of the relative size of each college.

1.2   Commendations

The main **theme** commended across all three Colleges was The Assessment Process (168 commendations, 29% of the total number of commendations). Many commendations were course or programme specific. As in the previous two years, the most often occurring type of commendation in this theme related to the range, quality and diversity of teaching, learning and assessment. Some examples of External Examiners' comments are given below:

"The three first term modules complement each other beautifully, not only in their content, but also in their mode of delivery, mode of assessment, and the cohort of students they engage. Together they give students diverse opportunities to shine and to recognise their own strengths and interests (from article critique to lesson plan design). They also provide all students with a firm foundation to move on to second term."

"In all cases the quality of the feedback provided was exemplary - it was thorough, specific and phrased in friendly terms. It is important that this was the case also with feedback on the highest marked papers with markers providing useful comments to help these top students to further improve their writing skills."

"I would like to commend the programme for its continuation of innovative and creative assignments, clearly underpinned by high quality teaching."

1.3   Suggestions

The Programme Development and Enhancement **theme** attracted the highest number of suggestions at 83 (42% of the total number of suggestions). The majority of External Examiner suggestions, across all Colleges, specifically related to programmes and courses. One common theme with 10 report entries (12% of the total number of suggestions) related to the range and variety of teaching and learning resources.

1.4   Issues

Overall, 35 issues were raised (a 43% decrease on the previous year's report). The main **theme** was Issues raised in a previous report with 12 issues (34% of the total number of issues) and was raised across all Colleges. The most common issue raised in this theme was that there was not a 'not applicable' option when completing the system form with four report entries.

Schools have responded to or are preparing responses to all reports.

2 Overview of the number of External Examiner Reports

2.1 Outlined in the figure and table below are the number of postgraduate taught (PGT) reports by College compared with the previous academic year.

Table 4: Number of postgraduate taught reports by College

	2020/21	2019/20
College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS)	99	93
College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine (CMVM)	46	42
College of Science and Engineering (CSE)	14	24
Total number of reports	159	159

2.2 Outlined in the figures below are the number and stage of postgraduate taught reports in each College for 2020/21 and 2019/20.

Table 5: Number and stage of reports by College and academic year

	Report Stage	2020/21	2019/20
CAHSS	Complete (response submitted)	32	66
	In progress (response outstanding)	38	43
	Late (report outstanding)	14	
	Due to breach*	15	
CMVM	Complete	29	40
	In progress	4	7
	Late	12	
	Due to breach	1	
CSE	Complete	6	26
	In progress	3	11
	Late	4	
	Due to breach	1	

*Due to breach status is where External Examiners have identified an individual in their report.

2.3 Student Systems has updated the PowerBI Dashboard to include in progress and due to breach status for reports. In the previous year only a breakdown of the stage of reports that were late or complete was available.

2.4 Colleges are continuing to work with Schools to ensure any outstanding draft reports are received and that responses are completed as soon as possible.

3 Items identified by Academic Response Coordinators as Institutional matters

3.1 No items were identified for institutional escalation in 2020/21 reports. In 2019/20, one suggestion was raised for escalation to institutional level (see Table 6).

Table 6 Institutional escalation

2019/20	
The Assessment Process, sub-theme Level of Assessment (suggestion)	1

C   Total reports for 2020/21

In 2020/21 the External Examiner Reporting System recorded a total of 202 reports from 201 Undergraduate External Examiners, and 159 reports from 158 Postgraduate Taught External Examiners. Report status is monitored by Colleges and followed up with Schools at course and programme level as required.

Figure 5 Undergraduate report overview

Figure 6 Postgraduate taught report overview

Susan Hunter
Academic Services
11 February 2022

The University of Edinburgh
Senate Quality Assurance Committee

24 February 2022

Annual Report on Student Discipline 2020/21

Description of paper

1. This paper provides information on the number of breaches of the Code of Student Conduct over the course of the academic year 2020/21.

Action requested / recommendation

2. The Quality Assurance Committee are invited to note the report and to discuss the analysis presented. College representatives are asked to ensure that the outcomes of the Committee's discussion are made available to and considered by the relevant College committee(s).

Background and context

3. Annual report submitted to the Quality Assurance Committee.

Discussion

4. See attached paper.

Resource implications

5. N/A – there are no proposed actions in the paper.

Risk management

6. N/A – there are no proposed actions in the paper.

Equality & diversity

7. N/A – there are no proposed actions in the paper.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

8. The overall conduct statistics in Appendix 1 have been published on the University website at: www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/studentdisciplinestatistics.pdf

Author
Student conduct team,
Academic Services

Presenter
Brian Connolly
Academic Services

February 2022

Freedom of Information

- **Closed -** disclosure would constitute a breach of the Data Protection Act

Annual Report on Complaint Handling, 2020-21

Description of paper

1. In line with the requirements of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) and the University's Complaint Handling Procedure (CHP), this paper reports on the handling of complaints to the University for the academic year 2020-21.

Actions requested

2. College representatives are asked to ensure that the outcomes of the Committee's discussions are made available to and considered by the relevant College committee(s).

Recommendations

3. Efforts need to be made to improve the logging and reporting of complaints received at School and support service level; College representatives are asked to reiterate to colleagues the vital role of regular reporting in delivering improvement and learning from complaints. The importance of accurate data collection is discussed further in the attached paper and in section 11 below.

Background and context

4. The CHP has two stages. Stage 1, frontline resolution, should be used in the majority of cases, with likely outcomes being an on-the-spot apology, an explanation or other action to resolve the complaint very quickly (within five working days). Stage 2 Complaint Investigation is appropriate where attempts at frontline resolution have failed, or where the issue is sufficiently complex, serious, or high risk from the outset that Stage 1 would not be appropriate.

5. The CHP specifies that the following will be reported internally:

    i)   'performance statistics detailing complaint volumes, types and key performance information, for example on time taken and stage at which complaints were resolved'

ii) 'the trends and outcomes of complaints and the actions taken in response including examples to demonstrate how complaints have helped improve services'

Discussion

6. Please see attached paper.

Resource implications

7. We recommend that resource is made available for procurement, or development, of a suitable data management system as a matter of urgency; we invite the Committee's support in this matter and onward recommendation to the University Executive. Central Complaints has seen a 340% increase in contacts in the last 5 years, the SPSO will soon require additional analysis of captured data, and we are increasingly being asked to supply management with information regarding complaint trends. No resource was made available for systems when the original CHP was launched in 2013, so staff record information via a number of simple spreadsheets. Whilst existing tools meet the day-to-day requirements of the central Complaints team, insofar as tracking the progress of open cases and investigations, they were not designed with the volume of contacts we now handle in mind, nor are they adequate to the task of meeting the data requests we receive. Challenges associated with data collection are further discussed in the attached paper.

8. In June 2021, the SPSO announced that they intend to introduce 5 mandatory and 3 recommended Key Performance Indicator's (KPI's) for the Higher Education Sector. The target for these KPI's to be finalised is 'early' 2022, with the expectation that they will be implemented in academic year 2022-23. If there are no significant changes to the draft document, resource implications will be significant, particularly for the remainder of the current academic year, as existing recording tools will need to be restructured within a short timeframe: from next academic year, a substantial amount of additional analysis will be needed to comply with the SPSO's reporting requirements. This information is noted here for advisory purposes, and further detail will be supplied when available.

9. Previous annual complaint reports, and internal audit reports, have highlighted the vulnerability of the 'Complaints Department' due to absence of robust cover arrangements. The last five years have seen a year-on-year increase in contacts received by the central Complaints team, and it is recognised within Academic Services that the current team of two require

additional resource, to ensure adequate cover, and comply with SPSO service standards. Consideration is being given to several solutions: including restructuring within Academic Services and recruitment to an additional post.

Risk management

10. Risk management is a key element in the successful handling of all complaints, especially those which carry the potential for reputational damage to the University and/or claims for compensation.

11. The absence of robust data collection mechanisms continues to pose some risks. Inability to analyse and quantify types of cases:
    i)   inhibits our ability to spot trends and learn from complaints, essential at this time of high complaint volumes,
    ii) makes quantification of financial or reputational damage impossible,
    iii) fails to comply fully with SPSO requirements on data collection.

Equality and Diversity

12. The SPSO carried out an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) before publishing the original model CHP. This report covers complaints received, some of which relate to matters where equality and diversity is a consideration. An internal EIA was carried out prior to the launch of the updated CHP.

Next steps

13. Academic Services will be responsible for taking forward points arising from this report.

Consultation

14. The information in this report will also be provided to the University Executive.

Freedom of information

15. This paper is open; data from it will be published on the University's complaint handling webpage.

Author

Suzanne Holland, Complaints Officer
February 2022

Discussion of complaint handling, 2020-21

1.   Introduction

For the purposes of complaint reporting, the University has around 50 'areas', comprised of the Schools, College Offices, and designated support services. Areas report quarterly on complaints resolved at Stage 1, 'frontline'. All Stage 2 complaint investigations are managed centrally by Academic Services.

2.   Overview of Complaint Data

Table 1, below, summarises the number of complaint contacts recorded by the University in each of the last 5 academic years.

Academic Year	Number of complaint contacts		
	Central Complaints	Complaint Areas	Total
2020-21	1506	642	2148
2019-20	821	Unavailable	821
2018-19	531	635	1166
2017-18	437	718	1155
2016-17	342	467	809

Table 1: Complaint contacts recorded August 2016 – August 2021.

As noted in the 2019-20 annual report, due to increased workload arising from Covid-19, local areas found it challenging to correctly record complaints, with several reporting that they were too busy to collate and submit data. Consequently, the total number of complaints for academic year 2019-20 should not be considered accurate.

2.1   Complaint Areas

During the 12-month period 1 August 2020 – 31 July 2021, areas reported a total of 642 complaints (338 from students, 282 from members of the public and a small number from staff members).

2.2   Central Complaints

1506 contacts were received during the reporting period (673 from students, 122 from staff, with the remainder being members of the public).

3.   Data Analysis

3.1   **Complaint Areas**

Of the complaints recorded, 275 (43%) originated from one area, the Principal's office, which accounts for the large number of complaints from members of the public. It is not uncommon for this area to receive a high volume of contacts, but we note the cumulative number of complaints logged by the areas during this period is only marginally higher than in 2018-19, and lower than the 2017-18 figure.

Undoubtably areas will have faced similar challenges during this reporting period as they did during 2019-20; however, we have observed an increase in the number of 'nil returns' made each quarter.

Whilst variability in complaint volumes is to be expected area-by-area, given the sharp upward trend in contacts centrally over the past two academic years, we are troubled by the number of Schools which advised that they did not receive a single complaint during 2020-21: analysis of the area logs show that 50% of CMVM, 33% of CSE and 8% of CAHSS fall into this category.

Due to low rates of complaint recording, opportunities may have been missed to enhance the quality of the student learning experience. We therefore ask that College representatives remind appropriate staff of the valuable role complaints play in service improvement, and reiterate the SPSO's requirements with respect to accurate logging.

3.1.2   Complaint Themes

The balance of synchronous and asynchronous teaching activities; building access; student experience and student/parent dissatisfaction at paying full tuition fees for 'online' programmes.

3.2   **Central Complaints**

Contacts continue to increase year-on-year. In this reporting period there was an increase of 83% on the previous academic year, which represents a 183% increase since 2018-19, and is 245% higher than the 2017-18 figure.

Of the 1506 contacts logged in 2020-21:

- 149 (158 in previous year) cases were referred to the appropriate areas for frontline resolution and are therefore included in the 642 area total for the year.
- In 497 (158) cases, the 'complaint' was resolved through an explanation.
- 214 (113) complaints were not considered – 142 due to 'unacceptable behaviour' on the part of the complainants, 57 because they were requests for compensation only, which is not covered by the CHP. 7 were time-barred and 8 because they were attempts to re-open complaints which had already been completed through the University's procedures.
- The SPSO contacted the office regarding 50 cases, 40% of which related to appeal matters rather than complaints.
- Some cases were referred for investigation under another procedure – student conduct (51), staff capability/disciplinary (13), or appeal (8). These numbers, though small, are up on pre-pandemic figures, possibly reflecting a greater awareness on the part of students that they can complain about inappropriate behaviour by other students or by staff.
- 158 (37) cases were referred back to complainants for more information or for third party DPA clearance.
- 38 (36) complaints were raised about matters which were not the responsibility of the University, most originating from members of the public with the majority coming from just two complainants.
- 29 (31) Freedom of Information and Subject Access Requests were made.

A continuing trend has been the number of occasions on which staff members have consulted Complaints for advice on cases at an early stage, either to give a 'heads-up' on an imminent complaint, or to check that their proposed frontline approach to a complaint seems appropriate. Such approaches account for most cases not specified in the breakdown above and demonstrate the value of the complaints staff as an advisory resource, rather than purely handling final-stage casework.

A significant proportion of the explanations offered to members of the public and students related to policy matters, e.g. tuition fee refunds and lease breaks. It was also frequently necessary to clarify which Covid-19 restrictions were outside the control of the University, and thus could not be considered via the CHP.

3.2.2 <u>Complaint Themes</u>

Covid-19, and the University's response, continued to be the dominant source of complaint during the reporting period. Examples include:

- **Student behaviour** – Members of the public complaining about student parties, and members of the University community complaining about mask-wearing compliance.
- **University policy** – There was a significant increase in requests for tuition fee rebates and reductions, lease breaks etc. compared to last academic year. As the SPSO recognise that policy is set at the discretion of the institution, all responses to these complaints must be co-ordinated and responded to by the central Complaints team, so that Completion of Procedures can be issued.
- **Accommodation** – Safety, security, 'policing' and social isolation during lockdowns.
- **Parental concerns** – Value for money, practicalities relating to accommodation and access to University facilities, quality of student experience, quality of teaching and the availability of pastoral support.
- **Teaching provision** - Balance of synchronous and asynchronous teaching activities.

4. Summary of Complaints Managed at Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the CHP

4.1 <u>**Complaints Considered at Stage 1**</u>

It is believed that most frontline cases were resolved within the five-day time limit, but data on this was not being recorded consistently by areas. Mechanisms for logging complaints have still not been improved as we had hoped, and work on developing systems is currently on hold.

4.2 <u>**Complaints Considered at Stage 2**</u>

Despite the huge increase in complaints received, the number of cases progressing to a Stage 2 investigation decreased to 14 (24, 24, 9, 9) this academic year, suggesting that over 99% of complaints are successfully resolved at Stage 1.

As noted in previous reports, in academic year 2018-19 SPSO guidance changed, which resulted in an increase in Stage 2 numbers. Guidance has remained unaltered since and Table 2, below, summarises the Stage 2 investigation outcomes for the past five academic years.

		Academic Year				
		2020-21	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17
Complaint Outcome	Fully Upheld	1	0	2	0	0
	Partially Upheld	4	5	1	2	2
	Not Upheld	7	9	13	7	6
	Withdrawn	0	3	1	0	1
	Resolved By Other Means	0	7	0	0	0
	Still Under Consideration	2	0	0	0	0

Table 2: Stage 2 investigation outcomes August 2016 – August 2021.

Many complaints cover several issues and where any of these are upheld, the outcome for the investigation is recorded as 'partially upheld'.

4.2.1 <u>Investigation Timescales</u>

Investigations should be completed within a maximum of 20 working days, unless an extension is given for good reason. Previous years have indicated that we are rarely able to complete a full investigation within the time limit specified by the SPSO, but our performance in the year under review has been particularly badly hit by Covid-19. Of the 14 cases investigated, 3 were concluded within 20 working days, 6 within 40 working days, 3 within 26 weeks and 2 took over 26 weeks. Delays arise for many reasons, but are often in response to requests by the complainant, who may wish an investigation to be put on hold for a time.

All the cases that were significantly delayed this year were complex, often requiring multiple interviews, and staff availability was a key factor, particularly during quarters two and three. The two cases which were still under consideration when the reporting period ended have now been concluded, with neither being upheld.

4.3 **Learning from Complaints**

There were no commonalities between the upheld and partially upheld complaints during the reporting period; however, improvements to services may arise due to investigation of a complaint, whether the complaint is

upheld or not. Examples of such improvements in the past academic year include:

- Content of student induction sessions to be updated by one School, with more emphasis placed on University policies such as Dignity and Respect.
- Website updates, made by multiple areas, to improve clarity of communication.

5.   Cases considered by the SPSO

Of the 50 cases queried with us by the SPSO, 20 related to appeals. 17 decisions were made regarding complaint cases, and of those considered, none were taken forward to investigation. Notably, the SPSO have endorsed our approach to several policy issues, such as the University's rejection of requests for refunds in relation to Covid-19 and industrial action; they have also supported our decisions regarding when to exclude matters from consideration via the CHP.

Report on the
Student Support Services Annual Review

Description of paper

1. Report on the review of Student Support Service annual reports for 2020/21. The paper highlights areas of good practice, themes arising from the service reports and summarises the service reports.

Action requested / recommendation

2. To discuss and approve areas of good practice (section 2). To consider whether any further actions are required in relation to the themes discussions (section 3).

Background and context

3. Student Support Services reporting is part of the University's quality assurance framework. Services report on student-facing activity and its impact on student experience. Fifteen reports were submitted this year.

Discussion

4. The paper, attached as Appendix 1, reports on the 2020/21 reporting process including report reviewers' commendations. As with last year, this year's process was streamlined to focus on impacts on the student experience related to industrial action and the Covid-19 pandemic. A process of peer reviewing took place this year.

5. The paper also covers the good practice examples and common themes identified by the reviewers and Academic Services across Student Support Service reports. Further information is included in the appendix.

Resource implications

6. No resource implications are directly associated with the paper which is a report on activity. Resource implications are implicit in existing planning by support services.

Risk management

7. No risk assessment is included in the paper. Services carry out risk assessment on areas for development.

Equality & diversity

8. No equality and diversity implications are directly associated with the paper. Services consider equality impact as part of the annual reporting process.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

9. The Committee should consider communication, implementation and evaluation of any actions resulting from the paper.

Author

Stuart Fitzpatrick,
Academic Services

Presenter

Brian Connolly
Academic Services

February 2022

Freedom of Information

The paper is **open**.

Report on the Annual Review of Student Support Services

1. Reporting process

1.1   2012/21 annual reporting process

In May 2020, Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) agreed that Student Support Service Annual Review (SSSAR) reporting for 2019/20 should be streamlined to focus on impacts of industrial action and Covid-19. This reduced the reporting burden on services and fulfilled expectations for compliance, including expectations on externality and student voice set out in the UK Quality Code.

Services were asked to submit their reports during a flexible reporting period from the end of August up to 13 November 2020. Academic Services set up a [SSSAR SharePoint](#) site with restricted access and all service reports can be viewed there.

All reports were reviewed by the SSSAR sub-committee external member, the Students' Association Vice-President Education and Academic Services. Reviewing focused on highlighting areas of good practice for sharing.

As with last year, no formal SSSAR sub-committee meetings were held for this reporting cycle.

2. Summary of service reports

Reviewers identified much to commend across the reports. Key commendations and good practice are highlighted below. Detailed comments are provided to each Service in their individual reader reports. Services reported little or no impact on the student experience of their provision due to industrial action. The ongoing situation regarding Covid-19 had a major impact on all services.

2.1   Accommodation Catering and Events (ACE)

Readers commended ACE for its continued response to supporting students during Covid. ACE took a student-focused approach in supporting students and established a number of proactive arrangements around identifying non-arrivals which in turn reduced queries regarding rent collection, and adopted a number of easy to access processes around rent and those students required to self-isolate due to either testing positive for Covid or being identified as a close contact.

2.2   The Advice Place

Readers commended the Advice Place for having responded to over 3,800 enquiries over the period in question, and the development of a Flatshare site to allow students to share housing needs and opportunities. Readers also commended the Advice Place for recognising a need for greater communication with other Student Support Services, particularly in relation to finance and accommodation.

2.3   Careers Service

Readers commended the Careers Service modifications and new initiatives in response to graduate and employer feedback, and for taking tailored School level approaches to ensure relevance and targeting of areas impacted more by particular events. Readers also commended the Careers Service for their continued use of embracing new ways of working since March 2020 to enhance and diversify Partnerships, working both within the University and externally, and the Edinburgh Award, which had been delivered online. The number of students completing this award was the highest in its ten year history.

2.4   Chaplaincy

Readers commended the Chaplaincy on Abundant Academy, which they felt was an excellent piece of outreach to support staff and students using a mindfulness approach to address anxiety during the COVID pandemic. Feedback clearly demonstrated its value to those who had engaged with it. The Chaplaincy had also moved the Listening Service to phone, video-call, or email consultations and made it a 24/7 service. The Chaplaincy were also commended for partnering with academic members of staff across Schools in producing the on-line course 'Empathy and Compassion in Work and Life'.

2.5   Edinburgh Global: International recruitment

Readers commended Edinburgh Global's close working with Student Recruitment and Admissions, Communications and Marketing, Colleges, Schools, and other stakeholders, through sharing resources, developing cross-departmental project teams, and creative problem solving. Readers also commended the benefits for Edinburgh Global staff of more flexible working patterns and digital communication. Readers noted the opportunities to increase activity in new and emerging student recruitment markets through on-line delivery, and opportunities to develop new digital recruitment campaigns and tools through cost savings on international travel which also contributed to the sustainability agenda.

2.6   Estates

Readers commended Estates' for their adaptation and response to the needs of public health measures to minimise Covid-19 risks, including asymptomatic planning and implementation on short timescales whilst ensuring adherence to strict guidance and protocols, and the introduction of 'The Edinburgh Standard for Ventilation'.

2.7   Finance

Readers commended Finance for numerous student focused enhancements, including moving to fully electronic processing, continuation of the Pay Fees Advice service via Microsoft Teams, running 'How To Pay Fees' sessions, introductions of new payment methods for those students studying outwith the UK and faster payments for refunds. Readers specifically commended Finance's engagement with external providers to both provide advice to students, and to improve the payment experience of international students. This work had resulted in the Income Manager receiving WPM's Outstanding Contribution Award for continuing participation in the Anti-Money Laundering and Credit Control Special Interest Groups.

2.8   Information Services Group (ISG)

Readers commended ISG's contribution to supporting staff with delivery of online teaching by highlighting the numerous options available for digital delivery, and the steps taken in supporting students, including increasing remote access to software applications, provision of essential hardware, and enabling online access to library resources via a number of different routes. ISG were also commended for the development of an interactive campus map to inform on sustainable travel advice, maintain physical Library access where allowable, and for moving towards cashless payments.

2.9   Institute for Academic Development (IAD)

Readers commended the IAD's activities to support hybrid teaching, noting that the service had refined and improved upon activities and support introduced in the first year of the pandemic. IAD were also commended for the excellent engagement with the Learning and Teaching conference, with an increase in attendees as a result of this having been hosted online.

2.10   Student Counselling Service

Readers commended the Student Counselling Service for work with SVHL as a positive strengthening of the service to support the increased numbers of students presenting as survivors of sexual or gender based violence. The service continued to

embed hybrid working and readers commended the accessibility of appointments, which could now take place via telephone, by email, in person and online (via Microsoft teams). Readers also commended the Counselling Service for the retention of BACP accreditation, which gave external recognition of the high standards of the service. Due to the rigour required to meet the criteria, the retention of this accreditation was to be highly commended.

2.11 Student Disability Service

Readers commended the Student Disability Service's introduction of online appointments, which prior to the pandemic had been restricted by professional and regulatory requirements. This had enabled more effective and efficient use of resources and greater reach to support more students. The Disability Service were also commended for implementing a new approach in determining continuing student requirements which removed the need for undertaking repeat face-to-face appointments, with students simply confirming whether their situation had changed or not and assessing whether such an appointment was required.

2.12 Student Recruitment and Admissions

Readers commended Student Recruitment and Admissions' establishment of a results helpline for offer holders in the face of school exam cancellations, and the development of a 'How To' series offering information on the transition into University life. Readers also commended the improved quality and consistency of University-level information for prospective students via a dedicated communications team, and SRA's ability to successfully deliver opens days to notable levels of satisfaction given lack of traditional face to face on campus delivery.

2.13 Student Systems and Administration

Readers commended Student Systems and Administration for both the scale and speed of their reactions to the ongoing and shifting nature of the Covid-19 pandemic. Readers commended the more personalised approach taken when dealing with issues relating to tuition fees and reducing outstanding fees, and the use of Edinburgh Castle in graduations to help with meeting graduand expectations when use of indoor venues was prohibited or problematic. Readers also commended the use of online assessment tools for assessing student hardship applications, which had been useful for evaluating the high number of requests, and allowing students to apply while not on campus.

2.14 Study and Work Away Service

Readers commended the Study and Work Away Service for identifying the benefits of working digitally with partner institutions in developing stronger relationships, and the movement of staff members across SWAY sub teams to create a wider knowledge of service workings and provision. Readers additionally commended SWAY on enhancing and diversifying study and work away experiences for students by offering more virtual opportunities, and the opportunities provided to overhaul the wider study and work away experience post-Covid and Brexit by implementing the 'Mobility for All' Strategy.

2.15 University Sport and Exercise

Readers commended University Sport and Exercise for its investment in staff during periods of furlough, and noted positive feedback from members around hygiene protocols and safety measures in place. Readers noted the high number of student memberships taken up during this period. Readers also commended the creation of performance bubbles for elite student athletes to help ensure continuity of training provision for events such as Olympic trials, and the provision of Covid Officer training for all clubs and their coaches.

3. Themes arising from service reports

3.1 Staff response to challenges

Services showed an impressive response to the continuing challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. This was only possible due to the commitment, flexibility and creativity of staff. Staff adapted quickly and responsively to the continued uncertainty and situations arising from changes to Government and public health guidance. As with last year, it should be noted that staff response and effort enabled provision to continue for the most part uninterrupted. The huge pressure the pandemic and resulting challenges have placed on colleagues was again evident.

3.2 Working across boundaries

Nearly all services reported on the benefits of improved and closer working with other areas. There was an increase in collaborative working with other teams, services and with Colleges and Schools to ensure appropriate responses to challenges and to support rapid change.

3.3 Digital processes for continued enhancement and accessibility

The benefits and flexibility which many services found by utilising online or digital provisions was clear, and a number of reports made specific mention of

the fact that this has increased accessibility in service provision. This was particularly welcome in areas such as Counselling and the Student Disability Service, where use of online appointments has afforded greater reach. Services last year had found that this had resulted in improved and streamlined processes, and it was evident that this had been maintained, finessed and built upon during this year.

Action: SQAC to consider any further actions in relation to the themes.

Stuart Fitzpatrick, Academic Policy Officer
Academic Services
February 2022

Senate Quality Assurance Committee

24 February 2022

Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR)
Action Plan

Description of paper

1. This paper provides a progress summary of the University's ELIR Action Plan (see Appendix 1).

Action requested/Recommendation

2. For Discussion.

Background and context

3. Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) is the method used by the Quality Assurance Agency Scotland (QAAS) to review and assess the effectiveness of higher education institutions' approaches to securing academic standards and the quality of the student experience.

4. Our review was conducted in a series of online meetings with students and staff in February and March 2021. QAA Scotland published the outcome of the review online in July 2021: University of Edinburgh (qaa.ac.uk). A shorter "outcome report" provides the formal outcome of the review and an overview of the commendations and recommendations; the longer "technical report" provides further information on the background and findings from the review, providing context to the commendations and recommendations.

5. An Action Plan setting out the University's response to the ELIR was approved by Senate in October 2021 and an ELIR Oversight Group established to progress activities in response to the ELIR recommendations. The ELIR Oversight Group is comprised of: VP Students; Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance; Deputy Secretary Student Experience; Director of IAD; Director of Strategic Change; and Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement, Academic Services.

6. The Vice Principal Students and the Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance held a series of consultative meetings with each School/Deanery (between November 2021 and February 2022) during which the School/Deanery Heads and key staff were invited to discuss the ELIR recommendations and share any related issues or activities (see Appendix 2 for themes from the meetings).

7. The University is required to provide a follow-up report to QAA Scotland on actions taken or in progress to address the outcomes of the review one year after the publication of the ELIR reports (due by 16 July 2022). An update on ELIR

actions will be presented to Senate on 25 May 2022 and this will form the basis of the follow-up report (which is also required to be endorsed by Court).

Resource implications

8.   Oversight of the ELIR Action Plan does not have overt resource implications, but some of the recommended actions may have implications in regard to staff time.

Risk Management

9.   The approach to responding to ELIR is designed to mitigate the risks associated with a poor outcome in the next review and is monitored as part of the University Risk Register - Strategic Risk 5 "Continued or worsening of NSS or other measures of student experience".

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

10. Relates to SDG 4: Quality Education, ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education. The overall focus of the recommendations is aimed at improving the quality of education and the student experience. There is a specific recommendation aimed at address equality and diversity in relation to student achievement and attainment gaps.

Equality & Diversity

11. No new or revised policies are currently being proposed, but some of the recommendations and actions will give rise to new or revised policies and practices. Equality impact assessments will be carried out at the point when a new or revised policy or practice is proposed. Equality and diversity is a key focus of one of the main recommendations.

Next steps/implications

12. Senate Quality Assurance Committee will play a formal role in monitoring progress against the recommendations and, together with the ELIR Oversight Group, will advise University Executive of progress and any concerns.

Further information

13. *Author*   *Presenter*
     Tina Harrison   Tina Harrison
     Assistant Principal, Academic   Assistant Principal, Academic
     Standards and Quality Assurance   Standards and Quality Assurance

Freedom of Information

14. Open

University of Edinburgh Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) 2021
Action Plan – Progress Update February 2022

Theme	Recommendation	Priority	Owner	Progress Update
Strategy, growth and planning	1. **Oversight and planning for growth of student numbers** "… implement an approach to facilitate institutional oversight and the effective planning and monitoring of student numbers, in order to ensure that appropriate and timely actions can be taken where increases in student numbers impact on arrangements for learning and teaching and student support."	Establish approach/controls (within 1 year) Size and shape (2 years)	Vice Principal Students	To be agreed. Currently no strategic oversight group in place. To be discussed further between Director of Planning, VP Students and Admissions to determine a way forward.
	2. **Strategic approach to the enhancement of learning and teaching** "… in view of the current transition between the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2017 and future plans, the University should provide institutional oversight, and ensure clarity for staff, on the strategic direction underpinning current learning and teaching developments."	Develop strategy within 1 year and implement from year 2 onwards	Vice Principal Students	Learning and teaching strategic priorities are being progressed through the Curriculum Transformation Programme. An outline of these priorities and interlinking and interdependent activities will be developed. The Senate Education Committee and Curriculum Transformation Programme Board are the key decision-making committees.
Change management	3. **Pace of change** "… develop an effective approach to the strategic leadership and management of change that will ensure more immediate and timely implementation of identified solutions in order to support staff and enhance the student experience."	Within next 2 years	Director of Strategic Change	Reflection on the positive aspects of the Adaptation and Renewal Team (ART) and consulting with internal experts in order to articulate an approach. Additionally, an overview of all change projects mapped to a timeline will be produced to facilitate School planning.
Monitoring consistency of implementation of	4. **Oversight and implementation of policy and practice** "… recognising the decentralised nature of university structures, the institution should establish a systematic approach to enable effective institutional oversight and evaluation of the implementation of policy and practice. As part of this, the University is asked to increase the range and use of institutionally determined baseline requirements to ensure consistency and accountability. The institution should ensure that mechanisms are put in place to adequately	Develop approach within next 12 months; implementation year 2 onwards	Vice Principal Students Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Deputy Secretary Student Experience	The University will identify priority areas of student experience (and associated policies and practices) for consistent implementation, develop a set of associated indicators from which to measure and evaluate, and establish a clear approach for monitoring consistency of implementation. Much of this work is being taken forward as part

University of Edinburgh Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) 2021
Action Plan – Progress Update February 2022

Theme	Recommendation	Priority	Owner	Progress Update
strategy, policy and practice	evaluate the consistency of implementation of strategic objectives across the institution and act when Schools deviate from institutional expectations.		Support from Director of Strategic Change (links to recommendation 3)	of the other ELIR recommendations (e.g. Assessment and Feedback, Student Support, PGR tutors, academic staff development).
	5. **Training for postgraduate research (PGR) students who teach** "… ensure effective implementation of its policy for the training and support of postgraduates who teach and ensure all PGR students are trained before engaging in teaching activities."	Linked to above	Doctoral College leads	An Oversight group has been convened and has met once. The group includes representatives from the Doctoral College, the three Colleges, IAD, HR and Academic Services. Tutor and Demonstrators representatives will join the group once identified. A second meeting is being scheduled for late March.

Schools have been asked to identify members to join a larger network / working group: the intention is to create a broad network from which a working group can be drawn, while the larger group can be used for consultation and hopefully will provide a long term network for those involved in T&D work. The network will be hosted on MS Teams. 69 members have been recruited so far, with 7 Schools / unit still to engage (out of 25 Schools / units). |
| **Student support** | 6. **Personal tutor scheme** "…make significant progress in implementing plans to ensure an effective approach to offering personal student support. In doing so, and recognising the extended period of time that the University has been developing its approach to personal | Within next 12 months with further implementation to follow on | Deputy Secretary Student Experience | Work continues on the implementation of the student support model.   Full implementation of the model is on target for September 2023 – however we will |

University of Edinburgh Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) 2021
Action Plan – Progress Update February 2022

Theme	Recommendation	Priority	Owner	Progress Update
	tutoring, it is asked to reflect on whether the current timescale for implementation of the institutional Student Support and Personal Tutor Plan in 2023-24, is sufficiently ambitious. The University should make demonstrable progress within the next academic year in respect of ensuring parity of experience for students and effective signposting to support services and delivery of an agreed and consistent baseline level of provision. As part of its approach, the University is asked to develop an effective mechanism to monitor consistency of implementation and allow it to evaluate the impact of these changes on the student experience."			see some variation in implementation across the University in September 2022. Other strands of work to note: 1. Revision of policies and regulations related to student support. Policy revisions will be presented to the relevant Senate committee for approval during semester 2. Consistent implementation and use of policy and regulations will be a pivotal aspect of training for new roles. 2. Development of evaluation criteria to monitor the quality of the implemented model. Indicators of success will be developed to ensure fidelity to the model across Schools, these factors will build into the School annual quality reports. For students, in the short term and to build confidence for the first cohorts experiencing the new model, communication will focus on understanding the model, knowing who to contact for support and what to expect. 3. The Implementation Board is already aware of challenges and in taking stock of these a working assumption is that this (or a variant) Board will remain in place to assist College and

**University of Edinburgh Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) 2021
Action Plan – Progress Update February 2022**

Theme	Recommendation	Priority	Owner	Progress Update
				Schools in the period beyond September 2023. 4. The February pulse survey asks a series of questions about students' experience of the personal tutor and student support systems as they are run within their School or Deanery. This is a repeat of the questions from April 2021. A meeting of the Senior Tutor Network will be held in semester two to consider data from the student pulse surveys and the plans for the implementation of the evolved model (the meeting will be led by the Vice Principal Students and the Deputy Secretary Students).
Assessment and feedback	**5. Assessment and feedback** "… over an extended period of time, the University has considered a broad evidence-base which has highlighted concerns about assessment and feedback and this remains an area of challenge for the institution. The University is asked to make demonstrable progress, within the next academic year, in prioritising the development of a holistic and strategic approach to the design and management of assessment and feedback. The University should also progress with proposals for the establishment of a common marking scheme to ensure comparability of student assessment processes across Schools."	Within next 12 months, develop holistic strategy; implementation to follow on.	Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance	The aim of the Assessment & Feedback Task Group (co-convened by Professor Tina Harrison, Assistant Principal, and Dr Sabine Rolle, Dean for Learning and Teaching CAHSS, and reporting to the Curriculum Transformation Board) is to develop a set of assessment and feedback principles that set out the quality standards and expectations for assessment and feedback, and an assessment and feedback strategy that sets out ambitions for assessment practice that will feed into the curriculum design principles as part of the Curriculum Transformation Programme.

University of Edinburgh Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) 2021
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Theme	Recommendation	Priority	Owner	Progress Update
				The group has developed a set of draft assessment & feedback principles that set out quality standards and expectations for assessment and feedback. Initial consultation has taken place on the principles through the Directors of Teaching Network. The principles are now being refined and will go to the March Senate Education Committee for discussion and approval along with recommendations for an assessment and feedback strategy. Work is progressing on a recommendation for a single Common Marking Scheme with a preferred approach identified. However, further scoping work is required to explore the implications for students systems of a revised marking schema on APT (Assessment and Progression Tool). Consultation with staff is planned throughout the rest of the year. The aim is to agree a new marking schema by the end of the year, but implementation will depend on any system changes required.
Developing and promoting teaching excellence	6. **Recognition and support for academic staff development** "… take action to remove barriers which exist that prevent some academic staff from fully engaging with its existing suite of development opportunities for the professionalisation of teaching."	Within 2 years	Vice Principal Students HR and new Provost Director of IAD	This work was paused in March 2020 due to the impact of COVID-19. JT has begun discussions with senior staff to explore the potential to restart this work in spring/summer 2022.

**University of Edinburgh Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) 2021
Action Plan – Progress Update February 2022**

Theme	Recommendation	Priority	Owner	Progress Update
				This would align with the Curriculum Transformation Programme and the desire to enhance support for the professional development in teaching we are seeing in several Schools. It has also been flagged in recommendations from our last ELIR and is likely to be a topic of interest to the new Provost. TH will arrange to have this embedded into the annual quality reports, with Schools required to report on progress on an annual basis. JT has also made contact with colleagues in HR to get an update on the contribution that People & Money can make to this work. A final decision on how and when to progress this may need to wait for the arrival of the Provost.
	7. Promotion of academic staff based on teaching "… progress with work to improve the recognition of teaching excellence across all aspects of the University. In particular, the University should ensure that recognition for teaching is embedded in annual review processes, that clarity of roles and titles is established, and that a clear progression pathway providing parity of recognition for education-focused academics is developed. In addition, the institution should ensure that it has the data available to be able to evidence and evaluate the progress made in all of these areas."	Within 2 years	Vice Principal Students HR and new Provost Director of IAD	This is an area that the Provost (with Colm) can drive thinking and planning, with JT and IAD contributing. There are things we can and are doing in the meantime. We've already seen changes to the Exemplars of Excellence (extending to grade 8 and updating) and to policies and procedures (including very welcome developments this year focussed on those in hybrid roles). I think it would be useful to ask James

University of Edinburgh Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) 2021
Action Plan – Progress Update February 2022

Theme	Recommendation	Priority	Owner	Progress Update
				Saville if there is someone from HR who can report in to this area of work in terms of progress to date and in the pipeline. I had a general catch up with James on Monday last week. One of the things we discussed was the potential benefit of returning to a recommendation we made a few years ago to commission an external evaluation of the policies and procedures introduced over the last ~5 years relevant to this topic. This includes the introduction and updating of the Exemplars of Excellence, introduction of the requirement to assess teaching when recruiting new academic staff, outcomes and experience of promotion system for individual staff, changes in policy and procedure around academic promotions. It would be good to discuss this proposal at one of our oversight group meetings. Having a report like this could be extremely useful for the Provost when she arrives.
Attainment gaps	8. **Attainment gap monitoring** "…consider how to address attainment gaps in student performance through the oversight, coordination and monitoring at an institutional level of school-level actions."	Develop approach within next 12 months; implementation from year 2.	Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance with	The Senate Quality Assurance Committee Data Task Group (established to progress the recommendations of recent Thematic Reviews) will help to address the ELIR recommendation on attainment gaps. As part of the QA annual reporting process Schools have increasingly

University of Edinburgh Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) 2021
Action Plan – Progress Update February 2022

Theme	Recommendation	Priority	Owner	Progress Update
			University Lead, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	engaged with widening participation (WP) and equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) data to identify any gaps in attainment for different groups of students. However, they have struggled to understand the underlying causes of these gaps or what good practice should be encouraged and cultivated to address them. The EDI Committee is undertaking work to determine the underlying causes of attainment gaps and share good practice with Schools to help them address these gaps. The University will establish a set of expectations or baselines in relation to WP and EDI data (based on the findings of the work to understand the causes of gaps and good practice) to allow Schools to gauge their relative performance. These expectations/baselines could in turn be monitored by the University as part of the School annual reporting process. Student Systems will make key EDI indicator data available to Heads of Schools as part of the HoS data dashboard.

Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR)
Oversight Group

School Consultation Meetings:
Themes

The Vice Principal Students and the Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance held a series of meetings with each School/Deanery between November 2021 and February 2022. School/Deanery Heads and key staff were invited to discuss the ELIR recommendations and share current activities related to each. The following themes were noted:

1. **Oversight and planning for growth of student numbers:**
   Student numbers emerged as a key theme from the meetings with Schools. Heads of Schools would like more involvement in the process to help them manage and plan School resources and more transparency on targets.

   Schools noted that resources had not followed growth in student numbers and the University needs more transparency in decision making regarding recruitment targets and the actual numbers needed in each area to 'balance the books'. Schools feel that they lack control over the recruitment process – University must trust and involve the Heads of School. Schools also feel that growth lacks coherent or strategic planning (instead driven by erratic, organic growth of programmes) – growth decisions must not be simply driven by income but should include consideration of physical space (particularly social space) and staffing constraints, and the local pedagogical context.

2. **Strategic approach to the enhancement of learning and teaching:**
   Schools need time and space to reflect on L&T aspirations. Student input is important but so too is clear academic leadership based on expertise and experience.

3. **Pace of change:**
   Schools noted dissatisfaction with the slow pace of change in some areas (i.e. Student Support and Personal Tutor Review and implementation) and a perceived hasty approach, compounded by poorly received changes, elsewhere (i.e. the timing and implementation of the Extensions and Special Circumstances and People and Money projects). Ownership and accountability at leadership level and performance management is vital to ensuring successful change management as is the principal of subsidiarity and the freedom to implement projects in a manner appropriate to local context. Recent CSE proposals for the implementation of the Student Support and Personal Tutor cited as a good example of subsidiarity approach to change implementation.

4. **Oversight and implementation of policy and practice:**
   Schools raised concerns at the lack of consistency in the implementation and oversight of policy and practice. Schools would like clearer guidance on implementing University policies, with a stronger steer from the central University on the required direction of travel via internal benchmarks and

baseline expectations. Some Schools suggested that the lack of consistency in staff and management structures (for example, no Head of School role descriptor) contributed to inconsistent implementation at the local level.

5. **Training for postgraduate research (PGR) students who teach:**
   Schools noted that teaching is increasingly relying on PGR students but there are capacity constraints on IAD courses used as a career incentive (e.g. providing HEA Associate Fellow recognition).

6. **Personal Tutor scheme:**
   The proposed changes to student support also emerged as a key theme from the meetings with Schools. The new system is seen an opportunity to properly embed professionalised student support. However Schools have general concerns in terms of timescales and specific concerns that insufficient staff resources will be in place during the transition to the new system. There are also concerns that the move away from the PT/Tutee relationship will be perceived as a loss by students which in turn may be reflected in poor NSS results. Schools noted the importance of career pathways for professional services in order to retain student staff and provide the system with stability.

7. **Assessment and feedback:**
   Schools would like more guidance on what good feedback looks like and more innovation in assessment as long as it is appropriate to the specific needs of the discipline (which may or may not be examinations). The volume of extensions and special circumstances is having an impact on assessment processes (e.g. moderation, marking and timely feedback).

8. **Recognition and support for academic staff development:**
   Teaching development for staff already in post must be meaningful and effective.

9. **Promotion of academic staff based on teaching:**
   Recruitment too focused on research rather than skills in addressing student experience issues. Schools would like more helpful indicators for grades 9-10 to help support promotions.

10. **Attainment gap monitoring:**
    Schools have increasingly engaged with widening participation (WP) and equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) data to identify any gaps in attainment for different groups of students. However, they have struggled to understand the underlying causes of these gaps or what good practice should be encouraged and cultivated to address them. The EDI Committee is now undertaking work to determine the underlying causes of the gaps and then share good practice with Schools to help them address these gaps. Furthermore, Schools have also expressed a desire for the University to establish a set of expectations or baselines in relation to WP and EDI (based on the findings of the work to understand the causes of gaps and good practice) to allow Schools to gauge their relative performance. These expectations/baselines could in turn be monitored by the University as part of the School annual reporting process.

Mid-year update on progress against
SQAC priorities 2021-22

Description of paper:

1. This paper provides an update on progress towards SQAC's priorities agreed at Senate in May 2021.

Action requested / recommendation:

2. For information.

Priorities:

3. **Develop and oversee the implementation of a plan of action in response to the 2021 Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR).**

   The Committee continues to receive regular updates on the ELIR Action Plan in preparation for the follow-up report to QAA Scotland on progress to address the outcomes of the review one year after the publication of the ELIR reports (due by 16 July 2022). An update on ELIR actions will be presented to Senate on 25 May 2022 and this will form the basis of the follow-up report (which is also required to be endorsed by Court).

4. **Implement the recommendations from the Digital Maturity report and consider how quality processes and the data that they produce can support the Curriculum Transformation programme.**

   Academic Services is currently examining options for utilizing SharePoint to optimize the presentation of quality data/evidence to Schools/Deaneries and encourage greater engagement and traction with quality processes.

5. **Implement the recommendations from the review of Course Enhancement Questionnaires (CEQs).**

   The Committee continues to monitor the implementation of mid-course feedback through annual monitoring, review and reporting processes. The CEQ Review Project Board is focused on developing a toolkit to support local collection of end of course feedback (e.g. question banks, different methods of collecting feedback).

6. **Continue to examine data and methodological options for the systematic monitoring of retention, progression, and attainment data in response to the recommendations from Thematic Reviews.**

The Data Task Group will submit a paper to the February meeting of SQAC inviting the Committee to consider the next steps required to implement a new system to monitor student progression and attainment data.

7. **Engage with quality assurance and enhancement-related aspects of the Scottish Funding Council review of coherent provision and sustainability.**

The Committee's focus on the use of quality data (see above) will allow the University to address one of the core principles for the approach to quality assurance and enhancement in the Review report (building on feedback from stakeholders about what is valued in existing approaches): "Evidence-based: data and evidence should inform our understanding of practice and quality assurance, and our plans for enhancement" (page 70). The Committee will receive an update later in this session on the SFC Review and its implications for the University's Quality Framework.

Resource implications:
8. None.

Risk management:
9. The paper is for information and risk assessment is not required.

Equality & diversity:
10. The paper is for information and equality impact assessment is not required.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed:
11. Committee Secretary will feedback comments to relevant areas.

<u>**Author**</u>   <u>**Presenter**</u>
Brian Connolly, Academic Services   **Brian Connolly,** Academic Services

February 2022
 Freedom of Information: Open

External Examiners:
Exceptional Appointments Report 2020/21

Description of paper

1. Report on College approvals of exceptional External Examiner appointments made during 2020/21.

Action requested / recommendation

2. To formally note the report.

Background and context

3. The External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy provides for Colleges to make exceptional appointments or where a conflict of interest has been identified (section 24). It was anticipated that the need for exceptional appointments may increase due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, to support quality assurance processes and future policy development, Colleges were invited to provide details of approved exceptional appointments.

Discussion

College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences:

4. The College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences had 11 exceptional appointments.

New exceptional appointments

5. There were two appointments approved for short tenures of one and two years, and one appointment for a five year tenure. Both short tenure appointments (School of Social and Political Sciences) were for External Examiners who were unsure of their capacity over the standard term of office but were desirable choices. The School intends to contact both Externals regarding the potential to extend their terms of office as their end dates approach.

Extensions to existing appointments

6. There were nine exceptional one-year extensions, granted for continuity. The majority related to Covid impacts.

College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine:

7. The College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine had 19 exceptional appointments.

New exceptional appointments

8. Two new exceptional appointments in the Vet School from non-higher educational institutions were approved. In both cases the External Examiners

were experienced veterinary practitioners. A mentoring arrangement was agreed for one appointment and pairings of higher education-based and practice-based External Examiners ensure appropriate expertise is provided across all aspects of the examination process.

Extensions to existing appointments

9. Seventeen one-year extensions were made to External Examiner appointments. Of these, 14 were related to challenges in recruiting new External Examiners due to impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, including one where the extension would support monitoring of curriculum changes. Two extensions were granted to support continuity and overlap in outgoing and incoming appointments. One extension was approved in the Deanery of Biomedical Sciences due to exceptional staffing issues which meant a new appointment could not be identified in time.

College of Science and Engineering:

10. College of Science and Engineering reports no exceptional appointments in 2020/21.

Resource implications

11. The paper reports on activity and no resource implications are associated with it.

Risk management

12. The paper is a report on activity and no risks are identified.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

13. This paper does not contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals as it is fulfilling external compliance within the quality framework.

Equality & diversity

14. The paper is a report on activity and an equality impact assessment is not required. Academic Services has not identified any major equality impacts in relation to this report.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

15. The Committee should consider implementation and communication of any agreed action. College representatives should ensure that the outcomes of the Committee's discussions are available for consideration by the relevant College committees.

Author	**Presenter**
Susan Hunter,	Brian Connolly
Academic Services	Academic Services

11 February 2022

Freedom of Information
The paper is open.

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

24 February 2022

Internal Periodic Review

Description of paper
1. Final reports and responses from Internal Periodic Review (IPR).

Action requested / recommendation
2. The Committee is invited to approve the final reports and confirm that it is content with progress in the 14 week response.

Background and context
3. The following final reports and responses are published on the Committee wiki (https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/SQAC/Thursday+24+February+2022):
    *   School of Biological Sciences Postgraduate Research provision – Final Report;
    *   School of Health in Social Science Undergraduate, Postgraduate Taught and Postgraduate Research provision – Final Report;
    *   School of Law Undergraduate, Postgraduate Taught and Postgraduate Research provision – Final Report;
    *   Moray House School of Education and Sport – 14 Week Response;
    *   School of Mathematics Postgraduate Research provision - 14 Week Response;

Discussion
4. See wiki.

Resource implications
5. No additional resource implications.

Risk management
6. No risk associated.

Equality & diversity
7. An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out on the IPR process.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed
8. Comments will be reported back to the School/Subject Area and the responses published on the Academic Services website.

Author
Brian Connolly
Academic Services

Presenter
Brian Connolly,
Academic Services

Freedom of Information - Open

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

24 February 2022

Sector Summary Outcomes from Institution-led Review

Description of paper
1. This paper presents an extract of the analysis of institutional annual statements on Institution-led Review (session 2020-21) by the Quality Assurance Agency Scotland (QAAS). This paper is an extract from a sector report and does not contribute to the Strategy 2030.

Action requested / recommendation
2. The paper is for information.

Background and context
3. Institution-led Review is a requirement of the Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework. Outcomes are reported annually to the Scottish Funding Council. QAAS analyse these reports and this paper is an extract detailing the summary outcomes.

Discussion
4. This paper is being presented to the Committee so they might consider the summary outcomes in relation to University's summary outcomes from its own Institution-led Review activity (Paper K).

Resource implications
5. No resource implications are identified in the paper (it is an extract from a sector report).

Risk management
6. No risks are identified in the paper (it is an extract from a sector report).

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals
7. This paper is an extract from a sector report and does not contribute to the climate emergency or Sustainable Development Goals.

Equality & diversity
8. No equality and diversity implications are identified in the paper (it is an extract from a sector report).

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed
9. Not applicable.

Author	**Presenter**
Nichola Kett	Not applicable.
Academic Services	
14 February 2022	