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

**Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 24 February 2022
at 2pm via Microsoft Teams**

Professor Tina Harrison **(Convener)**	Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance
Marianne Brown	Co-opted member with expertise in Student Systems
Brian Connolly	Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team (Interim), Academic Services
Dr Gail Duursma	School Representative (Engineering), College of Science and Engineering
Olivia Eadie	Assistant Director and Head of Operations and Projects, Institute for Academic Development
Dr Jeni Harden	School Representative (School of Molecular, Genetic and Population Health Sciences), College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine
Dr Katherine Inglis	School Representative (Literatures, Languages and Cultures), College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Stuart Lamont	Edinburgh University Students' Association Representative
Dr Paul Norris	Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Approval, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Dr Claire Phillips	Dean of Quality Assurance, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine
Professor Leigh Sparks	Deputy Principal, University of Stirling

Apologies:

Tara Gold	Vice President (Education), Students' Association
Professor Linda Kirstein	Dean of Education Quality Assurance and Culture, College of Science and Engineering

1. **Welcome and Apologies**

    The Convenor welcomed **Marianne Brown** (Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling (Interim), Student Systems) to her first meeting as the new co-opted member with expertise in Student Systems and **Heather**

NcNeill (Deputy Head of Academic Affairs, College of Science & Engineering), deputising for Linda Kirsten.

2. **Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 9 December 2021**

The Committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting.

3. **Matters Arising**

3.1 Senate Comments

The Convenor reported that there had been two comments from Senate members in response to the paper circulation prior to the meeting in reference to the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCS) Annual Report 2020-21 and External Examiner Reports Thematic Analysis 2020-21. The Committee noted that the Convenor had responded to both comments.

3.2 Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)

The Convenor reported on Scottish sector level discussions regarding the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). It was noted that there was a general agreement that Scotland has its own distinctive system for ensuring excellence in teaching, based on the principle of continuous enhancement, which is rigorous and widely valued.

For Discussion

4. **Data Task Group**

The Committee considered a proposal from the Data Task Group on the next steps required to implement a new system for monitoring retention, progression, and attainment data.

It was noted that in February 2020 the Committee established the Data Task Group to examine data set and methodological options for this new system. However during the last two years the pandemic had delayed the progress of this Group, with the maintenance of core requirements the primary focus of activities across the University. 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.

The Committee also noted that 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.

It was also noted that the [Equality Diversity Monitoring and Research Committee (EDMARC)](#) (a standing committee of EDIC) produces 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. It was suggested that the data and analysis in the EDMARC Student Report, and expertise of the EDMARC membership, could be utilized more in the annual quality assurance processes. This linkage may also benefit EDMARC by providing greater visibility, engagement and traction for its annual report across all Schools and Deaneries.

It was agreed that the Committee and EDIC should explore the scope for an expanded EDMARC Student Report encompassing the more granular data requirements of the annual quality reporting processes (such as data on progression and wider underserved groups of students such as parents and carers). The Committee agreed that the Convenor of EDIC should be invited to the April meeting to discuss the roles both committees will have in monitoring awarding gap data and addressing the underlying issues.

Action: Committee Secretary to invite the EDIC Convenor to the next meeting.

The Committee discussed the data currently available through the Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling (SAIM) [Insights Hub](#) to support annual quality monitoring processes. It was noted that data within these dashboards can be viewed across demographic attributes (Sex, Domicile, Ethnicity, Age, and Disability) and across Widening Participation indicators. Furthermore, 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).

The Committee agreed that confidence in the data underpinning the new oversight and monitoring system was vital to ensuring local engagement and ownership of the issues. To this end, the Committee agreed that the membership of the Data Task Group should be widened to include a School/Deanery representative from each College.

Action: Deans of Quality to nominate an appropriate School Representative from their College for the Data Task Group.

5.   **Annual Reports 2020-21:**

5.1 External Examiner Reports - Thematic Analysis

The Committee considered an analysis of data from the External Examiner Reporting System (EERS) for the academic year 2020-21.

The Committee noted the high number of commendations across the University and the low number of issues requiring attention. The main theme of commendation across all three Colleges was the assessment process and the most commendations of a single sub-theme was for good practice and innovation. Of the issues highlighted by External Examiners the most frequently mentioning were in relation to the provision of information and issues raised in a previous report.

5.2 Student Discipline CLOSED PAPER

5.3 Complaint Handling

The Committee considered a report on the handling of complaints to the University for the academic year 2020-21.

The Committee noted that there had been a significant increase in complaints due to the pandemic. In particular there had been an increase in complaints concerning requests for fee refunds, accommodation refunds and other concessions, and regarding community relations with local residents.

5.4 Annual Review of Student Support Services

The Committee considered a report on the review of Student Support Service annual reports for 2020-21, highlighting areas of good practice and themes for consideration in the next reporting cycle.

The Committee noted the themes arising from service reports:

- **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.

- **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.

- **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.

The Committee approved the report and the areas identified for further consideration by the student support services.

6. **Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR): Update**

The Committee considered a progress summary of the University's ELIR Action Plan. It was noted that the Vice Principal Students and the Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance had 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. The Committee noted that 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). It was also noted that 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.

For Information and Formal Business

7.   **Mid-year update on progress against SQAC priorities**

The Committee noted an update on progress towards priorities agreed at Senate in May 2021.

8.   **External Examiners: Exceptional Appointments Report 2021/22**

The Committee noted a report on College approvals of exceptional External Examiner appointments made during 2020/21.

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

The Committee approved the final reports and confirmed that it was content with progress in the 14 week responses.

10.   **Sector Summary Outcomes from Institution-led Review CLOSED PAPER**

11.   **Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

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