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

**Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 27 February 2019
at 10am in the Raeburn Room, Old College**

Present:

Professor Tina Harrison (Convener)	Assistant Principal, Academic Standards and Quality Assurance
Dr Shereen Benjamin	Associate Dean (Quality Assurance) College of Arts, Humanities and Social Science
Megan Brown	Schools Engagement Officer, Edinburgh University Students' Association
Brian Connolly	Secretary to Senatus Quality Assurance Committee, Academic Services
Dr Gail Duursma	School Representative (Engineering), College of Science and Engineering
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 Science
Nichola Kett	Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team, Academic Services
Dr Linda Kirstein	Dean of Education Quality Assurance and Culture, College of Science and Engineering
Sarah McAllister	Head of Operations & Projects & Assistant Director, Institute for Academic Development
Diva Mukherji	Vice President (Education), Students' Association
Dr Claire Phillips	Dean of Quality Assurance, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine

Present:

Linda Hannah	Administrative Assistant, Academic Services
Dr Antony Maciocia	Dean of Postgraduate Research, College of Science and Engineering

Apologies:

Lisa Dawson	Director of Student Systems and Administration

Brian Green	Deputy Associate Principal (Learning & Teaching), University of Strathclyde
Tom Ward	Director, Academic Services

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Convenor welcomed Dr Antony Maciocia, Dean of Postgraduate Research in the College of Science and Engineering (to speak to agenda items 4 and 5) and Linda Hannah, Academic Services (to observe as part of staff development).

2. Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 6 December 2018

The Committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting.

3. Matters Arising

- **School Directors of Quality Strategic Development Sessions**
  The Committee noted that the School Directors of Quality Strategic Development Sessions would be held on Wednesday 6 March 2019 and Thursday 4 April 2019.

- **Service Excellence: Programme and Course Information Management Project**
  The Committee received a brief update on the Programme and Course Information Management (PCIM) project, within the Service Excellence Programme.

  Action: Committee Secretary to circulate a detailed update to the Committee.

For Discussion

4. Quality Assurance and Enhancement for Postgraduate Research

The Committee discussed quality assurance arrangements for postgraduate research (PGR) in the context of the evolving PGR landscape, the impending review of the Senate Committees and the Enhancement-led Institutional Review. It was noted that whilst there is a diversity in local approaches and practice, there is also much commonality across the University. The Committee agreed to set up a group meeting to explore the issues in relation to the quality assurance of PGR and report back to a future meeting.

Action: Academic Services to set up a group meeting to explore the issues in relation to the quality assurance of PGR. The group will include the College Deans of Quality, and representatives from the Students' Association and the Institute for Academic Development (IAD).

5. Enhancement-led Institutional Review

5.1 2015 Review - Theme Reports

The Committee discussed reports from four of the six areas for development from the University's Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR) held in Semester 1 2015.

In regard to the Assessment and Feedback report, the Committee discussed the relationship between the targeted allocation of resources and positive student satisfaction results. It was noted that the 2015 ELIR indicated that where resources had been targeted, for example Online Distance Learning (ODL), this had enabled staff to dedicate more time to interact with students which in turn had resulted in very positive student feedback on all aspects of the

student experience, including assessment and feedback. The Committee noted the difference between this traditional ODL model of delivery and Distance Learning At Scale (DLAS) which has a more automated approach to delivery. Concerns were noted that moves to increase DLAS provision may have an adverse impact on student satisfaction scores.

The Committee agreed that this would be the final round of reports for the 2015 review in recognition of the fact that activities had either been completed or would continue to be progressed and reported on via other mechanisms (such as implementation plans for the Learning and Teaching Strategy, the Student Partnership Agreement, and the Student Experience Plan).

5.2   2020 Review – Update and Contextualised Themes

The Committee discussed the preparations for the 2020 ELIR.

The Committee noted that a key development of the ELIR process since the 2015 review has been the introduction Contextualised Themes which the reviewed institution must identify for the review team to focus on ahead of the review. The themes should be existing or planned activities linked to strategic priorities and should therefore help ensure that the University gets the greatest value from the review process.

Early consultations with stakeholders on potential contextualised themes have been held and the following themes have been proposed:

- **Teaching and Academic Careers** - this would include all the academic development work provided by IAD, plus the recent work of the Teaching and Academic Careers Task Group.
- **Student Voice and Community** - including the work the Students' Association on representation and the work around student surveys, mid-course feedback and strengthening of other student voice mechanisms, but also including planned work and future directions under the new Student Experience Plan (SEP).
- **Student Support** - this will include an (expected) update on developments with student support following the focus on Personal Tutors in the last ELIR, but will refocus around the new plans under the SEP for student support as well as including work around widening participation and considering student support more broadly than academic support.
- **Student Skills and Employability** - including all work related to supporting the development of students' skills and attributes for employability.

The Committee noted concern that the 'Student Support' theme may be too unwieldly, however it was also noted that suggestions to narrow its scope to Widening Participation (WP) students may be too restrictive. The Committee therefore agreed that WP should be added as a fifth theme in order to signal the University's good intentions on this issue.

Action: Academic Services to add Widening Participation as the fifth Contextual Theme of the 2020 ELIR.

6.   College Annual Quality Reports 2017-18

The Committee considered the annual College Quality Reports for 2017-18. The Committee discussed the reports, with particular attention to section 3, 'Themes for SQAC forward planning'.

Widening Participation

The Committee noted that across all three Colleges the course fail rate/percentage of withdrawals for students from WP backgrounds remains higher than the University average.

Action: Colleges to identify actions to address the relatively higher fail rate/percentage of withdrawals for students from WP backgrounds.

Reporting and Feedback
The Committee agreed that to ensure the communication loop is closed on University level actions in future an action response report will be circulated to College offices. College representatives will also ensure that the outcomes of the Committee's discussions are made available to and considered by the relevant College committee(s). The Committee also agreed that the timing and structure of the report should be reviewed.

Action: Academic Services to consult with the Colleges on the timing of the annual College reports and report back to a future Committee meeting.

6.1   College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
The College Dean of Quality thanked Alastair Duthie (Academic Administrator, Enhancement and Quality) for helping compile the report. The Convenor commended the College on an excellent report with clear targets.

The following was noted:

- **Quality Assurance Data**
  The College reported that the data sources available for strategic planning and quality assurance purposes are too disparate and housed within complex and inaccessible systems. It was noted that data discrepancies between the Student Data Dashboards and Business Intelligence Suite had lowered confidence in these resources within the College. The College requested that one definitive system be developed to provide basic but accurate data on student numbers and other key performance indicators at course, programme, Subject Area, School and College level. The Committee noted that Academic Services is working with Student Systems to enhance data sources for quality assurance and enhancement processes.

- **School and Programme Quality System (SPQS)**
  The College requested support from Information Services and Student Systems to expand on the success of SPQS across the institution. It was noted that the system has been used for two years in CAHSS and was piloted in the College of Science and Engineering (CSE) last year. Support is requested to maintain this system for both Colleges and for a full institutional roll-out to support annual quality reporting. Furthermore, it was noted that a Power BI Tool was currently in development for the thematic analysis of all reports, which will support the upcoming Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR). The Committee noted that a project to address these concerns is being taken forward by the CAHSS Business Intelligence Team.

- **Course Enhancement Questionnaires (CEQs)**
  The College requested that continued support be provided for centrally managed course-level feedback mechanisms. It was noted that a number of major concerns about the format, flexibility and delivery of CEQs and the sharing of their results were raised with the Director of Student Systems and Administration. The Committee noted that a working group to facilitate enhancement work in this area has been

established. The College and individual Schools will actively contribute to the work of this group.

6.2   College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine
The College Dean of Quality thanked Victoria Bennett (Quality Officer) for helping compile the report.

The following was noted:

- **Reporting and Feedback**
  The College requested intra-year updates on progress with items identified as University issues in School/Deanery QA reports not only those within the remit of SQAC but also those forwarded to other areas of the University. It was noted that the Committee had received a report (at the electronic meeting conducted between 18 May 2018 to 25 May 2018) providing updates on University level actions in response to College issues.

  Action: Committee Secretary to ensure that the action update report (responding to the College Reports) is circulated annually to the College Offices.

- **University Initiatives**
  The College reported that whilst welcoming University enhancement initiatives, the pace and extent of changes can be very time consuming and detrimental to staff (both academic and professional) seeking to maintain the quality of student experience, learning and teaching in Deaneries, Schools and other local areas.

  Action: Committee Secretary to request a response from Deputy Secretary Student Experience.

- **Increasing Admissions**
  The College reported that the increasing number of students (and push to increase further) is putting notable pressure on staff (academic and professional) in regard to teaching, feedback, admin but also provision of Personal Tutors.

  Action: Committee Secretary to request a response from University Senior Management to College concerns.

- **Timetabling**
  The College reported that errors in course timetables has had a significant impact on the student and staff experience, particularly in regard to a notable number of inappropriate rooms and locations.

  Action: Committee Secretary to request a response from the Head of the Timetabling and Examination Services to College concerns.

6.3   College of Science & Engineering
Dean of Education Quality Assurance and Culture thanked Heather Tracey (Deputy Head of Academic Affairs) for helping compile the report.

The following was noted:

- **Estates and Space**

The College reported ongoing challenges regarding the availability of high quality teaching space and social spaces for students. The removal of 24 hour access to study space at King's Buildings was noted as a particular issue.

Action: Committee Secretary to request a response from Space Strategy Group to College concerns.

- **Quality Assurance Data**
  The College reported that whilst the Student Data Dashboard was positively received, but also noted the need to ensure that data provided centrally to support the quality assurance process (such as the Assessment Hub and PGR data) was useful and fit-for purpose. The Committee noted that Academic Services is working with Student Systems to enhance data sources for quality assurance and enhancement processes.

- **Course Enhancement Questionnaires (CEQs)**
  The College reiterated concerns in regard to low CEQ response rates, and potential gender bias, and the detrimental impact this may have on confidence in the accuracy of the results. The Committee again noted that a working group to facilitate enhancement work in this area has been established. The College and individual Schools will actively contribute to the work of this group.

7. External Examiner Reporting System

7.1 Postgraduate Taught Reports - Thematic Analysis 2017-18

The Committee considered an analysis of data from the External Examiner Reporting System (EERS) covering postgraduate taught programmes for the academic year 2017-18. The report noted a high number of commendations across the University and a low number of issues that required attention. Of the commendations, the main theme commended across all three Colleges was Good Practice and Innovation mainly related to the range, quality and diversity of teaching, learning and assessment. Of the issues raised, the main theme was the Provision of Information to examiners, mainly related to meeting date changes and miscommunication on date changes.

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

7.2 Total Reports 2017-18

The Committee considered the summary of the total number of undergraduate and postgraduate taught reports submitted through the External Examiner Reporting System.

Action: Academic Services to include a discussion on how to increase External Examiner report submission rates on the agenda of the next Deans of Quality meeting.

8. Student Support Services Annual Review (SSSAR): Annual Reporting Template Updates

The Committee considered proposed minor amendments to the Service Report and Reader Report templates for annual reporting. The changes included incorporating areas for further consideration identified for all services in the 2017-18 reporting cycle (reported to the Committee in December 2018) and emphasis that reporting should focus on the student experience. The Committee noted that Academic Services had reformatted both templates to

provide clarity for services and readers on reporting expectations but that no changes were proposed to the reporting process or timescale.

The Committee agreed that the template should include a request to reflect on how the service is contributing to and/or aligning with University strategies for Learning, Teaching and Student Experience. It was noted that this was implicit but an explicit gathering of information about this would useful e.g. for planning rounds and ELIR. The Committee discussed options for report readers and agreed that peer review was the most appropriate.

Action: Convenor and Deputy Secretary Student Experience to consider whether the current practice of allocating report reader responsibility offered the most benefit.

The Committee noted a comment received from one of the Colleges which suggested that there may be benefit in the Director of Student Wellbeing bringing together reports from his area in a summary.

Action: Director of Wellbeing to consider the most appropriate approach to take the reports forward.

The Committee **approved** the proposed amendments to the reporting templates for implementation in the next reporting cycle.

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

The Committee discussed the mid-year update on progress towards the Committee's priorities agreed at Senate in May 2018.

For Information and Formal Business

10. **Thematic Review of Student Support**

10.1 **Mature Students and Student Parents and Carers 2017-18**

The Committee noted the update on the recommendations of the review. It was noted that in most instances this will involve further consultative and developmental work during the 2018-19 academic session within the work-plan for the "Edinburgh Cares" project led by the Director of Wellbeing. An update will be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.

10.2 **Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Students 2018-19**

The Committee noted the progress update. The review panel is currently consulting with students and will report initial findings to SQAC at the meeting to be held on 23 May 2019. These findings will then be discussed with key staff stakeholders from across the University. The final report, identifying areas of good practice and areas for enhancement, will then be submitted to the Committee at the first meeting of the 2019-20 academic session.

11. **Internal Review Reports and Responses**

The Committee approved the following final report for the Teaching Programme Review of Classics and **noted** the commendations and recommendations.

The Committee noted the year-on responses for the Postgraduate Programme Reviews of Chemistry, Clinical Sciences, and Engineering and confirmed that it was content with progress.

Action: Committee Secretary to circulate the year-on responses for the Teaching Programme Reviews of English Literature and Physics and Astronomy. The Committee to confirm that it is content with progress.

12.   Any Other Business

There was no other business.

13.   Date of Next Meeting: Thursday 25 April 2019 at 2pm in the Torridon Room, Charles Stewart House