

The University of Edinburgh

**Minutes of the Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC) meeting
held online on Thursday 3 June 2021 at 2.00pm**

Present:

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| Professor Alan Murray (Convener) | Assistant Principal, Academic Support |
| Dr Jeremy Crang | Dean of Students (CAHSS) |
| Dr Paul Norris | Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Approval (CAHSS) |
| Kirsty Woomble | Head of PGR Student Office (CAHSS) |
| Professor Judy Hardy | Dean of Learning and Teaching (CSE) |
| Stephen Warrington | Dean of Student Experience (CSE) |
| Alex Laidlaw | Head of Academic Affairs (CSE) |
| Dr Antony Maciocia | Dean of Postgraduate Research (CSE) |
| Philippa Burrell | Head of Academic Administration (CMVM) |
| Professor Neil Turner | Dean of Undergraduate Learning and Teaching (CMVM) |
| Fizzy Abou Jawad | Vice President Education, Students' Association |
| Dr Cathy Bovill | Institute for Academic Development (IAD) |
| Dr Adam Bunni | Head of Governance and Regulatory Framework Team, Academic Services |
| Sarah McAllister | Student Systems and Administration |

In attendance:

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| Professor Siân Bayne | Director of Education at the Edinburgh Futures Institute and Assistant Principal for Digital Education |
| Tara Gold | Incoming Vice President Education, Students' Association |
| Charlotte Macdonald | Advice Place Deputy Manager |
| Rachael Quirk | Head of Taught Student Administration and Support (CAHSS) |
| Ailsa Taylor (Secretary) | Academic Policy Officer, Academic Services |
| Tom Ward | Edinburgh Futures Institute Head of Education Administration and Change Management |

Apologies for absence:

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| Dr Lisa Kendall | Director of Academic and Student Administration (CAHSS) |
| Dr Paddy Hadoke | Director of Postgraduate Research and Early Career Research Experience (CMVM) |
| Gin Lowdean | Advice Place Manager, Students' Association |

1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 March 2021 were approved as an accurate record.

2. Matters Arising

Electronic business and Convener's Action had been conducted since the last meeting on 25 March 2021 as follows:

- a) Electronic Business – Draft annual report of the Senate standing committees 2020/21, Annual review of the effectiveness of the Senate standing committees 2020/21, Senate presentation and discussion themes for 2021/22 meetings (7 May 2021-14 May 2021)
- b) Convener's Action –Environmental Geosciences cohort graduating in 2020/21 (1 April 2021), SRUC measures to mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic for BSc in Environmental Management (13 April 2021), Appointment of additional deputy Board of Studies Conveners (1 May 2021).

3. Edinburgh Futures Institute Postgraduate Taught Programmes: proposals for regulatory arrangements(Paper A)

Tom Ward and Professor Siân Bayne presented this item. The planned suite of EFI educational programmes due to launch in 2022/23 included some approaches not anticipated by the University's current regulations, for the substantive project/dissertation element, and in relation to flexibility around duration of study and lifelong learning. At the last APRC meeting in March 2021, Edinburgh Futures Institute (EFI) had sought the Committee's views on potential approaches to addressing some of the regulatory issues. EFI was now submitting formal proposals for the Committee's consideration. Comments were made as follows:

The regulatory arrangements associated with the substantive project / dissertation, which include a request for one formal opt-out and pose some other questions for regulations around assessment and progression (paras 15 to 20 of the paper).

- The Committee noted the proposals identified in relation to the planned assessment of the 20 credit 'integration' course on a pass/fail basis. It was recognised by the Committee that the pass/fail approach to the project component would have some knock-on regulatory consequences for retrieval of failure and calculations of awards.
- The Committee was supportive of the proposal to hold an oral examination, if the student demonstrated active engagement and meaningful, consistent reflection in the blog, but failed the project plan. The Committee were also supportive of the proposal to offer the student an opportunity to produce a 1,000 word essay if they failed to demonstrate active engagement and meaningful consistent reflection in the blog.
- The Committee further queried what would happen if a student then failed the re-submission element, and how the assessment process would work in practice, in the absence of a formal progression point between the taught element and the project component.
- The Committee were supportive of the proposals identified in the paper with regard to the calculation of merit and distinction based on a single average

mark calculated from both the taught and project/dissertation elements (minus the 20 credit 'integration' pass/fail component). The Committee recognised that these proposals signified an opt-out from Taught Assessment Regulations 59 and 60, as merit and distinction would be calculated in a different way to that outlined in those regulations. The award of merit or distinction would, however, still be based on an average mark of 60% or 70% respectively.

The proposal to base the substantive 40 credit project for the MSc Creative Industries predominantly on group assessment (paras 21 to 25)

- The Committee noted the proposal to base the substantive 40 credits project for the MSc Creative Industries predominantly on group assessment. Members had raised some concerns about the risks associated with free-riding and team conflicts with regard to group assessment at the March 2021 APRC meeting, and it was recognised that EFI had taken steps to mitigate against this in their revised proposals.
- It was noted by the Committee that there was a distinction to be made between group work and group assessment.
- Members of the Committee noted that the balance between individual and group assessment outlined in the proposals signified a high proportion of group assessment, both for the MSc Creative Industries, and also for the 'shared core' courses that all students on the EFI PGT programmes would take.
- The Committee agreed that it would have concerns about any programmes where it was proposed that less than 50% of the assessment (by credit) was based on individual assessment. The Committee further agreed that they were likely to want to hear about any proposals of this type.
- It was clarified by the EFI representatives that the proposals for the 'shared core' courses that all students would take at EFI involved 55% individual assessment and 45% group assessment, not including the 'integration' pass/fail component.
- There were comments from within the Committee about the possibility of appeals and complaints from students who excelled in individual work but were "pulled down" by group work.
- It was noted by the Committee that in CAHSS there were several other Schools interested in "group based" dissertations, but they had been looking at group based projects with a higher proportion of individual work.
- A Committee member commented that the group work element made this programme less likely to be used as a "stepping stone" to a PhD, but recognised that the programme was more likely intended to target a particular market, which made this less of an issue.
- The Committee queried whether, if a student had failed courses, they could potentially use the 40 credits from the project element towards a Postgraduate Certificate or Postgraduate Diploma.
- It was recognised that the Models for Degree types did imply that the project/dissertation element focused on individual rather than group proficiency in research skills. The Committee gave their approval for a programme specific opt-out for the MSc Creative Industries, so that there could be an increased emphasis on group assessment, as proposed.

Opt-outs from Postgraduate Degree Regulation 16 and from the Models of Degree Types to facilitate transfer from lifelong learning to named and generic awards (para 29).

- The Committee discussed the EFI proposals in order to facilitate lifelong learning. In order for EFI to offer the opportunity for students to transfer on to a programme leading to a named award, and for EFI to offer a suite of generic awards, two formal opt-outs from the regulations were required. This involved an opt-out from Postgraduate Degree Regulation 16 (Recognition of Prior Learning) and an opt-out from provision outlined in the Models for Degree Types. The opt-out from the RPL regulation would allow students to transfer from studying with EFI on a lifelong learning basis to study towards a named award with up to 120 credits of prior study accumulated during lifelong learning studies with EFI (i.e. two-thirds of the total credits for the award). The opt-out from PGT provision in the Models for Degree Types would allow EFI to offer programmes without a 60 credits project/dissertation element. The Committee approved these opt-outs.

EFI's proposed arrangements for flexibility in duration of study (subject to subsequent confirmation that the University could manage the implications for business process and statutory returns) (paras 30 to 39).

- Committee members agreed that, as noted in the EFI paper, the proposal to allow lifelong learning individuals to remain registered for a long period of time (ideally around 10 years) raised substantive business process and statutory returns issues, along with regulatory issues. There were questions, for example, regarding: whether the University should treat these individuals who remained matriculated as if they are students; whether the students should be subject to the Code of Student Conduct; how far student support should extend, what access there would be to the full range of University and Students' Association services; and questions about raising expectations/the creation of legal obligations under consumer law, which would mean that marketing materials would need to be very clear.
- Members raised concerns about the proposed arrangements for flexibility in duration of study, given the current lack of understanding of downstream implications for business processes and statutory returns. It was noted in particular that it would be good to understand what the scope of work was for Student Systems e.g. whether there was any more substantial development work required, or whether it was more about "re-labelling". This would all need to be considered further by the Student Systems Partnership Board.
- A member suggested that the terminology for the status involved could be something like LLL for Lifelong Learner, and also noted that 10 years could be too short for a "lifelong learner" and that the boundaries could be pushed further to 15 years, but with the necessary caveats about re-registering etc.
- The Committee noted that it would be possible to facilitate the kind of sporadic engagement expected from Lifelong Learning students using existing Non-Graduating Student codes, without encountering the issues presented around student status in intervening years. However, this would not support the kind of longstanding connection with this cohort which EFI was seeking to put in place, so would require EFI to hold its own records regarding students in this cohort.
- It was proposed that EFI should approach Senate Education Committee (SEC) and also possibly SRFSG and any other relevant bodies to discuss the proposed arrangements for flexibility in duration of study further. There were a

range of philosophical and other questions raised here that required more of a discussion of the institutional position, before APRC could further engage.

- Once SEC and any other bodies had advised further, EFI could be invited to produce a Degree Programme Table for the lifelong learning programme. The Committee would be happy to have further discussion with EFI representatives as needed.

4. Online examination arrangements for 2021/22 (Paper B)

Dr Bunni presented this item. The paper discussed options relating to some aspects of the delivery of online examinations during centrally-scheduled exam diets in the 2021/22 session. Section A of the paper covered the length of time allowed for examinations, and Section B covered the handling of late submissions. The Committee discussed this paper in detail.

The Committee discussed the options in the paper and approved **option b. students should be offered an additional 1 hour for submission, with no further “silent window”**.

Students' Association representatives noted that they understood that the consensus from the group was to approve option b) but that they would like it to be noted that their preference would have been for option c). Option c) would have involved a further 10 minutes being offered either as a “silent window” or a clearly-defined period for late submission.

In relation to the handling of late submissions, the following options were presented:

- a. Schools must mark answers submitted late by students, where special circumstances have been accepted.
- b. Schools must not mark exam answers submitted late by students, where special circumstances have been accepted, but should award a null sit and provide a further opportunity for assessment.
- c. Schools can decide whether or not to mark exam answers submitted late on a case-by-case basis, where special circumstances have been accepted; late submissions should only be marked where Board of Examiners is satisfied that the student could not have gained an unfair advantage by submitting late.

The Committee were divided in opinion as to which of the above options to approve in relation to late submissions, and took a vote. There were 7 votes for option b. and 9 votes for option c.

The Committee approved **option c. Schools can decide whether or not to mark exam answers submitted late on a case-by-case basis, where special circumstances have been accepted; late submissions should only be marked where Board of Examiners is satisfied that the student could not have gained an unfair advantage by submitting late.**

5. Course Organiser: Outline of Role Update (Paper C)

Dr Bunni presented this item.

CAHSS had already been in touch with the author directly about some revised wording in section 2.4.

A Committee member asked whether 1.15 could be updated with reference to library resource lists, perhaps with links, for courses that use them. Dr Bunni agreed to pass this comment on to the author of the paper (Nichola Kett, Academic Services), to see if it was feasible for this to be included.

Subject to the above amendments, this paper was approved.

ACTION: Dr Adam Bunni to contact author the paper Nichola Kett, Academic Services) to pass on the Committee's comments about this paper.

6. Programme and Course Handbooks Policy Update (Paper D)

Dr Bunni presented this item. A Committee member asked whether handbooks could include the name of the School Representative, since they were elected in March. Dr Bunni agreed to pass this on to the author of the paper (Nichola Kett, Academic Services), to see if it was feasible for this to be included.

Subject to the above amendments, this paper was approved.

ACTION: Dr Adam Bunni to contact author the paper Nichola Kett, Academic Services) to pass on the Committee's comments about this paper.

7. College Progression Boards for Optional Study Abroad: Terms of Reference (Paper E)

Dr Bunni presented this item. The following comments/proposals were made:

- Terminology -“CSPC” and the “International Office” was mentioned on the front page instead of APRC and Edinburgh Global;
- Page 6 (appendix 1) near bottom of page – it referred to students studying abroad in year 3 twice, when one reference should be to studying abroad in year 3 and the second reference should be to students studying abroad in year 4 – e.g. it should refer to Year 4 when it referred to students studying abroad 33.3, 0, 66.6... ;
- There was a typo near the bottom of page 6 where “ration” was noted instead of “ratio”.

Subject to the above amendments, this paper was approved.

ACTION: Academic Services (Stuart Fitzpatrick) to amend the Terms of Reference in the light of the Committee's comments and arrange for them to be published online.

8. Taught Assessment Regulations (Paper F)

These proposed regulations for 2021/22 were approved as presented, subject to amendment of any typos and any other minor corrections. Academic Services would communicate the approved regulations in the annual email update to Schools and Colleges on regulations and policies, and cover any changes in relevant briefings.

[Following the meeting a further change to Taught Assessment Regulation 43 Special circumstances was made, with approval by Convener's Action. This was to include reference to the Extensions and Special Circumstances (ESC) service].

ACTION: Academic Services to publish Taught Assessment Regulations 2021/22

9. Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees 2021/22 (Paper G)

These proposed regulations for 2021/22 were approved as presented, subject to amendment of any typos and any other minor corrections. Academic Services would communicate the approved regulations in the annual email update to Schools and Colleges on regulations and policies, and cover any changes in relevant briefings.

ACTION: Academic Services to publish Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees 2021/22

10. Student Appeal Committee Membership 2021/22 (Paper H)

CAHSS colleagues noted that one of the members named had now left the University, so a replacement would need to be found. With the exception of this change, the paper was approved as presented.

11. Student Maternity and Family Leave Policy (Verbal Update)

Dr Antony Maciocia gave a verbal update on this item. This policy was due for revision, but there had been some recent discussions around PhD students and pay that may need to be reflected in this revision. The revised Student Maternity and Family Leave Policy would return to APRC for approval at a future date.

12. CSE: PUC Chile (CLOSED Paper I)

Alex Laidlaw presented this paper, and it was approved by the Committee.

13. Any Other Business

The Committee extended their sincere thanks to Professor Murray for his Convener'ship of APRC since January 2016. This would be Professor Murray's last meeting as Convener (and his last meeting of APRC). Dr Paul Norris was to take the Convener of APRC role from 1 August 2021.

The Committee also extended their sincere thanks to Dr Jeremy Crang for his role as Vice-Convener. Professor Judy Hardy was to take the Vice-Convener of APRC role from 1 August 2021.