

The University of Edinburgh
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
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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

- College PG L&T Committee will be reviewing and re-developing the handbook template during 2021/22.
- A blog is being developed to address the lack of visibility of teaching opportunities for PhD students and post-docs across College and enhance ways to express an interest. The blog will be hosted at

College level where Schools/Deaneries will be able to post local opportunities.

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

Challenges

- 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

Actions remitted to the University for 2021/22

- 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 Convener.

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-convenor 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-convenors 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