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

**Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 9 September 2020
at 2pm via Microsoft Teams**

Present:

Professor Tina Harrison **(Convener)**	Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance
Fizzy Abou Jawad	Vice President (Education), Students' Association
Brian Connolly	Academic Policy Officer, 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
Nichola Kett	Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team, Academic Services
Professor Linda Kirstein	Dean of Education Quality Assurance and Culture, College of Science and Engineering
Stuart Lamot	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
Katie Scott	Head of Student Opportunities, Students' Association
Paula Webster	Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling, Student Systems Partnership

Apologies:

Dr Jeni Harden	School Representative (School of Molecular, Genetic and Population Health Sciences), College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine

Present:

Alastair Duthie	Academic Governance and Quality Manager, College of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences

1. **Welcome and Apologies**

The Convenor welcomed Fizzy Abou Jawad to her first meeting as the new Students' Association Vice President Education, and Alastair Duthie attending in his role as Academic Governance and Quality Manager for the College of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences.

The Convenor reported that Professor Leigh Sparks, Deputy Principal University of Stirling, would join the Committee as the new External Member and would attend his first meeting in December.

2. **Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 21 May 2020 and the electronic meeting conducted between Monday 17 and Monday 24 August 2020**

The Committee approved the minutes of the previous meetings.

3. **Matters Arising**

The Convenor thanked members for all comments received during the electronic meeting and noted that these had been incorporated.

For Discussion

4. **Students' Association Priorities 2020-21**

The Students' Association Vice President (VP) Education noted her priorities for 2019-20 as follows:

- **Improving the quality and consistency of teaching and feedback** – the VP Education will work with Schools and University bodies to improve the quality and consistency of assessment feedback. The VP aims to build on new practice arising from COVID-19 by continuing to push for online assessment feedback, delivered consistently across all programmes. The VP Education will work on promoting academic representative roles in the wider student body. The Student Association will research effective structures to improve communication between Programme and School reps, so that feedback can effectively be brought to staff.

- **Ensuring all students have access to high-quality academic support** – the VP Education will explore ways to give students who are completing joint honours more freedom to 'design' of their academic support structure. Also, since implementation of the Personal Tutor and Student Support Review has been delayed until next year, the VP Education will take this opportunity to ensure that changes provide sufficient support for all students.

- **Create an inclusive and accessible learning environment** – the VP Education's current focus is on the impact which COVID-19 will have on the learning environment. The Hybrid Model has potential to create a more inclusive environment for all students in the long term. The VP Education will work alongside Schools on universal lecture recording and promoting the use of alternative forms of assessment beyond this academic year. The VP Education will also be supporting the Black and Minority

Ethnic (BME) Liberation Officer throughout the year on their work tackling the BME attainment gap at the university.

The Students' Association Vice President Education also noted the overarching priorities for the Sabbatical team for 2019-20 as follows:

- **Building inclusion** – the Sabbatical team is committed to building a University community in which all students feel welcome, respected, and able to participate, with a particular focus on addressing the financial barriers to student life and the negative experience of our BME members.

- **Ensuring support** - robust, consistent, and accessible support for all students is vital, particularly in-light of the challenging personal circumstances many of our members will experience as a result of the pandemic.

- **Facilitating connection** - it is more important than ever that we ensure that students - no matter which campus they are based at or what their mode of study is - feel connected to each other, to the University, and the wider Edinburgh community.

5. **Enhancement Led Institutional Review Reflective Analysis**

The Committee received and discussed the Reflective Analysis (RA), a self-evaluation of the University's strategies, policies and practices in support of academic standards, learning and teaching and the student experience. The Convenor noted that the RA was a key piece of evidence to support the University's next Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR), due to take place in semester 2 2020/21.

The Convenor noted that drafts of chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 (developed using information gathered from colleagues across the University and the Students' Association) were made available to all staff and students in November and December 2019 with accompanying Teaching Matters blog posts. Comments received on the draft chapters were used to develop a first draft of the RA which was then reviewed by key internal and external stakeholders in late January/early February 2020. Comments received on the first draft were used to develop a second draft, which was made available to all staff and students in March and April 2020 with an accompanying Teaching Matters blog post. The second draft was then updated with the addition of a reflection on actions taken in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. It was noted that this final draft RA represents the University's actions and intentions as at August 2020.

It was noted that Academic Services would continue to work on the glossary of acronyms, referencing within the RA (e.g. to related sections and appendices), the appendices, and web links. The Principal's foreword and photographs would also be added final publication.

The Committee thanked the Convenor and the Academic Services team for all their work producing the RA and recommended the content to Senate for approval.

6. **Internal Periodic Review Themes 2019-20**

The Committee discussed the themes that emerged from internal periodic reviews held in 2019-20.

The following areas of good practice were noted:

- **Student Support** - The dedicated support provided to students by both academic and professional staff, including as part of the Personal Tutor system and during students' transitions.

- **Learning and Teaching** - commitment to teaching and curriculum development.

- **Employability** - developing employability and graduate attributes through involvement of the Careers Service.

- **Supporting Staff** - supporting and developing staff, including support for tutors and demonstrators, continuing professional development, and roles to support tutors and demonstrators.

- **Sense of Belonging** - community building through initiatives including peer support, societies and social activities.

- **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion** - accessibility, inclusivity and Widening Participation initiative.

The Committee noted the following areas for further development and approved the proposals for responsibility for action in response as follows:

- **Tutors and demonstrators** (recommended in eight reviews) - recommendations covered training (including continuing professional development), allocation of work and remuneration, the creation of roles to provide support, and recruitment processes.

  Action: Academic Services to refer recommendation to Human Resources for response.

- **Space** (recommended in seven reviews) - recommendations related to the impact that pressures on and challenges with the estate are having on the student and staff experience, including on the ability to build community. The lack of space for tutors and demonstrators to carry out marking and meet with students was also noted.

  Action: Academic Services to refer recommendation to Space Strategy Group for response.

- **Community building** (recommended in six reviews) - recommendations focused on developing and implementing approaches to improve community building. The impact of pressures on and challenges with the estate on efforts to build community was also noted.

  Action: Academic Services to refer recommendation to Senate Education Committee for response.

- **Curriculum** (recommended in six reviews) - recommendations relating to curriculum development and course provision, and embedding and assessing skills and employability within the core curriculum.

  Action: Academic Services to refer recommendation to Senate Education Committee for response.

- **Student support** (recommended in six reviews) - recommendations related to the importance of clearly communicating support available to students and also encouraged the preservation of good practice within the current Personal Tutor system in future models of support.

  Action: Academic Services to refer recommendation to review of Personal Tutor and Student Support for response.

It was noted that Academic Services would inform areas and individuals with allotted responsibilities, including example recommendations for context. The areas for further development would also be reported to University Executive. It was agreed that Academic Services and the Institute for Academic Development (IAD) would consider how good practice identified in the reviews could be shared across the University in 2020-21, possibly via a Collaborate event. In the longer term, Academic Services would explore optimal ways of sharing good practice across the University as part of the Digital Maturity Project.

Action: Academic Services and IAD to explore options for sharing good practice.

7. **Thematic Review**

The Committee considered updates on progress to implement the recommendations from the 2017-18 Thematic Review of Support for Mature Students and Student Parents and Carers and the 2018-19 Thematic Review of black and minority ethnic (BME) students' experiences of support at the University.

The following was noted in relation to the 2018-19 review update:

- 4.1.2 Staff Experiences – the University must set out how the experiences of black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) staff will be captured if the proposed Semester 1 2020/21 initiative is not funded.

- 4.1.3 Racial Literacy – the University should give consideration to upskilling via the Senior Leadership Programme and the Unconscious Bias training module (particularly in regard to how positive discrimination can be used in recruitment).

- 4.4.1 Curriculum – the University must ensure that the Curriculum Review takes a strategic approach to enabling BAME students to be involved in diversifying content, including the co-design of curricula and assessments.

- The Committee will seek regular progress updates in relation to the 2018-19 review during the current academic year.

Action: Committee Secretary to feedback to the University Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee and the Race Equality and Anti-Racist Sub-Group.

8. **Monitoring Retention, Progression, and Attainment Data**

The Committee agreed to task a small group, led by the Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Approval (CAHSS) and the Head of Student Data and Surveys (Student Systems), to examine data set and methodological options for monitoring student retention, progression, and attainment data. The remit of the Task Group would be focused on addressing the recommendations remitted to SQAC by the 2017-18 and 2018-19 Thematic Reviews.

Action: Data Task Group to hold initial meeting and report to the December meeting of the Committee.

9.   **Committee Effectiveness Review: Questionnaire Initial Analysis**

The Committee considered the initial analysis of the feedback received from the Senate Committee Effectiveness survey.

It was noted that Academic Services was taking part in the Digital Maturity project setup by the Digital Transformation Programme, with the objective of evaluating the Committee's Digital Transformation journey to date and exploring ways to further increase the Committee's Digital Maturity.

10.   **Personal Tutor (PT) System Oversight Group**

The Committee discussed a proposal to focus responsibility for oversight of the Personal Tutor (PT) system on School Annual Quality Reports and the Adaptation and Renewal team responsible for the transition to hybrid learning, teaching and support.

The Committee noted that the PT System Oversight Group was established by the Committee in 2015 and tasked with the responsibility for quality assurance (QA) oversight of the PT system during the transition from the conclusion of the implementation of PT system (i.e. the end of Enhancing Student Support (ESS) project) to full mainstreaming within the QA processes of each School. The primary responsibility of the Group has been to ensure that each School remains aligned to the University's commitment to a quality student experience across the PT system, as enshrined in the School Personal Tutoring Statement (SPTS). However, Schools were not required to update their SPTS this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the adoption of a new set of Guiding Principles for PTs and Student Support Staff produced by the Adaptation and Renewal team responsible for the transition to hybrid learning, teaching and support. Furthermore, with the anticipated changes to student support, as part of the Personal Tutor and Student Support Review, it was unlikely that the Group would be required to meet again to approve SPTS.

It was also noted that the Group has also continued to monitor the relative performance of schools by considering key statistical and free text data drawn from student surveys, such as the National Student Survey (NSS) and the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), and School and College Annual Quality Reports. However, the Group has consistently drawn attention to the limitations of the PT performance data currently available for this task. It has been the opinion of the Group that more robust and granular internal benchmark data are required if meaningful conclusions are to be drawn and/or judgements made in regard to the relative performance of both Schools and individual PTs.

It was noted that since September 2018 the Group has developed a role in the annual quality reporting process whereby it considers PT related trends in student surveys and then feeds comments to the September meeting of the SQAC Sub Group considering the School annual quality reports. This enables the latter group to make judgments and recommendations to

Schools informed by the PT System Oversight Group's considerations which in turn allows SQAC to monitor the PT system within mainstream School QA processes. However, given the Covid-19 driven changes to the annual monitoring process and the fact that there is no PT question in the NSS or PTES this year it would be difficult for the Group to discern valid trends or make meaningful judgements in regard to the relative performance of Schools.

The Committee noted that the new Guiding Principles for PTs and Student Support Staff references the School Annual Quality Report process as the oversight mechanism for a new School based approach to QA for the PT system. The Monitoring and Improvement section of the new Guiding Principles notes the following:

> All Schools and Deaneries must define a mechanism that ensures that that the advice and assistance that students receive from their support teams and Personal Tutors is of high quality and responsive. The results, in the form of feedback and reflections on the support provided should be included in the School's Annual Quality Report. The mechanism for monitoring and improvement must be made public and made clear to both students and the Assistant Principal for Quality Assurance.

This will have implications for the way the School Annual Quality Report process is managed, with specific guidance required for reporting on each Schools' PT system.

The Committee was in agreement that, given the delay to implementing the new system of student support, it was important that the Group be maintained as an oversight forum during the transition period.

Action: Academic Services to liaise with the Assistant Principal Student Support and the ART team to explore options for oversight of the PT system.

11. UK Quality Code for Higher Education - Advice and Guidance Mapping

The Committee approved the mapping of the University's policies and practices to the advice and guidance that underpins the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and thanked those responsible for an extremely comprehensive mapping. It was noted that the mapping would form part of the Advanced Information Set (AIS) for ELIR.

For Information and Formal Business

12. Terms of Reference, Senate Committees Members' Guidance and Committee Priorities 2020-21

The Committee noted the Terms of Reference, Senate Committees Members' Guidance, and summary of the planned priorities for 2019-20 which was approved by Senate in May 2020.

13. Scottish Funding Council Annual Report 2019-20

The Committee noted the University's annual statement on institution-led review and enhancement activity to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). The Committee commended the author, Nichola Kett (Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team, Academic Services) for her work on the report.

14. Quality Processes – University Level Actions Update

The Committee noted an update report on University level actions agreed in response to issues identified as areas for further development in School Annual Quality Reports 2018-19 and themes that emerged from teaching/postgraduate programme reviews held in 2018-19.

15.   **Enhancement Theme 2020-2023: Resilient Learning Communities**

The Committee noted that Resilient Learning Communities would be the sector-wide Enhancement Theme from 2020 to 2023. This Theme will focus on meeting the changing needs and values of an increasingly diverse student community, and a rapidly changing external environment.

16.   **Internal Periodic Review – Reports and Responses**

The Committee confirmed that it was content with progress implementing the recommendations from the internal periodic reviews. However, in relation to the response of the School of Social and Political Sciences, it was agreed that the Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Approval (CAHSS) would have a follow-up conversation with the School regarding the PGR annual review process recommendation (i.e. that it is a requirement and must be adhered to).

Action: Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Approval (CAHSS) to discuss response with School.

17.   **Any Other Business**

18.   **Date of Next Meeting:** Thursday 17 December 2020, 2pm, MS Teams