Senate Committees'
e-Newsletter

Introduction

Welcome to the final edition of the Senate Committees' Newsletter for academic year 2019/20. This publication aims to keep the University community better informed about discussions and decisions occurring within Senate (the University's supreme academic body) and its Standing Committees (the three Committees to which Senate has delegated its authority in particular areas). We hope you find it interesting and informative.

COVID-19 Recovery – Adaptation and Renewal

The University has established an Adaptation and Renewal Team (ART), led by the Principal, to oversee the work needed to respond to the short, medium and longer-term challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

ART will enable swift but well-informed decisions to be taken in a number of time-critical areas to ensure that the University continues to deliver against its overall strategy.

ART has four main strands:

- Research
- Students
- Estates and Infrastructure
- Re-shaping

and reports to the University Executive. However the 'Students' strand (led by the Vice-Principal Students, Professor Colm Harmon) will be closely linked with the work of the Senate Committees. Senate Education Committee will be responsible for overseeing and approving all work relating to the delivery of learning and teaching, while Academic Policy and Regulations Committee and Senate Quality Assurance Committee will consider concessions and other relevant matters as required.

This newsletter is produced by Academic Services.

Please direct any queries or suggestions to Philippa.Ward@ed.ac.uk.

Further information on Senate and its Standing Committees is available at http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/committees.

Meetings covered by the May - June 2020 edition

Date	Committee
5-13 May	E-Senate
21 May	QAC
25 May	EC
27 May	Senate
28 May	APRC

On account of COVID-19 pandemic, meetings were conducted via Microsoft Teams.

Report from Senate

Overall responsibility for regulating and superintending teaching and discipline, and promoting research.

Documentation for the E-Senate meeting held from 5 to 13 May 2020 and the Senate meeting held on 27 May 2020 is available at http://edin.ac/1FL8RrJ

The Senate meeting on 27 May took place online and attracted a very large audience from across the University. The meeting opened with an update from the Convener, Principal and Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Mathieson, on the short-, medium-, and longer-term responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Professor Mathieson has established an 'Adaptation and Renewal Team' (ART) to lead the University response - further information can be found in this newsletter under 'Covid-19 Recovery'. Professor Mathieson responded to a range of questions from staff and student representatives, including questions on equality, diversity and inclusion issues, home-working and workplace safety, union involvement in planning discussions, and support for staff on fixed-term contracts.

Curriculum Reform

Senate received a presentation on 'Curriculum Reform' from Vice-Principal Students Professor Colm Harmon. Professor Harmon set out the rationale for Curriculum Reform now, and described the opportunities for Curriculum Reform to have a positive impact across the student lifecycle. Professor Harmon noted that Curriculum Reform is a long-term project and is distinct from the 'Adaptation and Renewal' work streams, although there may be lessons to learn from this work. The scope of the Curriculum Reform project includes undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research programmes. Professor Harmon responded to a range of questions from staff and student representatives, including questions on the National Student Survey, skills training, the relationship between research and teaching, and the links between Curriculum Reform and systems development.

A recording of the presentations and discussions above is available on request from SenateSupport@ed.ac.uk

Senate Standing Committees' Annual Report
(https://edin.ac/3f6ve3m, Paper C)

Senate received and approved the annual report from the Senate Standing Committees, including notification of planned work for 2020/21.

Senate and Senate Standing Committee annual internal effectiveness reviews (https://edin.ac/3h5Q9Wl, Paper H)

Senate was informed of plans for annual internal effectiveness reviews of Senate and of the Senate Standing Committees. These reviews will be conducted during the summer by Academic Services and will include consideration of the Senate Committee remits which were revised for 2019/20. The review reports will be presented to Senate in September / October 2020.

Senate membership (https://edin.ac/3h5Q9Wl, Paper G)

The terms of office of the current Senate membership end on 31 July 2020, and outgoing members were thanked for their contributions. The new membership of Senate will take up their roles on 1 August 2020. New members will be invited to a Senate induction session in late August or early September.

For further information about any Senate matter, please contact Kathryn.Nicol@ed.ac.uk

Report from Senate Education Committee (EC)

Responsible, on behalf of Senate, for taught and research student matters, particularly strategy and policy concerning learning, teaching and the development of curriculum.

Documentation for the meeting held on 25 May 2020 is available at https://edin.ac/2oR9kfB

The focus of the Education Committee meeting was planning for Academic Year 2020/21 in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The following topics were given particular consideration:

Widening Participation (https://edin.ac/3ePpDym, Paper A)

The University has a strong commitment to widening participation. It will continue to be a key priority for the University in the coming months and years, in spite of the challenging circumstances.

Education Committee discussed the particular challenges widening participation students (and those who have caring responsibilities, are care-experienced or are estranged from their families) are experiencing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Postgraduate Employment and Study – finding high quality employment can be more difficult for those from widening participation backgrounds, who tend not to have access to the same networks as non-widening participation students. The Careers Service is making an enhanced package of support available to this year's graduates including providing virtual recruitment preparation, a virtual graduate jobs fair in July and virtual delivery of the 'Insights' Programme. University of Edinburgh graduates are being offered a 20% discount on taught postgraduate fees for Academic Year 2020/21 to make postgraduate study more accessible.

Student Support – the Committee considered the additional support needs widening participation students may have in Academic Year 2020/21 and ways in which these might be met. It noted that the Making Transitions Personal programme is likely to be particularly helpful as a mechanism for supporting students in the coming year. Schools are keen to provide their widening participation students with targeted support, but can find this challenging on account of not always knowing who these students are. The University's Widening Participation Team is considering ways in which this issue might be addressed, whilst ensuring that students' personal data continues to be properly protected.

Technological Equity – with the move to a hybrid model of teaching, technological equity is likely to be a particular issue. Information Services is in the process of ensuring that all programme descriptors include details of the minimum technological requirements for full engagement with the programme. In order to support this work, Schools are being asked to provide their College IT Officers with details of the minimum technological requirements for their programmes.

Education Committee did recognise that, while there will be additional challenges for widening participation students going forwards, the shift towards a hybrid model of curriculum delivery will also provide new opportunities for those who find it difficult to engage with a more traditional, campus-based approach.

End of Semester 1 2020/21 Assessment (https://edin.ac/3ePpDym, Paper B)

Education Committee considered a paper exploring possible options for end of Semester 1 assessment in 2020/21, based on the assumption that a range of local and global public health constraints will remain in place in December 2020. It was agreed that the planned December 2020 exam diet will remain, but Schools are being encouraged to make use of in-course assessment and forms of assessment other than exams wherever possible.

There is a broad sense that the Semester 2 2019/20 exam diet has worked well. However, a thorough review will be undertaken over the summer to ensure that all learning from the operation of the exam diet is captured.

2020/21 Course Delivery

Schools and Subject Areas have been asked to provide the University with details of the programmes and courses they plan to deliver in Academic Year 2020/21 and to consider where rationalisation might be possible. At present, around 500 courses – approximately 10% of the University's current offering – will not be offered in the coming academic year. Schools are being encouraged to continue thinking about opportunities for prioritisation.

Report from Senate Education Committee (EC) continued

Management of Teaching Spaces

It is estimated that, with social distancing measures in place, the University will be able to use around 20% of its teaching estate (with capacity reduced to around 10% in some lecture theatres). Education Committee discussed the way in which teaching space will be allocated. It also considered microphone use, the equipment required for synchronous hybrid teaching, air circulation within teaching rooms and other hygiene considerations.

Establishment of a Doctoral College and Governance Structures

Education Committee received an update on the establishment of the Doctoral College – a horizontal University structure to coordinate the training of research students. Around 160 members of staff are now contributing to the Doctoral College, and numbers are continuing to increase.

The current circumstances have exposed some weaknesses around the governance structures for research postgraduate education. The Vice-Principal Students is taking steps to address these.

PhD and MSc by Research Programmes, Academic Year 2020/21

Consultation with Schools has shown that at present, all PhD programmes are planning to start on time, although it is recognised that some students may arrive late. The start dates of a small number of MSc by Research programmes – mainly in the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine – will be pushed back, but the majority will start on time.

Support for Doctoral Supervisors: Development of an Online Course (https://edin.ac/3cDQMmi, Paper I)

The Committee welcomed and approved the introduction of an online training course for doctoral supervisors. All supervisors are required to complete this course.

Additional Meetings of Senate Education Committee, Summer 2020

Additional meetings of Education Committee will be held on **24 June 2020** and **12 August 2020** to allow urgent consideration of matters referred to the Committee by the University's COVID-19 Adaptation and Renewal Team (ART).

For further information about any Education Committee matter, please contact Philippa.Ward@ed.ac.uk

Report from Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC)

Responsible, on behalf of Senate, for the University's framework of academic policy and regulation, apart from those aspects which are primarily parts of the Quality Assurance Framework.

Documentation for the meeting held on 28 May 2020 is available at http://edin.ac/2pAaOv7

Key points discussed included:

Concessions in response to COVID-19

The Committee approved a small number of additional concessions to the regulations in order to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student progression. To minimise the number of students needing to take resit assessment in the summer, pre-Honours students may be awarded credit on aggregate for up to 40 credits of failed courses this year.

Service Excellence Programme – Special Circumstances Policy
(https://edin.ac/2BswcIF, Paper B)

The Committee approved amendments to the Special Circumstances policy, designed to accommodate changes relating to the introduction of the new Extensions and Special Circumstances (ESC) team. The ESC team will make decisions about the validity of Special Circumstances applications before passing accepted applications to Schools for academic decisions.

External Examiners: Attendance at Taught Boards of Examiners
(https://edin.ac/2BswcIF, Paper C)

The Committee agreed to amend External Examiner requirements from 2020/21 to state that External Examiners are no longer required to attend the University physically at least once a year. External Examiners will instead be required to attend the University on at least one occasion in the first year of their term, and to agree any further physical attendance with the relevant School. This change does not affect the existing requirement for at least one External Examiner to participate in each meeting of a Board of Examiners.

Taught Assessment Regulations 2020/21 and Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees 2020/21
(https://edin.ac/2BswcIF, Papers D & E)

These regulations were approved for publication, subject to some minor amendments. Academic Services will provide Schools and Colleges with further information about changes to the regulations in July 2020.

Student Appeal Regulations Review (https://edin.ac/2BswcIF, Paper F)

Academic Services conducted a periodic review of the Student Appeal Regulations, which involved consultation with Colleges and Schools, the Students' Association and Appeal Committee members. Based on proposals arising from the review, the Committee approved some changes to the Student Appeal Regulations for 2020/21. These include streamlining the grounds for appeal, which will be supported by more comprehensive guidance about the way in which they are applied.

For further information about any APRC matter, please contact Ailsa.Taylor@ed.ac.uk

Report from Quality Assurance Committee (QAC)

Responsible, on behalf of Senate, for the framework which assures standards and enhances the quality of the student learning experience.

Documentation for the meeting held on 21 May 2020 is available at http://edin.ac/1MUwq8L

Key topics discussed included:

Annual Monitoring, Review and Reporting: Changes due to the COVID-19 Pandemic (https://edin.ac/37bKxFo, Paper C)

The Committee agreed to suspend the normal annual monitoring, review and reporting processes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, a light-touch, interim process was approved with the aim of complimenting ongoing academic contingency work during the coming year. Streamlined reports will focus on the impact of and learning from the pandemic, but will also allow optional updates on actions identified from last year's reporting cycle and reflection on other aspects of academic standards, student performance and the student learning experience (including industrial action).

The Committee agreed the following reporting deadlines, with the understanding that there was a degree of flexibility should this be required:

- Programme/Programme Cluster - Friday 30 October 2020
- School/Deanery - Friday 20 November 2020
- College - Friday 27 November 2020

Report templates and more details on the new interim process (including other deadlines) can be found at http://edin.ac/2JJBQYO

At the conclusion of the interim process, the Committee will take a decision on when and how to return to normal annual monitoring, review and reporting processes.

Student Support Service Annual Review: Changes due to the COVID-19 Pandemic (https://edin.ac/37bKxFo, Paper E)

The Committee agreed to suspend the normal Student Support Services Annual Review (SSSAR) reporting process and approved the implementation of an interim process in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. SSSAR reporting for 2019-20 will be streamlined to focus on impacts of industrial action and COVID-19, which will reduce the reporting burden on Services whilst also ensuring compliance. A revised report template has been circulated to Services with a reporting deadline in mid-November. Services will be invited to submit their reports from the end of August to a new SharePoint site, which will facilitate sharing of experience and good practice.

Student Voice Policy – Changes (https://edin.ac/37bKxFo, Paper D)

The Committee approved changes to the Student Voice Policy to extend the requirement for mid-course feedback to include Postgraduate Taught courses that run for 10 weeks or longer from academic session 2020-21.

Internal Periodic Review (IPR)

The Committee noted that the postponement of ELIR (see information in separate text box) will have a knock-on effect on the IPRs schedule for 2020-21. The outcome of discussions regarding new dates will be communicated to colleagues in due course.

Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR) – New Dates

Due to COVID-19, our ELIR, which was due to take place in autumn 2020, has been postponed. The new visit dates are:

- Planning visit: Wednesday 3 February 2021
- Review visit: Monday 22 to Friday 26 March 2021

Further information can be found on the Spotlight on ELIR series on Teaching Matters https://www.teaching-matters-blog.ed.ac.uk/tag/spotlight-on-elir/

Senate Committee Dates for 2020/21

Senate	E-Senate	Education	APRC	QAC
07 Oct 2020	15-23 Sep 2020	10 Sep 2020	24 Sep 2020	17 Sep 2020
–	–	18 Nov 2020	26 Nov 2020	03 Dec 2020
10 Feb 2021	19-27 Jan 2021	27 Jan 2021	21 Jan 2021	25 Feb 2021
–	–	17 Mar 2021	25 Mar 2021	22 Apr 2021
02 Jun 2021	11-19 May 2021	26 May 2021	03 Jun 2021	20 May 2021