Senate Committees'
e-Newsletter

Introduction

Welcome to the first edition of the Senate Committees' Newsletter for 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.

Restructuring of the Senate Committees

At its meeting in May 2019, Senate agreed a number of changes to its Standing Committees:

- Researcher Experience Committee (REC) was dissolved.

- Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) was renamed 'Education Committee', and its remit and membership were extended to include strategic postgraduate research student matters (formerly the responsibility of REC).

- Responsibility for early career research matters passed from REC to Research Policy Group (RPG).

- Minor changes were made to Curriculum and Student Progression Committee (CSPC), including renaming it 'Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC)'.

- No substantive changes were made to Quality Assurance Committee (QAC).

It was agreed that arrangements for the long-term governance of the broader student experience would require further consideration. Decisions around this will be taken at the end of Academic Year 2019/20 in recognition of the fact that a sub-committee of the University Executive is currently fulfilling this role by overseeing the development and implementation of the Student Experience Action Plan.

Terms of Reference for the new Standing Committees were drawn up over the summer and can be found here:

Education Committee

Academic Policy and Regulations Committee

Quality Assurance Committee

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.

Report from Senate

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

Documentation for the E-Senate meeting held from 10 to 18 September 2019 and the Senate meeting held on 2 October 2019 is available at http://edin.ac/1FL8RrJ

Senate heard presentations on the theme of 'Support for Early Career Researchers'. These were framed by the recently published 'Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers', and provided an opportunity to share information on current support available as well as to identify gaps in support and successful support models. The presentation included perspectives from current Early Career Researchers and academic and professional services staff who support them. Senate also:

- received a brief update on the Student Experience Action Plan;

- discussed and approved the Senate Election Regulations for elections taking place in Spring 2020. A call for nominations for Senate elections will be announced at the next meeting of Senate on 5 February 2020.

For further information about any Senate matter, please contact kathryn.nicol@ed.ac.uk

Report from Education Committee

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 9 October 2019 is available at https://edin.ac/2oR9kfB

Key topics considered included:

Student Satisfaction Results 2019
The Committee considered the results of the 2019 National Student Survey (NSS), Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) and Course Enhancement Questionnaires (CEQs), and high-quality analysis produced by Student Data and Surveys. It noted that PGT students are the most satisfied, while satisfaction amongst PGR students is declining. Undergraduate students have concerns around feedback and sense of belonging. Members discussed some of the reasons for students' dissatisfaction, and action that might be taken to address concerns. They noted in particular that a 'Sense of Belonging' Task Group has been established as part of the Student Experience Action Plan.

University of Edinburgh Students' Association Priorities
(https://edin.ac/2oaWl8L Paper F)

The Students' Association Vice-President Education outlined her priorities for academic year 2019/20 namely:

- promoting quality and constructive feedback

- ensuring students have access to the support they need

- improving the accessibility and inclusivity of academia.

Student Support and Personal Tutor Project
(https://edin.ac/2oaWl8L Paper G)

Education Committee welcomed and considered a paper which provided an update on the review of Student Support and Personal Tutoring, and presented three models of future ways of working. These are currently under consultation, and all members of the University are strongly encouraged to engage with the consultation: https://edin.ac/32Kn9eY

Supervisor Support and Training
(https://edin.ac/2oaWl8L Paper J)

Members received background information on the 'Excellence in Doctoral Education and Career Development Programme' (fformerly a Researcher Experience Committee project) and noted in particular work being undertaken as part of the of 'Supervisor Support and Training' workstream. The Committee recognised the value of this work, particularly in the context of the previously discussed 2019 PRES results.

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 19 September 2019 is available at https://edin.ac/2pAaOv7

Key points discussed included:

Edinburgh Futures Institute (EFI)
(https://edin.ac/30AFZ6i, Paper A)

The Committee gave their approval for the establishment of an EFI Curriculum Oversight Board. The Board will provide an efficient and robust way of fulfilling the functions of a Board of Studies in considering and approving proposals for courses and programmes owned by EFI. This arrangement is to be interim for two years until the end of 2021/22, by which time EFI expect to have secured approval for the initial UG and PGT educational portfolio, and their ongoing management and operational structures will also be in place.

Special Circumstances and Coursework Extensions Project
(https://edin.ac/30AFZ6i, Paper B)

The Committee received a Service Excellence Programme paper which provided an update on this strand of work and sought input from the Committee on proposed amendments to regulations relating to coursework extensions. Activity is underway to create a new, dedicated professional service in the University, providing students with a single point of access for applying for coursework extensions and special circumstances. Eligibility, evidence review and validity will be performed by a dedicated service in Student Systems and Administration, with student support and decisions about academic outcomes to remain in Schools.

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 18 September 2019 is available at
http://edin.ac/1MUwq8L
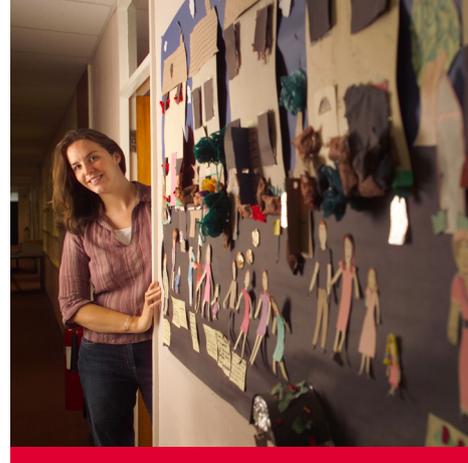
School Annual Quality Report and Internal Periodic Review Themes

In September of each year, QAC considers School Annual Quality Reports and a report on themes that have emerged from Internal Periodic Reviews held in the previous year. This year, the Committee identified several areas which will form the basis of a sharing good practice event in early February 2020, in particular:

- initiatives to develop academic communities

- examples of how student feedback has been gathered and responded to

- the general support, dedication and commitment provided by both academic and professional services staff

Areas for further development which will be taken forward at University level include:

- the ongoing challenge of accessing suitable learning and teaching accommodation to accommodate growing student cohorts

- related and increasing issues with timetabling, and the pressures on staff time as student numbers expand

Thematic Review

The Committee also approved the final report and recommendations of the 2018-19 Thematic Review of black and minority ethnic (BME) students' experiences at Edinburgh. A key finding was that a gap exists between the awareness and racial literacy of University staff and the lived experiences of both UK-domiciled and international BME students. The report calls for an open and honest conversation on race to be held across the University. QAC will monitor the implementation of the recommendations which will be taken forward by a taskforce led by Professor Sarah Cunningham-Burley under the new Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee.

For further information about any APRC matter, please contact brian.connolly@ed.ac.uk

Senate Committee Dates for 2018/19

Senate	E-Senate	Education	APRC	QAC
		11 Dec 19	21 Nov 19	5 Dec 19
5 Feb 20	14-22 Jan 20	22 Jan 20	23 Jan 20	27 Feb 20
		11 Mar 20	19 Mar 20	23 Apr 20
27 May 20	5-13 May 20	20 May 20	28 May 20	21 May 20

September / October 2019
Meetings covered by the September / October 2019 Edition

Date	Committee
10 - 18 September	E-Senate
18 September	QAC
19 September	APRC
2 October	Senate
9 October	Education Committee

Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR)

We have begun preparing for the forthcoming Enhancement-Led Institutional Review - the process by which the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) reviews universities in Scotland. The Reflective Analysis is our key document in preparation for the Review. Staff and student involvement in the Review is extremely important and there will be opportunities to get involved in drafting the Reflective Analysis. To highlight this, we are publishing a series of Teaching Matters blog posts outlining how to get involved: https://www.teaching-matters-blog.ed.ac.uk/tag/spotlight-on-elir/. For further information please contact ELIRsupport@ed.ac.uk