

The University of Edinburgh
Senate Quality Assurance Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on
Thursday 16th May 2024, 2-5pm
Hybrid meeting: Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House
and Microsoft Teams

1. Attendance

Present:	Position:
Professor Tina Harrison	Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) (Convener)
Professor Matthew Bailey	Dean of Quality, CMVM
Professor Laura Bradley	Doctoral College Representative of CAHSS (PGR)
Marianne Brown	Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling
Brian Connolly	Acting Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement, Academic Services
Dr Anne Desler	School Representative of CAHSS
Dr Gail Duursma	School Representative of CSE
Olivia Eadie	Co-Director, Institute for Academic Development
Dr Pia Helbing	Senate Representative
Professor Nazira Karodia	Deputy Vice Chancellor and Vice Principal of Learning & Teaching, Edinburgh Napier University
Professor Linda Kirstein	Dean of Education Quality Assurance and Culture, CSE
Callum Paterson	Academic Engagement and Policy Coordinator
Dr Neneh Rowa-Dewar	School Representative of CMVM
Dr Emily Taylor	Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Approval, CAHS
Professor Jose Vazquez-Boland	Senate Representative
Sinéad Docherty	Committee Secretary, Academic Services
Apologies:	
Dr Michael Barany	Senate Representative
Carl Harper	Vice President (Education), Students' Association
Dr Pia Helbing	Senate Representative
In attendance:	
Dr Steven Morley	Senate Representative (on behalf of Dr Michael Barany)

2. Minutes of meeting held on 25th April 2024

The Committee discussed the minutes of the meeting held on 25th April 2024. A point of clarification had been proposed around the accreditation requirements of the Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine and Surgery (BVM&S) programme addressed in paper G of the previous meeting. This amendment was agreed by the Committee.

The Committee approved the minutes pending the minor change.

3. Matters Arising

- **SQAC & Curriculum Transformation Workshop**

The Committee reflected on the recent workshop that had been arranged by the Curriculum Transformation (CTP) team. It was felt to have been a useful session which surfaced important issues around regulations and process.

- **Annual Monitoring**

The Committee were informed that the annual monitoring templates have been circulated to the Directors of Quality for each School and to the College Quality Offices. An appendix is yet to be circulated; this has been requested by the Curriculum Transformation team and will include questions on the level of programme readiness for the PGT CTP framework.

The Committee were supportive of the annual monitoring process being used to gather this information, noting that it was an effective use of time and energy to combine the questions through the one process.

Action: Academic Services to share the CTP question(s) with the College Deans of Quality for their approval before circulating to Schools.

- **Student Support Services Annual Review (SSAR)**

It was confirmed that the SSAR process will be reviewed by Academic Services and the Deputy Secretary, Students. Any changes will seek to align with the outcomes of the tertiary review which are expected to be announced over the summer. The Committee were made aware that there will be changes to funding arrangements in the sector which will impact the work of external bodies (QAA and SFC), to whom the University reports its quality assurance activities.

- **Thematic Review**

The Committee were informed that the Deputy Secretary, Students is continuing with plans for a thematic review to take place in the second semester of 2024-25. A proposal is expected by the Committee in autumn.

4. Degree Awarded Analysis 2022-23 (Paper B)

This report was presented by the Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling. As part of its standard business, the Committee is required to take a detailed look at the degree outcome data. The Committee were informed that, due to changes in statutory reporting, the Higher

Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data is not yet available and therefore it has not been possible to undertake the usual benchmarking activity to be included in this report. As a point of feedback, the Committee advised that the language used in relation to this matter should refer to the “awarding gap” rather than “attainment gap”.

The report for 2022-23 focussed on analysis at institution and School level, as well as key cohort groups. It was noted that the analysis shows outcomes are returning to pre-pandemic levels. There remains an increase in first class awards but this is levelling off. The awarding gap is most significant in comparisons between BAME and white students and, despite some fluctuations in the pandemic years, the gap has largely remained the same since 2018-19. Students from a widening participating (WP) background are also notably impacted by the awarding gap.

The Committee discussed the best way to address and improve the awarding gaps. It was felt that institution-wide actions may not help the pockets of students who are affected; action at School and programme level would be expected to have more impact. The Convener informed members that the QAA have announced provision of a resource to help to address awarding gaps.

It was noted that the disability gap is smaller than that of ethnicity and WP and this was attributed, in part, to the concrete actions that have been taken across the University to address this gap and increase support.

It was reported by the external member of SQAC that Edinburgh Napier University’s efforts to address the BAME awarding gap included increasing resources, developing an anti-racist curriculum and gathering views from the international student perspective to inform actions. Edinburgh Napier University had discovered that international students were less likely to come forward for student support. The Committee requested that, in future reports, UK BAME and international BAME students be presented separately in the data to better understand the impact of the awarding gap.

The Committee discussed the grading scale and the legacy of Schools being asked to award marks in the 80s and 90s to make full use of the scale. The Committee also recognised that the use of elevated hurdles for students to progress to honours year can act as an early intervention mechanism and has an impact on awards and outcomes.

An appendix had been provided with this paper to give further context to the mitigations and impact of the marking and assessment boycott (MAB). It was confirmed that Schools has engaged fully with the data collection and reporting, but analysis of unclassified degrees did not separate out MAB mitigations from factors such as extensions and special circumstances, and therefore it was not possible to fully understand the impact of the MAB from this report. The Committee were informed that Schools should be able to provide this insight. The Committee requested, going forward, a clearer indication from School data as to which mitigations have been applied in order to better understand the impact of specific factors.

In relation to the next steps, SQAC agreed that outliers illustrated in the data should be referred to the relevant local area for investigation. It was also agreed that the analysis is relevant to the work of the Student Data Monitoring Group and the Group should liaise with the Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling team to agree the areas and focus and granular detail to be provided in future reports. Once the HESA data is available, the Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling team will carry out benchmarking activity and report back to SQAC on their findings.

Action: Head of Student Analytics to report back to SQAC on benchmarking activity once progress has been made.

5. Student Data Monitoring (Paper D)

Following the Committee's decision to approve the establishment of the Student Data Monitoring Group in its previous meeting, an updated paper detailing the proposed remit, composition and Terms of Reference was presented for approval during this meeting.

It was outlined that the group will report in to SQAC and is tasked with setting a systematic approach to monitoring data at University-level across key stages in the student lifecycle, including retention, progression and attainment. An initial focus of the group will be to ensure that the adopted approach addresses the recommendations made to the University in ELIR 2021 and QESR 2023 reviews, which require the University to make progress in monitoring the awarding gap and sharing good practice to support staff across the University in taking effective action.

In discussion of the composition of the group, SQAC proposed that a colleague in the role of subject-level EDI Director would be valuable to the group. It was noted that early engagement with key cohorts is also vital and the use of Section Representatives to form reference groups will help with consultation and support the work of the core group.

It was agreed that the group is expected to meet early in the next academic year to agree its membership and set short-term and long-term objectives. SQAC expects regular updates in the next academic year around the action and activities of the group.

Action: Academic Services to approach key colleagues to form group and set up initial meetings.

6. Student Support: Evaluation Plan (Paper E)

The Committee were updated on the development of the evaluation framework to measure the effectiveness and impact of the Student Support model. The key indicators are to be established

by the Project Board in June 2024 and SQAC expect an update in due course, as part of their oversight role in monitoring the Student Support model.

Discussion of the evaluation approach highlighted the need for a focus on data and evidence and the importance of asking students about the benchmarks that are important to them. Letters of recommendations for medical students was given as an example of a concrete interaction that can be benchmarked and tracked. The length of waiting times for the provision of support and availability of meetings with Student Advisors were also identified as elements which can be measured as key indicators.

It was recognised that Schools must be aware of how to use the relevant data to report on their Student Support outcomes, and additional support may need to be offered to School staff to ensure they have the tools and knowledge to do this. Some variation in the indicators is expected across Schools but the expectation is for a set of standard baseline measures to be in place. More prompts and guidance have been included in the annual monitoring templates to set the expectation for more evidence-based reporting on Student Support.

The Committee also discussed the importance of PGR voices and PRES results feeding into the evaluation of Student Support across all students, and not only taught students. Whilst the new model has been implemented for taught students, the overall support available for PGR students must also be included in the University's oversight and evaluation activity. The PGR Wellbeing work being led by the Doctoral College was cited as an example of activity that can intersect with the Student Support evaluation work and provide more insight into the PGR student experience.

The Committee reflected on the value of a holistic overview of Student Support, taking into account the full eco-system across the institution for all students. Harnessing institutional-level improvement was highlighted as a particular challenge, although the SSSAR review was proposed as a means to align QA monitoring with the continuous improvement work of Student Support.

Action: Convener and Academic Services to liaise with Deputy Secretary, Students and seek to align SSSAR changes and continuous improvement work.

7. External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy Review (Paper E)

This paper was presented by the Acting Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement, Academic Services for approval. The Committee welcomed the review of this policy and requested some slight amendments to the wording of points 10(c), 21.2, 38.1 and 53(a).

In relation to point 33 of the policy, the Committee discussed setting expectations around training for external examiners. Training is not currently provided and there was concern that this is a gap at institutional level. The Committee recognised the nuances around conflict of interest and collaborations that may develop with External Examiners, and agreed that it was appropriate for local areas to measure the significance of any collaborations and declare such

conflicts. External examining activity should be recorded in Pure, which can assist with managing conflicts.

Action: Convener to escalate concerns around training expectations for EEs and report back to Committee with an update.

Action: Committee Secretary to refer changes to policy authors, and then circulate updated policy to members of the Committee electronically.

8. Work-based and Placement Learning Policy Update (Paper F)

The Committee commended the paper authors on a thorough review of this policy. There was a query on the application of the policy to non-credit bearing activities that may be required by a programme, or non-credit bearing activities that a student may choose to do. It was agreed clarification on this point would follow.

The Committee recommended that the language used in the scope of the policy be updated to reflect the Student Support model that is now in place for taught students.

Action: Committee Secretary to refer changes and point of clarification to policy authors, and then circulate updated policy to members of the Committee electronically.

9. Operation of Senate Standing Committees (Paper G)

The Committee noted the upcoming Effectiveness Review which will be circulated to all Senate Standing Committee members in the summer of 2024.

It was suggested that an area for improvement is the way in which members review the Internal Periodic Review (IPR) reports and responses to ensure thorough scrutiny. It was confirmed that the Deans of Quality will form a reading group for the IPR reports and responses and this will form the first layer of scrutiny.

The timing of the survey was also discussed, and it was highlighted that circulating the survey during the summer is prohibitive for the VP Education who steps away from their role in May of the academic year.

Action: Academic Services to review timing of effectiveness survey circulation going forward.

10. Scotland's Rural College (SRUC): Accreditation Committee Annual Report 2023-24 (Paper H)

The Committee were presented with the annual report relating to SRUC, for their information. The Accreditation Committee had affirmed continued accreditation for the BSc Environmental

Management and PhD Agriculture, Rural and Environmental Studies programmes. SQAC highlighted the many examples of good practice demonstrated by SRUC and noted the potential for learnings that the University of Edinburgh can take from SRUC. It was noted that SRUC has a lower level of first-class degree outcomes, and it was understood that this is due to lower entry requirements with SRUC. The Committee were informed that SRUC benchmarks well across the sector.

The Committee were advised that SRUC are working towards their own taught degree awarding powers, and this will change the nature of the relationship between UofE and SRUC in future.

11. Annual Monitoring and Internal Periodic Review Themes 2022/23: University Level Actions (Paper I)

The Committee noted the University- level responses to issues raised through annual monitoring and IPR cycles in 2022/23. Committee members requested a more detailed update from the Vice-Principal Corporate Services and Convenor of the Staff Experience Committee outlining more specific action taken and areas of focus. A member of the Committee highlighted that the last online publication of minutes from the Staff Experience Committee was in 2020, although meetings have been taking place periodically.

Action: Convenor to approach the Vice-Principal Corporate Services and Convenor of the Staff Experience Committee to obtain a more substantial response and to enquire into the availability of minutes from that Committee.

12. Committee Priorities 2024/25 (Paper J)

Following initial discussion at the April meeting and consultation on the revised draft via e-business, the final version of the Committee Priorities for 2024/25 were presented to the Committee for noting.

The revisions made to each priority as a result of consultation were indicated to the Committee. An additional priority of assessing the QA framework for internal systems and change processes, including VLEs, Timetabling and Exceptional Circumstances, had been raised through e-business consultation. This item had been discussed at the previous meeting and the Committee agreed that as the portfolio sat within the remit of the Deputy Secretary, Students, it would be an area on which to receive reports but not to set as a Committee priority. The Convenor is to liaise with the Deputy Secretary, Students to investigate the relevant reporting strategies for internal systems and update the Committee.

13. Terms of Reference and Membership 2024/25 (Paper K)

The Committee noted the updated ToRs and membership for the next academic year. The Convenor extended thanks to outgoing members; the EUSA VP Education, Senate elected members who have served their one-year term and the School representative from CSE who has also completed their term.

The Committee discussed the two vacant positions within the membership for co-opted members. Suggestions were made for another student member to join and a colleague with a role in University strategy and operations. It was highlighted that all Senate Committees can invite participants to attend meetings when they have specific expertise that would be useful in discussions.

Action: Members to submit any nominations for co-opted roles to the Convener and Committee Secretary.

14. Internal Periodic Review: Reports & Responses (Paper L)

The Committee discussed the IPR reports and responses that had been presented for approval. Particular reflections on the final IPR report of the Deanery of Molecular, Genetic and Population Health Sciences (MolGenPop) were noted, with the lack of a Workload Allocation Model (WAM) recognised as an area for development. If a WAM is to be introduced, it was suggested that CMVM could learn from the work CAHSS have done in this area.

The Dean of Quality for CMVM highlighted the multiple IPRs that had taken place within CMVM in 2023/24 and informed the Committee that recommendations relating to structural elements of the Deaneries and College are being brought together to inform the modernisation plans.

The Committee approved the IPR reports.

15. A.O.B.

There was no other business.

16. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 10th September 2024, 2-5pm.