

Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee
Thursday 21 November 2024 at 2:00pm
Boardroom, Chancellor's Building, BioQuarter / Teams

DRAFT MINUTES

<p>Present: Professor Gill Aitken Dr Adam Bunni</p> <p>Professor Jeremy Crang Lisa Dawson Dr Murray Earle Lucy Evans Amanda Fegan Dr Valentina Ferlito Professor Mohini Gray Professor Patrick Hadoke (Convener)</p> <p>Clair Halliday Professor Linda Kirstein Isabel Lavers Cristina Matthews (Secretary) Katy McPhail Catriona Morley</p> <p>Dr Donna Murray Callum Paterson</p> <p>Dr Emily Taylor (Vice-Convener)</p> <p>Dylan Walch Professor Stephen Warrington Kirsty Woomble</p> <p>Substitute members: Dr Patrick Walsh on behalf of Dr Matt Bell Neil McCormick on behalf of Karen Howie</p> <p>In attendance: Dr Paul Norris</p> <p>Apologies: Dr Matt Bell Karen Howie</p>	<p>Dean of Education (CMVM) Head of Academic Policy and Regulation, Registry Services</p> <p>Dean of Students (CAHSS) Academic Registrar, Registry Services Senate representative (CAHSS) Deputy Secretary, Students Postgraduate Research Manager (CSE) Senate representative (CMVM) Dean of Students and Alumni (CMVM) Director of Postgraduate Research and Early Career Research Experience (CMVM) The Advice Place, Deputy Manager Dean of Education (CSE) Academic Administration Manager (CMVM) Academic Policy Officer, Registry Services Deputy Head of Academic Affairs (CSE) Head of Taught Student Administration & Support (CAHSS) Head of Taught Student Development (IAD) Academic Engagement Coordinator, Students' Association (Co-opted member) Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Validation (CAHSS) Vice President Education, Students' Association Dean of Student Experience (CSE) Head of PGR Student Office (CAHSS)</p> <p>Senate representative (CSE)</p> <p>Educational Technology Policy Officer, Information Services</p> <p>Secondee to Curriculum Transformation Programme</p> <p>Senate representative (CSE) Head of Digital Learning Applications and Media, Information Services</p>
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1.	<p>Welcome and apologies</p> <p>The Convener welcomed everyone to the meeting, and noted the substitute members present. The Convener also introduced Dr Paul Norris, in attendance.</p>
2.	<p>Minutes of the previous meeting (Paper 2A)</p> <p>To approve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 19 September 2024 <p>There was one amendment to the minutes regarding the title of one of the Committee members. No other comments had been received.</p> <p>The Committee approved the minutes with the minor amendment.</p>
3.	<p>3.1 Matters Arising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Convener's communications <p>Updated agenda: The Convener noted that the agenda had been updated to remove paper 2C, at the request of the paper authors. The Deputy Secretary, Students, explained that this was an important policy due for review this year, and that feedback from the Colleges indicated that further review was needed prior to the policy coming to the Committee for approval, hence its removal from the agenda. Further consultation will therefore be undertaken before the policy comes to the Committee for approval, and input to this from members would be welcome.</p> <p>Survey on Committee induction for new members: The Convener thanked members who had completed the survey regarding the Committee induction for new members provided in September. The feedback was very positive, and included constructive comments which will help shape how inductions to the Senate Standing Committees are delivered in future years.</p> <p>Update from Senate Task and Finish Group: The Convener attended the October meeting of the Senate Task and Finish Group, which discussed feedback from the Senate External Review on the Senate Standing Committees. The feedback from the Senate External Review was that the Standing Committees work well, particularly APRC and the Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC), and this was consistent with the internal effectiveness feedback received from the Committees. There was also discussion regarding better representation of research activities and Postgraduate Research (PGR) students at Senate level.</p> <p>Co-opted member: The Convener asked members to consider including a co-opted member from the Disability and Learning Support Service (DLSS) in the Committee membership, given that there is currently a vacant position for a co-opted member, and that input from DLSS on policy reviews and updates would be helpful. Members agreed with the proposal.</p> <p>Action: The Convener will ask DLSS whether they would like to nominate a member of their team to join the Committee as a co-opted member.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Actions log <p>The Convener reported updates on the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review and update APRC concession forms: The APRC concessions form has been updated to include more information regarding the concession request, particularly for concession requests which relate to an Interruption or an Extension of Study. The form will be circulated to Colleges after this meeting.

- **Provide an update to the Committee regarding any progress on University-wide PhD archetypes:** an initial review of the PhD provision across the University has indicated that the provision is extremely varied, and that this presents challenges for applying our policies and regulations consistently. Colleagues have noted that, as well as the challenges that arise in delivering these programmes, the heterogeneity of the offering is also having an impact on students' experience. The Convener noted that this mapping exercise is not formally part of the Curriculum Transformation Project, but that it may make use of some of the same language, e.g. archetypes, for consistency. If there were to be any formal outputs of this mapping exercise in the form of PhD archetypes, these would need to be reviewed through the Senate Education Committee and Senate.

Members provided comments on this update:

- An acknowledgement that part of the diversity in the PhD provision stems from the diversity in the requirements of funding bodies, which Colleges have responded to by creating bespoke PhD programmes to fit these requirements. The Convener agreed that this was part of the reason for the diversity of the provision, and that it was therefore important to have a suitable range of models, or archetypes, in which to fit new programmes, rather than be dictated to by funders and local areas developing bespoke models.
- There are risks attached to having taught doctoral programmes, given that they are subject to different sets of regulations which apply to taught and research degrees, as well as risks to the student experience.

3.2 Report of Convener's Action

- Summary of approved concessions

Since the last meeting September 2024:

Number of individual student concessions approved: 21 (8 PGR, 7 UG, 6 PGT)

Number of cohort concessions approved: 0

The most common reasons for the concession requests (10 out of 21) were for interruptions or extensions of study, with a smaller number of requests for exemptions to assessment regulations, e.g. resit assessments, degree-specific regulations, aegrotat awards.

4.1 Taught Postgraduate (PGT) Curriculum Framework and Programme Archetypes (Paper 2B)

To discuss and comment on proposals

The paper was presented by Dr Paul Norris, secondee to Curriculum Transformation Programme (CTP).

The paper provides an update on work undertaken on the CTP Postgraduate Taught Framework (PGT) since this was last discussed by the Committee at its meeting in May 2024. The author noted three significant updates:

1. Previously, it was estimated that 20% of our PGT programmes would not map to the proposed archetypes without modification; further work now suggests that this is closer to 10-15%.
2. The full business case for the PGT Framework has now been approved by the University Initiatives Portfolio Board (UIPB). The business case includes support from Academic Quality and Standards to help with this work.
3. The current timelines continue to propose that the majority of PGT degrees would conform to the new framework for students beginning their studies in autumn 2026, with several stop/go decision points identified to check that the University is in a position to support any

switchover. Plans for programmes would need to be finalised in summer 2025, in time to be advertised for a September 2026 start. The author would welcome feedback on these, including whether or not there is enough time for the consultation.

The paper invites members of the Committee to comment on a range of issues currently under consideration (in bold text), before these are sent out for wider consultation.

Degree-specific regulations contained within the Postgraduate Degree Regulations

The Committee agreed that, although the degree-specific regulations were significantly out of date, removing them entirely would present significant risks in relation to the governance, approval and implementation of these processes. The Committee agreed to support the proposals on this issue (sections 13-14):

- CTP team and Academic Quality and Standards to undertake further work to establish if Programme Specific Regulations can be recorded within a DPT, or if a separate central resource would be more appropriate.
- CTP and Colleges to review current opt-outs in individual programmes, determine if new PGT archetypes can address these issues without opt-outs, and assess how opt-outs are communicated to students. The findings would be presented to the Committee in Semester 2 of Academic Year 24/25 to consider changes to the Degree Regulations for Academic Year 25/26.

Members noted the following considerations:

- Wherever the information is published, it must be accessible to all staff and students, and not in School resources which are not publicly accessible
- To consider having a requirement for Programme Handbooks to link to the DPT/location of the published information as the final golden copy

One member also noted that, as we move towards implementing the new archetypes, the current DPT system may not be able to support this. The paper author agreed to raise this with the CTP Curriculum Management Group, given that it relates to systems.

Study period

The Committee agreed to support the proposal for the 2-year (240 credit) MSc model to be treated as a 2-year programme for the purposes of establishing appropriate levels of extensions and authorised interruption of studies (section 18).

The paper author proposed to follow up with members who discussed examples of similar programmes in their areas.

Stackable degree structure

The Committee had a wide-ranging discussion of the stackable degree model, which included the following points:

- To consider the experiences of areas which have been offering this type of model for years (e.g. CMVM online PGT programmes), by making use of PG Degree Regulation 60 Application for Associated Postgraduate Diploma or Masters
- To consider the different implications of the model for online vs campus-based programmes, e.g. different tuition fee models
- Members had general concerns about the potential for this degree model to have a huge uptake in programmes and student numbers before the necessary infrastructure is in place:
 - o Current systems for supporting the existing stackable model involve a lot of manual processes which would not scale up easily, so the scale of any pilot programmes would need careful consideration
 - o Communication regarding annual fee increases would need to be very clear to students from the start

- There was also a general concern that setting up new PGCert and PGDip programmes on a mass scale would lead to a proliferation of new degrees, rather than simplifying the current offering, which is one of the aims of CTP
- Consideration should also be given regarding whether some of these options (e.g. part-time or intermittent study) should be applied to UG programme archetypes

The Committee agreed to support the proposal for the CTP team to work with interested Schools and Colleges, and to hear more about the CMVM experience of delivering this model, in order to consider whether it would be sensible to develop a pilot of this model within the existing regulations. If there was agreement to go ahead with a pilot, careful consideration should be given as to the scale of this and which programmes to include.

Regulations on postgraduate progression and award

The implementation of the proposed PGT degree archetypes will likely require some amendments to the regulations on progression and awarding decisions. This would also reduce the need for APRC to explicitly approve exemptions to progression or awarding regulations for degrees that do not follow the standard MSc model.

A member queried why it was necessary to amend these regulations. The paper author confirmed that the additional options are required in order to be implemented for non-standard MSc programmes, because the current regulations are based on a standard MSc comprising 120 credits of taught courses + 60 credits for a dissertation.

The Committee agreed with the proposal to consult more widely on the development of a 'menu' of possible progression and awarding rules for each PGT archetype. Programmes would then be invited to use whichever of those rules they saw as most appropriate for their academic needs. This approach should avoid the proliferation of bespoke regulations across the University. The Committee favoured this approach over the proposal to develop more streamlined general awarding rules (sections 35-37).

Award of credit on aggregate

The Committee discussed options for the maximum allowance of credit on aggregate on a Masters programme. Some members noted that 40 credits on aggregate would be in proportion to allowances for UG students. Other members were more supportive of allowing 60 credits on aggregate due of the lack of resit options for PG programmes; however, there were also concerns about allowing credit on aggregate for a third of the credits needed for a Masters degree.

Members noted that for fully-taught programmes, students would not have an equivalent opportunity to resubmit for 60 credits of the programme, as compared with students on programmes with a 60-credit dissertation. As such, while members supported on balance setting a maximum for credit on aggregate at 40 credits, they agreed that the potential for resits/resubmission as a method for redeeming assessment failure should also be revisited, instead of focussing exclusively on credits on aggregate. This would be particularly helpful on taught-only MSc programmes.

PGT course pass mark

At its May 2024 meeting, the Committee indicated that they would like the CTP team to consider the current discrepancy between Level 11 course pass marks (40%) and the grades required for MSc progression/award (50%).

Benchmarking across other institutions suggests that most institutions use the same mark for passing a PG course and for PG progression/award. In most cases, this is one grade band up from the mark used for UG courses, although some institutions use the same grade band for PG and UG. The UoE approach of having a course pass mark at one level, and a progression/award pass mark at another level seems to be unusual.

Members from of the Committee from the College of Science and Engineering noted that informal consultation with staff in Schools suggested that many staff would prefer not to change the status quo. There was also discussion of areas where both UG and PG students take the same course, and also UG Integrated Masters students and PG Masters students take the same course, and the potential confusion in having a different pass mark for these groups within the same course.

Members also noted that a simplified approach to the PG pass mark would be less confusing to students and staff. The EUSA VP Education indicated that he would support the position of moving the course pass mark to 50, as long as staff marking assessments were making use of the full scale of marks. The Committee agreed that the evaluation of this option would need to consider data on how many students would not have achieved a pass if the mark were raised to 50, including students registered on PGCert and PGDip programmes.

Overall, the Committee agreed to support further consultation on whether to maintain the current position or whether to revise the PGT the course pass mark to 50%.

Degree Programme Specifications

The EUSA VP Education noted concerns with students looking at Degree Programme Specifications (DPS), given that many of these are out of date. The paper author confirmed that the CTP team are considering the wider context of the use and function of the DPS, and that the Committee should receive a paper on this during Semester 2 of Academic Year 24/25.

Action: The paper author agreed to provide a written update with any progress on the above issues to the next Committee meeting in January 2025.

4.3 Academic Year dates 2026/27 and provisional Academic Year dates 2027/28 (Paper 2D) To approve

The paper was presented by Cristina Matthews, Academic Policy Officer.

The Academic Year dates are drafted following the model used in previous years which is set by the academic structure approved by Senate and published at [Academic year structure](#). The paper requested approval from the Committee for the academic year dates for 2026/27, which the Committee approved as provisional dates at its January 2024 meeting. The paper also requests Committee approval for the provisional academic year dates for 2027/2028.

Members of the Committee raised a number of issues in relation to the proposed dates:

- The overlap between teaching weeks and different sets of school holidays, and the equalities impact of this on staff. Members noted that the dates have different impacts on academic and professional services staff, and also that staff are based across different council areas which operate different school holiday dates. The paper author noted that the dates were dictated by the model and, in Semester 1 in particular, the limitations on the timing for Welcome Week.
- Across the University the number of exams seems to have increased post-Covid and, possibly, in response to concerns about misuse of Generative AI in assessments. If this continues to be the case, an increasing number of exams would need to be compressed into a smaller number of days for the December diet of 2026. The Academic Registrar confirmed that the starting premise for the Timetabling team is that students should not have two exams in one day. The Committee discussed some of the implications of the proposal to re-introduce two exam-session days as standard practice, and members noted concerns regarding this generating additional capacity to increase the number of exams. There were also concerns about this leading to more students having two exams in one day, although another member noted that allowing for two-session days across the full diet should in fact

make it easier to avoid students having two exams on the same day due to the increased capacity of the diet. The Convener reminded the Committee that there would be a paper coming to the next Committee meeting specifically focussing on the approach to the exam diet, including the use of two-session exam days, and that these discussions would be most appropriate at the point of the Committee considering those proposals.

A member from the Students' Association noted that the use of two-session exam days in the current diet for December 2024 had not been approved by the Committee, and that the approval of two-session exam days for 2023/24 did not extend to the current academic year. The Convener confirmed that he had received notice that it would be necessary to make use of two-session exam days due to timetabling capacity. It had been due to an oversight that APRC had not been consulted on this matter.

- Members noted that the academic year dates did not reflect the use of three terms spanning the full year (usually in Schools which have PGT online programmes), and that this resulted in a lack of recognition in the calendar of staff who work across the full year.
- One member noted that, in practice, students preparing for exams will often not attend the last few days of classes in order to increase their revision time, and that the Committee could consider ending the teaching blocks sooner in order to facilitate this and reduce absence rates in the last few days of teaching.

The Committee noted that the academic year structure presented wide and varied challenges, but that it was not within the remit of the Committee to make amendments to the overarching model. Members also noted that when the structure was last reviewed in 2018, there were no changes made.

The Committee agreed to **approve** the academic year dates for 2026/27 and the provisional academic year dates for 2027/2028.

Action: Committee Secretary to update the academic year dates website as approved.

4.4 College Progression Boards for Optional Study Abroad: amendments to Terms of Reference (Paper 2E)

To approve

The paper was presented by Dr Adam Bunni, Head of Academic Policy and Regulation.

The Terms of Reference are presented to the Committee for approval, following the scheduled review for this academic year. The College Offices and the Study and Work Away (SWAY) team were consulted as the key stakeholders. The consultation indicated that the Terms of Reference are working well, therefore the proposed changes are modest and do not involve significant changes in policy. The paper author noted an additional proposed amendment, not included in the paper, to remove section 1.4.

Members discussed whether or not it would be helpful to include further detail in some sections, but agreed that the range of scenarios was very varied and therefore difficult to list comprehensively.

One member of the Committee noted a reference in 4.5 to Personal Tutors which should be amended.

The Committee agreed to **approve** the proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference, including the removal of section 1.4 and the removal of the reference to Personal Tutors, with immediate effect.

4.5	<p>Visiting and Non-Graduating Student Policy and Procedure (Paper 2F) To approve</p> <p>The paper was presented by Dr Adam Bunni, Head of Academic Policy and Regulation.</p> <p>The paper proposed a number of minor amendments to the policy, following its periodic review due this academic year.</p> <p>A member noted the use of the term Visiting Undergraduate Taught Students (VUGTs) rather than the more commonly used term Visiting Undergraduate Students (VUGs). The distinction has been made because the consultation noted that there are Visiting Undergraduate Research Students as well, so the term VUGTs differentiates this group from the research students.</p> <p>The Committee approved the amendments to the policy, to be implemented with immediate effect.</p>
5.1	<p>Update on response to Watch That Gap project (Paper 2G) For information and to note</p> <p>The paper was presented by Lisa Dawson, Academic Registrar, Registry Services.</p> <p>The paper provided an update to the Committee regarding work undertaken following the 'Watch That Gap' project, which had been commissioned by the Deputy Secretary, Students, in order to identify and propose mechanisms of support for students with needs beyond the scope of the Exceptional Circumstances policy.</p> <p>Members of the Committee discussed some of the challenges regarding identifying students who are parents and carers, given the current lack of data on this, and welcomed the proposal to integrate this information into the student record.</p> <p>One member noted a concern about the proposals to support student parents and carers via the Exceptional Circumstances policy and processes, and whether this would signify a return to conflating this student population with the students with Exceptional Circumstances.</p> <p>A member representing Information Services (IS) provided an update on a project to improve lecture recording and captioning, which is particularly important for this student population, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Data on the use and quality of lecture recording - Guidance for staff on the use of microphones - Proposal to switch on captioning by default, instead of staff having to switch this on manually <p>The Committee agreed that further updates on this IS project would be of interest to the Committee.</p> <p>Action: IS representative member to provide an update to the Committee regarding improvements to lecture recording and captioning.</p> <p>One member noted that making timetabling adjustments for students who are parents and carers seemed particularly challenging, given the lack of data on this and the challenges with the timetabling system.</p> <p>A member from the Students' Association noted that, while these updates were welcome, there was frustration amongst the Students' Association that the implementation of these was not in place yet, and that the introduction of the new Exceptional Circumstances policy in September 2024 had left a gap in support for these students. The Deputy Secretary, Students, acknowledged these frustrations, while also noting the huge amount of effort and time spent by a range of teams across</p>

	Registry Services to get this far with the proposals, even though the changes have not yet come into effect.
5.2	<p>Annual Concessions Report 2023/24 (Paper 2H) To note and comment</p> <p>The paper was presented by Cristina Matthews, Academic Policy Officer.</p> <p>The paper provided the Committee with an annual report of the approved concession requests for individual students to have exemptions from the University regulations or policies approved by the Committee during the 2023/24 academic year.</p> <p>The proposed next steps focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitoring and discussing any impact on concessions of amendments to regulations approved by the Committee for 2024/25. A member from CAHSS noted that they were already seeing the positive effects of the amendments to PG Degree Regulation 45 Request for reinstatement on Doctoral and MPhil degrees, and that the College had approved three such cases in the last month. - Considering whether there are further changes to regulations or policies that would be beneficial to the postgraduate research student experience. One member noted the broad concern that the overall scale of PhD projects is becoming more ambitious and that many project plans are not realistic. There was acknowledgement that this may not be an issue that can be addressed via regulations or policies. However, this issue often results in students requesting concessions for extensions, and that the longer students are on programme, the more likely it is they will have a life event requiring further concessions. <p>The Committee agreed that the PGR sub-group could consider these proposed next steps at its next meeting.</p>
6.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>The Convener noted that the Committee Secretary will be on maternity leave from January 2025, returning in September 2025. More information will be shared in due course regarding cover for the role of Committee Secretary. The Convenor thanked the Committee Secretary for the support she has provided for the Committee and wished her well for her Maternity leave.</p> <p>No other business received.</p>