

Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee

Thursday 20 March 2025 at 2:00pm

Teams

CONFIRMED MINUTES

Present: Professor Gill Aitken Sarah Barnard (Secretary) Dr Matt Bell Victoria Buchanan Dr Adam Bunni Professor Jeremy Crang Lisa Dawson Dr Murray Earle Amanda Fegan Dr Valentina Ferlito Professor Mohini Gray Professor Patrick Hadoke (Convener) Karen Howie Professor Linda Kirstein Isabel Lavers Charlotte Macdonald Katy McPhail Catriona Morley Dr Donna Murray Callum Paterson Dr Emily Taylor (Vice-Convener) Professor Stephen Warrington Dylan Walch Kirsty Woomble Apologies: Lucy Evans Clair Halliday	Dean of Education (CMVM) Academic Policy Officer, Registry Services Senate representative (CSE) Director, Disability and Learning Support Service Head of Academic Policy and Regulation, Registry Services Dean of Students (CAHSS) Academic Registrar, Registry Services Senate representative (CAHSS) Head of Postgraduate Research Student Administration (CSE) Senate representative (CMVM) Dean of Students and Alumni (CMVM) Director of Postgraduate Research and Early Career Research Experience (CMVM) Head of Digital Learning Applications and Media, Information Services Dean of Education (CSE) Academic Administration Manager (CMVM) Manager, The Advice Place Head of Taught Student Administration (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) Dean of Student Experience (CSE) Vice President Education, Students' Association Head of Postgraduate Research Student Office (CAHSS) Deputy Secretary, Students Deputy Manager, The Advice Place
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1.	<p>Welcome and apologies</p> <p>The Convener welcomed all members to the meeting, and thanked members for noting the change of circumstances which had led to the meeting being held online, rather than in Charles Stewart House.</p>
2.	<p>Minutes of the previous meeting (Paper 2A) To approve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23 January 2025 <p>An amendment was requested under section 4.1, under bullet 5 of the Return to study discussion, removing the clause “it is often challenging to engage these students in this process”.</p> <p>The Committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting subject to this amendment.</p>
3.	<p>3.1 Matters Arising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convener’s Communications <p>The Convener commented on the February e-business of approving the inclusion of two exam slots in May 2025. The Committee’s capacity for discussion was constrained by time sensitivity and practicalities in this instance. It was noted that any more general discussion regarding the approach to assessment and examinations is outside APRC’s remit and would be done through SEC and/or Senate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions Log <p>The Head of Academic Policy and Regulation updated members on development around moderation advice from the Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group, which is a subgroup of SEC. The Group expressed an appetite for more guidance, which was echoed by Committee members. Caution was expressed around the capacity of Schools to engage with any requested changes to regulations before May’s meeting of APRC.</p> <p>3.2 Report of Convener’s Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of Approved Concessions <p>Since the last meeting (January 2025): Number of individual student concessions approved: 6 (5 PGR, 1 PGT) Number of cohort concessions approved: 0</p> <p>The most common type of approved concession request (5 out of 6) was for extensions, predominantly due to health reasons.</p>
<p>4. SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS</p>	
4.1	<p>Undergraduate Degree Regulations 2025/26 To comment and recommend to Court</p> <p>The paper was presented by Dr Adam Bunni, Head of Academic Policy and Regulation.</p> <p>The Committee discussed the proposed amendments, with the following points raised in the discussion:</p> <p>26 Leave of Absence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed wording in the paper appeared to preclude study at partner institutions. A further amendment was proposed to clarify that activity undertaken must be required for a

	<p>student's studies, and to introduce clarity between permanent study and long-term study, the latter of which can be built into programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Not appropriate" to be amended to "not permitted" in both sets of regulations. • Members reported that Leave of Absence is sometimes misused in place of Authorised Interruption of Studies, and noted that while this would not appropriately be covered by the regulations, it should be clearly articulated in any accompanying guidance. • Recommendations were sought on cases where students are effectively undertaking distance-learning but are not enrolled on distance-learning programmes, as these programmes have not yet been created. On a case-by-case basis, depending on visa requirements, it would be reasonable to make a concession request to APRC. • The importance of the University's sponsor licence was remarked upon, alongside acknowledgement of the difficulty of compliance-driven policy development. The Academic Registrar offered to update APRC with a summary of Home Office changes. <p>The Committee approved the amendments to regulation 26.</p> <p>28 Optional Study Abroad</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "At the end of Semester 2" to be added as alternative wording for the publication deadline for continuing student results, to avoid misunderstandings where students assume credits ratified and published in August via alternative assessments will suffice to progress and meet Optional Study Abroad selection criteria. <p>33 Withdrawal and Exclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request to specify that the requirements which must be met are the progression requirements, to make explicit the connection between the DRPS and Taught Assessment Regulations. • The wording regarding the period of time permitted between withdrawal and readmission to study was queried, with some members suggesting the requirement should refer to recency of study rather than time elapsed from withdrawal. However, with readmission permitted at the discretion of College, rather than an entitlement, it was felt that the current wording struck an appropriate balance. <p>43, 44 Progression and Permissible Credit Loads</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A suggested amendment disambiguating optional credit and retaken credit will be removed, as it is seen as insufficiently clear, and unlikely to occur at undergraduate level in any case. • Student Adviser to be removed as a suggested delegated nominee of the Director of Teaching. <p>78 CMVM Degree Specific Regulations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor typographical amendments proposed. <p>The Committee agreed to recommend the Undergraduate Degree Regulations to University Court, subject to the additional revisions noted above being made.</p>
4.2	<p>Postgraduate Degree Regulations 2025/26</p> <p>To comment and recommend to Court</p> <p>The paper was presented by Dr Adam Bunni, Head of Academic Policy and Regulation.</p> <p>The Committee discussed the proposed amendments, with the following points raised in the discussion:</p> <p>20 Permissible Credit Loads</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request to retain the 40 additional credit limit, with resulting proposed amendment to grant College the licence to approve credit loads above this, as it occurs comparatively rarely and APRC scrutiny does not add significant value. <p>30 Leave of Absence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be amended in line with agreed amendments to the UG DRPS 26. <p>60 Application for Associated Postgraduate Diploma or Masters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarification added that the requirements to be met by students applying for readmission are progression requirements, in line with agreed amendment to the UG DRPS 33. <p>The Committee agreed to recommend the Postgraduate Degree Regulations to University Court, subject to the additional revisions noted above being made.</p>
4.3	<p>Exam Delivery – Two Session Day Proposal To approve</p> <p>The paper was presented by Lisa Dawson, Academic Registrar.</p> <p>The proposal is to move to a two-session exam day from academic year 2025/26. Point 2 recognises additional cost of moving to two sessions a day, and if growth continues this will need to be discussed with the relevant budget holders.</p> <p>It was flagged that many students would prefer two sessions across the board and including Saturday exams, if this would facilitate avoiding a clash. EUSA suggested trying not to fill slots to capacity, which should mean clashes are less likely.</p> <p>Currently, it is not always feasible to prevent students with adjustments from being scheduled for consecutive exams. In the May exam period, ten students are affected by this issue. In such cases, DLSS requests that the School offer alternative assessments, which may not always be possible. It was suggested that it would be beneficial to audit the practices of different Schools where they have deemed it appropriate to provide alternative assessments, as this may provide an indication of where alternative forms of assessment may be appropriate more generally. This suggestion was supported by the Convener.</p> <p>It was noted that, if it cannot be guaranteed that students will not have two exams in a single day, then it must be accepted that having two exams in a single day is considered reasonable. This necessarily precludes the pre-emptive application of Exceptional Circumstances, as suggested. Despite access to improved data, clashes, and instances where students have two exams in one day, are unavoidable unless the volume of exams changes. It was reiterated that it is not for the exams service to interrogate exams as a method of assessment.</p> <p>The new timetabling software has improved functionality and will yield better data for this Committee. However, efforts to reduce clashes and instances where students have two exams in one day would have to be balanced with the demand from students to have their exam timetable earlier.</p> <p>Noting some reservations and practical concerns, the Committee nonetheless agreed to approve the proposal.</p>
4.4	<p>Special Arrangement Exams Extra Time To approve</p> <p>The paper was presented by Lisa Dawson, Academic Registrar.</p>

	<p>During the pandemic, extra time in exams was a blanket one hour. The proposal looks to return to percentage-based extra time, with adjustments based on DLSS-assessed need. It was noted that 2,800 students will receive less extra time, and that this will require careful communications with students, some of whom will be towards their final years of study.</p> <p>Members were supportive of the return to needs-based support. The staffing implications for professional services colleagues were noted, but the lead time and consultation were sufficient that colleagues felt this was manageable.</p> <p>In the discussion, the possibility was raised of gradually implementing changes so that students accustomed to the current system could complete their degrees under the same conditions. However, introducing such an adjustment could be manually intensive and prone to errors. A mixed adjustment system would also create extra work for teaching office staff. The Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) mentions reassessing students and adjusting their allowances. The Committee acknowledged the complexities of changing students' perceptions and the potential for increased complaints or unintentional harm from excess additional exam time.</p> <p>DLSS will coordinate closely with the Advice Place and EUSA to ensure effective communication regarding these changes. The Convener confirmed that it would be useful for the Committee to have sight of the communications before issue.</p> <p>ACTION: DLSS to circulate these draft comms to members electronically for comment</p> <p>The Committee agreed to approve the paper.</p>
4.5	<p>Taught Assessment Regulations – Initial discussion of proposed amendments</p> <p>To comment</p> <p>The paper was presented by Dr Adam Bunni, Head of Academic Policy and Regulation.</p> <p>This paper highlights a small number of proposals for amendments to the Taught Assessment Regulations for the 2025/26 session. The following points were raised in the discussion:</p> <p>17 Assessment deadlines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caution was expressed about delegating authority to Colleges without published guidelines. In particular, it was noted that students with electives or joint programmes might find a “free-for-all” challenging to navigate. • Support was expressed for allowing deadlines to be set locally at programme-level. The current constraints put pressure on staff and students around marking. • Current practice includes deadlines being set during the Easter period, meaning the regulations should either clarify to allow, or clarify to prohibit. The pressures around feedback turnaround encourage staggering of deadlines, with not many other levers to pull. <p>The Committee would not feel comfortable banning this without extensive consultation with the Colleges and broader understanding of the reasons for its use and its impact. Therefore, the question is whether to keep the wording vague or make it more explicit. The Head of Academic Policy and Regulation agreed to look at the wording on basis of this discussion and come back to APRC in May.</p> <p>27 Resit assessment</p> <p>A consultation document was circulated among Colleges, Schools and EUSA regarding this proposal, based on capping of marks at 40. An alternative option would be to use pass/fail.</p>

	<p>Potential benefits of the proposal included the potential to make greater use of resubmission as a method of reassessment for failed coursework.</p> <p>Various committees and groups, including the CMVM education committee and CAHSS Senior TO managers, had discussed the proposal. There was some support in principle, along with recognition of the need for change, but concerns were expressed regarding the implementation details, particularly the idea of capping at the course level rather than component level.</p> <p>From a QA perspective, it was noted that the University was an outlier in its current practice. It was suggested that current practices might not be the most equitable, and that better data would be required to challenge assumptions about which students might be disadvantaged by any change in policy, particularly in relation to widening participation students. Concerns also included the potential for increased stress among students due to the punitive nature of the system, challenges in processing results within existing timeframes, and inadvertent increases in exceptional circumstances submissions.</p> <p>The Committee was in favour of a reconsideration of the broader approach to reassessment and resubmission, ensuring any changes are carefully considered and data-informed. However, the Committee agreed that a specific change to regulation to move towards capping of marks for resit assessment should not proceed at this time.</p> <p>58 Resubmission of postgraduate dissertations or research projects – Academic misconduct</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some members were supportive, but noted that most academic misconduct is unintentional and minor. It was queried why a PGT dissertation would be treated differently to other kinds of resit. • If a student receives a mark of 45 to 49% even after an academic misconduct penalty, the offence might not be severe, suggesting that allowing them to resubmit might be reasonable as the penalty was not substantial. <p>Consensus was towards maintaining the current stance, acknowledging that changes would only affect a narrow set of circumstances.</p> <p>58 Resubmission of postgraduate dissertations or research projects – Permitted number of resubmissions</p> <p>The Committee expressed strong support for the proposal to limit resubmissions to two, noting that APRC could allow for concessions to this, where individual circumstances warranted additional flexibility.</p>
4.6	<p>Committee Priorities 2025/26</p> <p>To comment</p> <p>The paper was presented by the Convener.</p> <p>Each year, in the second semester, Standing Committees discuss and set priorities for the following year. APRC is guided by the need to comply with scheduled reviews of policies and regulatory requirements, such as the QAA quality code.</p> <p>Additional suggestions from members included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resit and resubmission policies as a priority, suggesting that Senate Education Committee (SEC) should handle this initially. • Moderation processes, which would start with SEC and then be brought to this committee for any relevant changes to regulations.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numbers and quotas of exams as a broad issue that needs attention in Senate discussions. <p>The Convener confirmed that “Watch that Gap” would likely return to this committee, with ongoing work regarding the Bristol case also expected to return for discussion.</p> <p>ACTION: Secretary to request LD to bring an update regarding “Watch that Gap” to the May meeting.</p> <p>Timing of the academic year was noted as a potential topic for SEC.</p>
4.7	<p>CMVM Programmes with Non-Standard Academic Years 2025/26</p> <p>To approve</p> <p>The paper was presented by Isabel Lavers, Academic Administration Manager, CMVM.</p> <p>It was noted that some undergraduate programmes start earlier in the year and the online programmes have distinct schedules. The aim going forward was to align the online programmes’ non-standard schedules, which are largely historical, more closely with the rest of the University of Edinburgh’s standard academic calendar. The Committee looked forward to better alignment in the following year.</p> <p>The Committee agreed to approve the proposed changes to the terms for these programmes.</p>
5. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION / NOTING	
5.1	<p>Update on Regulations Work Associated with Curriculum Transformation Project (PGT)</p> <p>To note</p> <p>The Committee noted the paper.</p>
5.2	<p>Update on Lecture Recording and Captioning</p> <p>To note</p> <p>The Committee felt that it would be beneficial to make the policy language more prescriptive and define what “pedagogical” means in terms of opting out of lecture recordings, in a context where lecture recording has shifted from being recommended to expected. It was acknowledged that navigating this change is challenging due to strong and varied views among staff, and additionally that primary challenges stem from inadequate execution of the policy (e.g. failure to wear a microphone) rather than an excess of opt-outs.</p> <p>ACTION: KH to also share lecture recording and captioning data with Colleges.</p>
5.3	<p>Implementation of Disclosure (Scotland) Act 2020</p> <p>To note</p> <p>The Committee noted the paper.</p>
6.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>The Committee thanked Stephen Warrington for his contributions to APRC over the years.</p>
<p>Date of next meeting Thursday 22 May 2025, 2-5pm, Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House / Microsoft Teams</p>	

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