# APRC 25/26 1

**Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee**
**Thursday 18 September 2025 at 2:00pm**
**Liberton Tower, Murchison House, King's Buildings / Teams**

**AGENDA**

| 1. | **Welcome and apologies** | |
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| 2. | **Minutes of the previous meeting**<br>To approve<br>• 22 May 2025 | **APRC 25/26 1A** |
| 3. | **3.1 Matters Arising**<br>• Convener's communications<br>• Actions log<br><br>**3.2 Report of Convener's Action**<br>• Summary of approved concessions | **Verbal Update** |
| **4. SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS** | | |
| 4.1 | **Board of Examiners Review – Implementation of Decision Trees for Exceptional Circumstances**<br>For discussion | **APRC 25/26 1B** |
| 4.2 | **Remote delivery of teaching**<br>For approval | **APRC 25/26 1C CLOSED** |
| 4.3 | **Students' Association Sabbatical Officer Priorities 2025/26**<br>For discussion | **APRC 25/26 1D** |
| | **BREAK** | |
| 4.4 | **Variation to the Models for Degree Types regulations to support an intercalated degree in transdisciplinary practice**<br>For discussion | **APRC 25/26 1E CLOSED** |
| 4.5 | **Amendments to Student Maternity and Parental Leave policy**<br>For approval | **APRC 25/26 1F and 1F Appendix 1** |
| **5. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION/NOTING** | | |
| 5.1 | **Revised Student Complaints Relating to Staff Conduct Procedure**<br>To note | **APRC 25/26 1G** |
| 5.3 | **Committee Administration:**<br>• APRC Membership<br>• APRC Terms of Reference<br>To note | |

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|  | **Committee Priorities 2025/26:**<br>To note<br>• Development of curriculum framework arising from Learning and Teaching Workstream<br>• Scheduled review of policies |  |
| **6.** | **Any Other Business** |  |

**Date of next meeting**
Thursday 20 November 2025, 2-5pm, Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House

# APRC 2025-26 1A

**Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee**
**Thursday 22 May 2025 at 2:00pm**
**Cuillin Room**

**UNCONFIRMED MINUTES**

| **Present:** | |
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| Professor Gill Aitken | Dean of Education (CMVM) |
| Sarah Barnard (Secretary) | Academic Policy Officer, Academic Quality and Standards |
| Dr Matt Bell | Senate representative (CSE) |
| Victoria Buchanan | Director, Disability and Learning Support Service |
| Dr Adam Bunni | Academic Policy Manager, Academic Quality and Standards |
| Professor Jeremy Crang | Dean of Students (CAHSS) |
| Lisa Dawson | Academic Registrar, Registry Services |
| Dr Murray Earle | Senate representative (CAHSS) |
| Dr Valentina Ferlito | Senate representative (CMVM) |
| Clair Halliday | Deputy Manager, The Advice Place |
| Professor Patrick Hadoke (Convener) | Director of Postgraduate Research and Early Career Research Experience (CMVM) |
| Professor Linda Kirstein | Dean of Education (CSE) |
| Isabel Lavers | Academic Administration Manager (CMVM) |
| Katy McPhail | Head of Taught Student Administration (CSE) |
| Catriona Morley | Head of Taught Student Administration & Support (CAHSS) |
| Dr Donna Murray | Head of Taught Student Development (IAD) |
| Callum Paterson | Academic Engagement Coordinator, Students' Association (Co-opted member) |
| Dr Emily Taylor (Vice-Convener) | Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Validation (CAHSS) |
| Dylan Walch | Vice President Education, Students' Association |
| Kirsty Woomble | Head of Postgraduate Research Student Office (CAHSS) |
| | |
| **In attendance:** | |
| Professor Mary Brennan | Dean of Education (CAHSS) |
| Rebecca Shade | Senior Policy and Projects Adviser – Students |
| Amy Willis | Academic Policy Officer |
| | |
| **Apologies:** | |
| Lucy Evans | Deputy Secretary, Students |
| Amanda Fegan | Head of Postgraduate Research Student Administration (CSE) |
| Professor Mohini Gray | Dean of Students and Alumni (CMVM) |
| Karen Howie | Head of Digital Learning Applications and Media, Information Services |
| Charlotte Macdonald | Manager, The Advice Place |

# APRC 2025-26 1A

| 1. | **Welcome and apologies** |
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| | The Convener welcomed committee members to the meeting and introduced Rebecca Shade and Amy Willis, in attendance. Apologies were noted from Lucy Evans, Amanda Fegan, Mohini Gray and Karen Howie. |

| 2. | **Minutes of the previous meeting (Paper 2A)** |
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| | To approve |
| | • 20 March 2025 |
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| | The EUSA VP Education commented on a recent discussion at Senate Education Committee about lecture recordings in the context of the Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy, noting that this felt disconnected from the March APRC discussion regarding lecture recording. |
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| | The committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting. |

| 3. | **3.1 Matters Arising** |
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| | • **Convener's Communications** |
| | A call for expressions of interest in the positions of Convener and Vice-Convener was issued prior to the meeting. The Convener confirmed expressions of interest had been received, and would be brought forward for voting under item 4.4. |
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| | The committee noted the withdrawal of a proposed amendment to UG DRPS 28, which had been approved by the committee at the previous meeting for recommendation to University Court. Due to an oversight, colleagues in SWAY were not initially consulted and had subsequently raised significant concerns about the proposal. The Convener had therefore approved the removal of this proposed amendment, before the Court Resolution process was undertaken. The regulation will be revisited in the next annual review. |
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| | • **Actions Log** |
| | The Academic Registrar gave a verbal update on Watch That Gap, highlighting challenges including a need for a clear student identification method and resource allocation issues due to shifting focus to the Board of Examiners project. Related work is ongoing through the Widening Participation Strategy, of which the Academic Registrar is co-leading a strand with the Dean of Students and Alumni (CMVM). They have also been working with The 93% Club to provide information to students around availability of financial support. The Academic Registrar will share a further electronic update in due course. |
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| | **3.2 Report of Convener's Action** |
| | • **Summary of Approved Concessions** |
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| | **Since the last meeting (March 2025):** |
| | Number of individual student concessions approved: 20 (15 PGR, 3 PGT, 2 UG) |
| | Number of cohort concessions approved: 0 |
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| | The Convener suggested that the emphasis of concession requests should be on assessing the probability of a successful outcome for the student in their programme, noting the long-standing nature of several recent PGR concession requests. It would also be beneficial to know if Schools, supervisors, and Directors/Deans support these requests to aid in their processing. |

| 4. | **SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS** |
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| 4.1 | **Taught Assessment Regulations 2025/26** |
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| | To approve |

The paper was presented by Dr Adam Bunni, Academic Policy Manager.
The Committee discussed the proposed amendments, with the following points raised in the discussion:

**27.6 Resit assessment**
- Committee members queried whether the proposed amendment was aligned with the new Authorised Interruption of Studies policy, and expressed caution that it would generate more work at College concession level. The amendment was intended to clarify the status quo, which is that recency of study is considered when determining a student's eligibility to resit. Following the discussion, the Committee decided it would be fairer to the student and carry less risk of generating extra work to clarify the regulation in the opposite direction, excluding periods of AIS from consideration.
- "Session" and "academic year" are used interchangeably throughout the regulations. Academic Quality and Standards will review this with a view to standardising language as part of the next annual review of the regulations.

**28.1 Late submission of coursework**
- A Committee member raised that some areas of the University do not mark on a 0-100 scale, and that anecdotally, using a percentage (e.g., 5%) causes less confusion than using a specific mark. The terminology used in Academic Misconduct procedures varies, using both marks and percentages. The consensus was to maintain the current regulation for now.
- Academic Quality and Standards will review and address the inconsistent use of marks and percentages in the regulations in the next year.

**46.3 Release of marks**
- Committee members were cautious about the implication of making the three week turnaround a regulatory requirement. It was additionally raised that the reference to "submission date" is insufficiently clear as to when the clock starts.
- The Committee approved new proposed wording which made reference to timelines stated in the Assessment and Feedback Priorities and Principles, but did not specify the timelines within the regulation.

**56.1 Postgraduate assessment progression**
- The Committee queried the advantages of removing College oversight. The proposed amendment aimed to remove mention of a process distinct from the Exceptional Circumstances process, which applies to null sits. To clarify and avoid confusion, the reference to College approval for provisional progression to the dissertation will be reinstated in the regulation.

The Committee agreed to **approve** the Taught Assessment Regulations, subject to the additional revisions noted above being made, and approved by the Convener.

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| 4.2 | **Postgraduate Research Assessment Regulations 2025/26**<br>To approve<br><br>The paper was presented by Dr Adam Bunni, Academic Policy Manager.<br><br>The Committee noted that the proposed changes around student capability have potential relevance to Regulation 13: Progression review and Regulation 14: Annual progression review recommendation, and this will be considered in next year's annual review of the regulations.<br><br>The Committee agreed to **approve** the Postgraduate Research Assessment Regulations. |

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| **4.3** | **Updated Support for Study Policy**<br>To approve |

The paper was presented by Rebecca Shade, Senior Policy and Projects Adviser – Students.

The Support for Study Policy, in place since 2016, has been revised after extensive consultation to reflect current practice in Schools and Colleges, and to bring the Policy more into line with the approach elsewhere in the sector. It now includes more supportive language: setting out, for example, that students can bring healthcare professionals to meetings. Stage 3 outcomes now include exclusion from studies, intended to be used only where this is in a student's best interest.

The following amendments were proposed by the Committee:

**Throughout**
- The repeated phrase "and/or live as part of the University community" is broad and could expose the University to liability for situations beyond scope. Alternative wording such as "participate in the university community" or "residing" rather than "living" would be preferable. Nonetheless, Committee members felt that recognising the impact on other students (as in ResLife cases) within the policy marks an important improvement.

**Cover sheet (Overview section)**
- Following the sentence "The University will seek to engage with students who are experiencing health concerns in a positive and constructive manner" with "however" could potentially be interpreted as negating that commitment.

**3 Overview of the policy**
- Under 3.4, clarification sought on whether notifying the Deputy Secretary Students is necessary when cases skip directly from Level 1 to Level 2, or if this was only for more severe cases.

**7 Support for Study Stage 2**
- Specifying that the phrase "Dean of Students" includes any nominee would be helpful and ensure there can be flexibility when potential conflicts of interest arise, i.e. when a Stage 2 case concerns a student in the Dean of Students' own School.
- Under 7.1, PGR colleagues would like more detail about their role in School level approval for Stage 2 referrals.
- Section 7.13 does not specify a voting process; it states that the convener will make the final decision. This aspect is unclear. Committee members recommend removing the reference to a vote.

**8 Support for Study Stage 3**
- The Students' Association had previously requested the removal of sabbatical officers from the membership of the Stage 3 meeting; a pool of students similar to the conduct panel would be preferable. Student members from the Student Discipline Committee were not seen as appropriate substitutes.

**10 Students detained under the Mental Health Act**
- The Students' Association expressed concerns regarding communication with the NHS, specifically that student consent should be obtained prior to sharing information. This wording will be revised accordingly.

**11 Return to study**

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|  | • The reference to eating disorders was felt to be out of place, although it was noted that UUK guidance specifically names eating disorders. |
|  | The policy suggests that the NHS will have conducted a risk assessment when students are sectioned – this is difficult to guarantee in practice. It is also important to acknowledge that such circumstances can occur outside the UK context. The Senior Policy and Projects Adviser noted that the Director of Student Wellbeing, who has consulted on the policy, emphasised that the University must exercise its own judgment. |
|  | The Students' Association representatives raised a number of concerns and asked that their objection to the policy be minuted. They expressed concerns that the policy may not comply with equalities legislation and the housing bill currently proceeding through Parliament. The Director of DLSS acknowledged the concern regarding disability discrimination, but cited extensive consultation on this policy, including with Legal Services. Additionally, in some instances, health and safety concerns take precedence over disability discrimination considerations. |
|  | The EUSA VP Education questioned the purpose of including exclusion in the policy, if it is unlikely to be used, and expressed a view that the policy wording is complex and difficult to interpret. |
|  | The Convener suggested proceeding with approval on the understanding that a review will be conducted in 2026/27, recognising that a comprehensive evaluation of how various policies (Code of Student Conduct, Exclusion and Withdrawal from studies procedure, Authorised Interruption of Studies) interrelate will be required. Currently, the SfS framework does not integrate seamlessly. |
|  | With the caveats noted above, the Committee agreed to **approve** the updated policy, subject to amendments being made to clarify the issues noted. The final version will be approved by the Convener and circulated to members of the Committee for information. |
| 4.4 | **APRC Convener and Vice-Convener 2025/26**<br>To approve<br><br>This item was presented by the Committee Convener.<br><br>The Committee approves its Convener and Vice-Convener roles on an annual basis at the last Committee meeting of the year. The following expressions of interest were received in advance of the meeting:<br>• One note of interest for Convener role (from Dr Emily Taylor, the current Vice-Convener)<br>• One note of interest for Vice-Convener role (from Dr Donna Murray)<br><br>There were no further notes of interest from members present.<br><br>For discussion of the role of Convener, Dr Taylor left the room. The Committee discussed and approved Dr Taylor taking the role of Convener for 2025/26.<br><br>For discussion of the role of Vice-Convener, Dr Murray left the room. The Committee discussed and approved Dr Murray taking the role of Vice-Convener for the next academic year 2024/25. |
| 4.5 | **Regulatory Framework for Award of Masters with Pathway Specialism**<br>To approve<br><br>This paper was presented by the College Deans of Education. |

The framework, agreed across the Colleges, has a single point of entry and shared core of 60 credits with 40 credits specialism. The Committee was asked to approve the proposed model.

The proposal is presented as a response to the ambitions of the portfolio review, allowing specialist pathways which are not sustainable at programme level to be retained. The application of a common framework, including an agreed credit load for specialisms, can lead to consolidation and work being diverted in a different way.

Committee members expressed support for the general direction of the proposal, but caution around practicalities such as potential added workload for teaching offices. The paper presenters acknowledged a lack of clarity at this stage as to the systems work implications of the proposal. However, it is expected that this work will be taken through as part of the L&T workstream. The proposed model already exists in areas of the University and developing solutions that are not workarounds would be beneficial. The paper presenters also noted senior commitment to ensuring that the required systems work happens in a way that is aligned with the Board of Examiners review and without creating additional bureaucracy.

The Academic Registrar flagged concerns regarding the lack of priority for this work from a systems and governance view. Resources and work packages for the L&T workstream are currently not agreed upon, which could lead to conflicts in resource allocation and project execution.

The Senate representative for CSE suggested there is a contradiction between the proposals for a Masters with Pathway Specialism and the pressure on existing pathway-based undergraduate programmes in the School of Biological Sciences.

Acknowledging that it is not APRC's role to action systems changes or to rationalise undergraduate and postgraduate policy, and with the caveat that approval does not guarantee that the systems work will follow, the Committee agreed to **approve** the regulatory framework for award of Masters with Pathway Specialism.

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| **4.6** | **Updates to the Withdrawal and Exclusion from Studies Procedure** <br> To approve <br><br> The paper was presented by Dr Adam Bunni, Academic Policy Manager. <br><br> The Committee discussed the proposed amendments, with the following points raised in the discussion: <br><br> <ul><li>The late declaration of Exceptional Circumstances in a progression interview introduces complexities that Boards of Examiners can struggle with. It was suggested that TAR 64.1, which outlines the process by which the Board of Examiners can be reconvened to review a decision, should be referenced explicitly under point 14 of the procedure.</li><li>In line with related policies, it should be added that students can bring a member of the University community with them to any interviews.</li><li>For categories of exclusion outwith the scope of appeal, the appropriate route is the Complaint Handling Procedure. The reference to students contacting Schools in the first instance if they are excluded due to non-matriculation or lapse of time will therefore be removed.</li><li>It was queried whether exclusion due to termination of supervision ought to be withdrawal, as the student is not at fault. It was explained that withdrawal is always voluntary on the part of the student, and these terms cannot be used interchangeably. The bar for terminating supervision is very high and has never happened. Exclusion on this basis would be an admission that we cannot provide the supervision.</li></ul> |

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|  | • It remains preferable for students to complete the Withdrawal Form, but it is not tenable to require this, as students often stop engaging after they have notified the University of their intention to withdraw.<br>• The Director of Students and the Student Support Manager are more suitable points of contact to be informed of student withdrawals than the Cohort Lead and Programme Director.<br><br>The Committee agreed to **approve** the revised Withdrawal and Exclusion from Studies Procedure, subject to the additional amendments listed above being made. |
| 4.7 | **Proposed Minor Amendments to Student Appeal Regulations**<br>To approve<br><br>The paper was presented by Amy Willis, Complaints and Appeals Team Lead.<br><br>Minor amendments to the student appeal regulations were proposed to ensure alignment with other policies. If there is a high volume of rejections of Authorised Interruption of Study requests that are subsequently appealed, these cases will be monitored closely in case review of the policy is required. Maximum appeal timelines for late appeals are to be amended to one year, with the provision in the TAR that the Board can review appeals up to two years later. There has been an increase in late appeals, but typically no later than six months.<br><br>The Committee agreed to **approve** the amendments to the Student Appeal Regulations. |
| 4.8 | **Expected Behaviour Policy**<br>To approve<br><br>The paper was presented by Lisa Dawson, Academic Registrar. The proposed changes are minor, primarily prompted by the Office for Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals being established as its own entity, and also the removal of a reference to defamation from the list of unacceptable behaviours, since this term only applies in the context of a formal legal case.<br><br>The Committee agreed to **approve** the amendments to the Expected Behaviour Policy. |
| 4.9 | **Updates to the Policy Review Schedule**<br>To approve<br><br>The Committee agreed to **approve** the changes to the Policy Review Schedule, including the transfer of responsibility for the Programme and Course Approval and Management Policy to Senate Quality Assurance Committee. |
| 4.10 | **Non-standard programme end dates for the Online MBA**<br>To approve<br><br>The paper was presented by Emily Taylor, Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Validation, CAHSS.<br><br>The Online MBA has a unique student cohort and strong School support, which are mitigating factors for the non-standard format of the programme. The Convener suggested the repeated APRC approval requests for non-standard dates indicated some reactive decision-making from the School (potentially in response to gaps in the market), and also noted the short lead time. However, the approval of this proposal is not intended to set a precedent, and no additional costs or impact on student experience are expected. |

|  | The Committee agreed to **approve** the non-standard end dates for this programme. |
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| **4.11** | **Student Discipline Committee Membership**<br>To approve<br><br>The paper was presented by Lisa Dawson, Academic Registrar.<br><br>The terms of the Convener and Vice Convener of the Student Discipline Committee are approaching their conclusion. It is proposed to introduce a Professional Services Convener and an academic Vice-Convener. Given the increase in non-academic misconduct and following benchmarking with institutions across the UK, the appointment of a Professional Services Convener is considered appropriate.<br><br>The Committee agreed to **approve** the proposed membership of the Student Discipline Committee.<br><br>The Committee expressed thanks to the outgoing Convener and Vice Convener, and to the student members. |
| **5.** | **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION / NOTING** |
| **5.1** | **Membership and Terms of Reference 2025/26**<br>To comment<br><br>The Committee noted this paper. |
| **5.2** | **Senate and Standing Committees Annual Internal Effectiveness Review**<br>To note<br><br>The Committee noted this paper. |
| **6.** | **Any Other Business**<br><br>The Committee expressed its gratitude to the outgoing Convener, Professor Patrick Hadoke, for his contributions to APRC, including his diligent and considerate handling of concession requests.<br><br>The Committee recorded thanks to Dylan Walch, outgoing EUSA VP Education, and Dr Murray Earle, attending his last APRC meeting as Senate representative for CAHSS. |

**Dates of meetings in 2025/26**
Thursday 18 September 2025, 2-5pm
Thursday 20 November 2025, 2-5pm
Thursday 22 January 2025, 2-5pm
Thursday 19 March 2025, 2-5pm
Thursday 21 May 2025, 2-5pm

**Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee**

**18 September 2025**

**Board of Examiners Review – Implementation of Decision Trees for Exceptional Circumstances**

**Description of paper**

1.  The paper seeks discussion of elements of the implementation of the Board of Examiners Review, specifically relating to the use of decision trees in the handling of Exceptional Circumstances (EC). This work supports the Strategy 2030 goals that "We will have more user-friendly processes and efficient systems to support our work", and "We will offer accessible, responsive and efficient educational services as well as personal, pastoral and professional support".

**Fit with remit**

| Academic Policy and Regulations Committee | Y/N |
|---|---|
| Oversee the development, maintenance and implementation of an academic regulatory framework which effectively supports and underpins the University's educational activities. | Y |
| Ensure that the academic regulatory framework continues to evolve in order to meet organisational needs and is responsive to changes in University strategy, and in the internal and external environments. | Y |
| In taking forward its remit, the Committee will seek consistency and common approaches while supporting and encouraging variation where this is beneficial, particularly if it is in the best interests of students. | Y |

**Action requested / recommendation**

2.  This paper provides early sight of options and asks APRC members to discuss and comment on the approach to using decision trees to determine Exceptional Circumstances outcomes, specifically thresholds for discounting components at course level and courses at programme level. APRC will be asked to approve policy changes in November 2025.

**Background and context**

3.  The Board of Examiners Review identified a number of recommendations for changes to Boards of Examiners process to simplify and bring consistency to our BoE processes. These were approved by the University Executive in May 2025. As a reminder, the agreed recommendations were:

    *   Exceptional Circumstances – developing standard decision trees for application of policy in Schools, aligning processes around late EC applications, mapping learning outcomes to assessments and institution wide agreement on levels for discounting elements of assessment
    *   Course Mark ratification – developing asynchronous processes for agreeing course marks via Course Boards

- Quality – Ensuring changes don't impact the quality of our courses and programmes by recommending clear processes for Teaching Quality Review and updating policy and guidance for External Examiners
- Programme Boards – simplification of processes and contingency plans

All underpinned by policy updates, training, and guidance.

4. Further detail is available on the project SharePoint information pages: Board of Examiners Review Implementation The Implementation Project is working through process designs and the related policy changes required to implement these recommendations.

**Discussion**

5. **Exceptional Circumstances Policy:**
One area of focus for the project is in developing standard decision trees for determining Exceptional Circumstances outcomes. Eight schools across CAHSS and CSE already make use of algorithmic decision trees to determine these outcomes. The project is seeking to implement a consistent and efficient approach to handling cases by introducing uniform decision trees which guide Schools through the application of the EC Policy.

6. **Thresholds:**
Within the decision tress, an area of significant discussion across Schools and Colleges has been the approach to thresholds for discounting both components of assessment when determining course results, and excluding course results when determining programme awards.

7. The Exceptional Circumstances policy allows Boards to disregard components of assessment and derive course results from remaining components under 10.5d, and to exclude course results when making programme-level calculations around progression/award under 10.6b. Currently there is no consistent approach regarding what proportion of components or courses Boards will disregard, although some Schools or subject areas have local rules for this or are bound by professional body requirements.

8. Students on joint degrees are particularly affected by the different approaches to applying the EC policy and the use of 10.5d.

9. An aim of this discussion is to agree what is a safe mark for components and courses impacted by EC and what level of mitigation must occur at course and programme level.

**a) Thresholds for disregarding components of assessment from course results**

10. The use of the threshold applies to core, compulsory or elective courses as the threshold only applies if all learning outcomes are met and therefore a safe reliable course mark can be ratified by the board.

11. Currently, each School or Board determines if any components can be disregarded and what constitutes a safe and reliable mark when all components are EC affected. In addition to discussing the introduction of a course level threshold for disregarding components there is a need to define what level of mitigation must take place at course level where all components are EC affected, the course is passed and all learning outcomes achieved. If one or more components are lower than should it be disregarded to support course level mitigation and reduce the need for programme level mitigation?

12. Introducing thresholds would provide an opportunity to disregard components at a course level which would reduce the need to exclude course results at programme level and prevent over-mitigation. Disregarding components also reduces the need for resit assessments which impact on academic and progressional services workloads.

13. The underlying principle in using thresholds is that where course assessment is mapped to learning outcomes and/or has forced fail in place, all learning outcomes must be met before any threshold for disregarding a component is considered.

14. Where all components of assessment relate to all learning outcomes one or more components may be disregarded where ECs have been approved and the minimum threshold has been met.

15. Example of course level thresholds in practice:

    ECA currently uses a 50% or less threshold where all learning outcomes have been met. Where more than 50% of the course components have been affected by ECs the board *usually* will not disregard a component as they feel the course does not have a sufficient percentage of unaffected/reliable marks to provide an overall course mark. It is a Board decision as to whether a component/s can be disregarded where all components meet all LOs and all components have been affected by ECs and student is passing at least 50% of assessments and therefore achieved the learning outcomes.

**b) Thresholds for discounting course result from programme outcomes**

16. In some scenarios, it will not be possible to mitigate the impact of Exceptional Circumstances at course level by disregarding components of assessment in line with relevant thresholds. However, where a pass can be awarded for a course, either based on the student having achieved a pass mark in the course (and having passed any force fail elements), or via the award of credit on aggregate,

the decision tree will direct Boards to refer the course result for potential exclusion from the relevant programme average (i.e. for progression or classification).

17. Where this occurs, the Programme Board will be directed to exclude the course result from the programme average, where that would be to the student's benefit, provided that the remaining courses give them sufficient evidence of performance to support the decision being made (e.g. classification).

18. Honours and postgraduate taught degrees at the University follow a regimented structure in terms of how much credit they consist of (in line with SCQF requirements), and what proportion of this is used for classification purposes. With the exception of professional body requirements, there is therefore no strong academic rationale for significant variation between Schools or subject area with regard to the maximum amount of credit to be discounted due to Exceptional Circumstances.

19. There is currently no limit set with regard to the maximum volume of credit which can be disregarded when making such a decision (see 10.6.2 of the Exceptional Circumstances Policy). As is the case with disregarding of components of assessment at course level, there is currently broad variation between Schools with regard to what volume of credit Boards are willing to exclude when calculating programme averages for classification purposes. In some areas, these thresholds are subject to restriction due to professional body requirements.

20. Examples of programme level thresholds in practice:

   ECA will disregard up to 40 out of 240 credits from classification due to Exceptional Circumstances.

   LLC will disregard up to 120 out of 240 credits from classification due to Exceptional Circumstances.

**Proposed Benefits:**

- A consistent approach across the university therefore easier to communicate to students
- Clearer guidance to support more consistent decision-making for professional services, academic staff and Board members
- Allows for a more transparent and therefore equal process for students
- Fewer resit assessments
- Fewer delays to progression and awards
- Ensures BoE's have guidance and basis for their decisions. Noting that Convenors and Board members vary in experience and understanding of regulations.

**Anticipated Limitations:**

- Where there are fewer assessments there is less opportunity to discount components (e.g. thresholds would not benefit courses with one component and therefore mitigate at course level)
- Where Learning Outcomes are mapped to individual components of assessment this will limit potential EC Policy application, including disregarding components.
- Could see an increase in course/assessment/alternative reassessment re-design as the impact of parameters are felt.

**Mandatory thresholds vs guidelines:**

21. The use of thresholds would complement the decision trees and deliver greater consistency of outcomes for students with Exceptional Circumstances. They would also safeguard minimum standards relating to the achievement of course learning outcomes, awards, and degree classification. Academic standards are maintained by relying on course design and moderation such as force fails and learning outcomes to ensure these decisions are not compromised by the use of algorithmic decision trees.

22. If a minimum threshold is put into practice will the percentage be determined by the University or an individual School.

23. There are different ways to approach thresholds as outlined below (thresholds used in these examples are purely illustrative).

**Course-level mitigation**

24. **Option 1:** Where a student has achieved all learning outcomes a board *must* disregard a failed component/s or component/s with a lower mark than unaffected components that falls within the minimum threshold (e.g. 50%).

25. **Option 2:** Where a student has achieved all learning outcomes a board *may* disregard a failed or lower mark component/s that falls within the minimum threshold (e.g 50%).

**Programme-level mitigation**

26. **Option 1:** For degrees with two Honours years, a Board of Examiners *must* be willing to classify a degree based on a minimum of (for example) 160 credits' worth of courses.

27. **Option 2:** For degrees with two Honours years, a Board of Examiners *may* classify a degree based on a minimum of (for example) 160 credits' worth of courses.

28. Where possible, EC mitigation must be applied at course level. Example: Where all EC affected components have been disregarded then there should be no further action at programme level. If the student has achieved all learning outcomes, passed the course and no action can be taken at course level then

the course must be marked as ME (Must Exclude) and will be excluded if it benefits the student.

29. Where all components of assessment have been affected by ECs but the student has passed the course and achieved all learning outcomes, schools must disregard the components and give a course result and must refer the course to programme Board.

30. Where late penalties have been removed (10.5a), the course board must mark the course to be reviewed at the programme Board if the component mark for the affected component was lower than the unaffected components. If the component mark is not lower than the unaffected components then the course level mitigation is sufficient.

## Action
31. The aim of proposing thresholds as part of the decision trees is to support an institution wide agreement on levels for discounting components of assessment. APRC is asked to share thoughts on the inclusion of thresholds within the decision trees. Further consultation will be undertaken to investigate current practices across the institution to inform discussions on acceptable levels for thresholds and whether this is expressed as a minimum or maximum. Relevant changes to section 10.6.2 of the EC policy will be brought back to a future APRC meeting.

## Resource implications
32. The use of mandatory thresholds - like the decision trees themselves - serves to reduce workload in the handling of EC cases by reducing the amount of time spent considering cases where there is discretion.

## Risk management
33. The current approach to handling of Exceptional Circumstances, and specifically with regard to discounting of components of assessment and especially course results, is leading to a high level of inconsistency of outcome in cases. This not only risks being perceived as unfair by students, but also risks variation in standards across programmes. The introduction of Decision Trees, including University wide thresholds will reduce risk levels across the institution.

## Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals
34. N/A

## Equality & diversity
35. While the approach to thresholds for discounting under the Exceptional Circumstances Policy can have a significant effect upon the outcomes in cases, it is not expected to change significantly the approach in the policy to addressing the needs of students with protected characteristics. The existing Equality Impact Assessment for the Policy will be reviewed to determine whether any changes are required, based on the agreed approach to any changes to the Policy.

**Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed**

36. Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of this work falls under the remit of the Board of Examiner Review Implementation Project. The project has a full communication plan and will be developing guidance for new processes complete with a training schedule. Evaluation will but undertaken across the whole project to ensure expected benefits are delivered.

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September 2025

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**Freedom of Information**
Open

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**APRC 2025-26 1D**

**Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee**

**18 September 2025**

**Students' Association Sabbatical Officers' Priorities for 2025/26**

**Description of paper**

1. This paper articulates the priorities of the Students' Association Vice President Education and the Sabbatical Officer team for 2025/26.

**Fit with remit**

| Academic Policy and Regulations Committee | Y/N |
|---|---|
| Ensure that the academic regulatory framework continues to evolve in order to meet organisational needs and is responsive to changes in University strategy, and in the internal and external environments. | Y |
| Consider the implications of the Committee's work and its decisions in the context of external initiatives and compliance and legal frameworks, particularly in relation to equality and diversity. | Y |

**Action requested / recommendation**
2. To note and comment.

**Background and context**
3. Each year a paper is presented to Senate and its standing committees, summarising the Sabbatical Officers' priorities for the coming year, enabling Senate and its members to identify areas of common interest and collaboration. These priorities are based on the manifestos the Officers were elected on – this year's Officers received a combined 10,845 votes – and were further refined during the Officers' induction, based on data from the various national student experience surveys and feedback from outgoing student representatives.

**Discussion**
4. See attached paper.

**Resource implications**
5. Actions arising from the ideas discussed in the paper may have resource implications; these will be considered in detail if specific action is proposed.

**Risk management**

6.  Actions arising from the ideas discussed in the paper may have risk implications; these will be considered in detail if specific action is proposed.

**Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals**

7.  Actions arising from the ideas discussed in the paper may have Climate Emergency and Sustainable Development Goals implications; these will be considered in detail if specific action is proposed.

**Equality & diversity**

8.  Actions arising from the ideas discussed in the paper may have equality and diversity implications; these will be considered in detail if specific action is proposed.

**Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed**

9.  Actions arising from the ideas discussed in the paper may have communication, implementation and evaluation implications; these will be considered in detail if specific action is proposed.

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**Freedom of Information**
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**Students' Association Vice President Education priorities for 2025/26:**

- Enhance support for Widening Participation students, and re-commit the University to addressing the attainment gap through strategic and evidence-based initiatives.
- Build on existing work to decolonise the curriculum, and expand it to include discussion of present-day examples, as well as the ways in which historic colonialism has shaped contemporary discourse and institutions.
- Advocate for transparency and accountability in University processes – from timetabling to marking schemes – and decision-making, giving students the power to make informed choices and shape their experience.
- Ensure the ongoing portfolio review addresses student feedback, including calls for a diverse and relevant curriculum, and alternative forms of assessment, supporting them to develop the University's Graduate Attributes.

**Sabbatical Officer team priorities for 2025/26:**

- Ensure that all students have what they need to thrive and succeed, from basic needs like affordable housing and transport, to supportive communities, accessible wellbeing services, and responsive academic processes.
- Centre student experience, particularly that of marginalised communities, in the University's decision-making regarding the ongoing financial challenge.
- Empower students to use their voices and create positive change on the issues that matter to them, whether through traditional feedback mechanisms like course feedback and Student-Staff Liaison Committees, or through campaigning.

**Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee**

**18 September 2025**

**Amendment to Student Maternity and Parental Leave policy**

**Description of paper**

1. The paper proposes minor amendments to this policy in order to align with revised UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) terms and conditions for PhD studentships, which come into effect from October 2025.

**Fit with remit**

| Academic Policy and Regulations Committee | Y/N |
|---|---|
| Ensure that the academic regulatory framework continues to evolve in order to meet organisational needs and is responsive to changes in University strategy, and in the internal and external environments. | Y |
| Consider the implications of the Committee's work and its decisions in the context of external initiatives and compliance and legal frameworks, particularly in relation to equality and diversity. | Y |

**Action requested / recommendation**

2. The Committee is asked to <u>approve</u> the amendments proposed to the policy.

**Background and context**

3. This policy was reviewed and approved by the Committee in March 2024, following its periodic review. The policy aims to align with the terms and conditions for maternity and parental leave offered by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). The UKRI terms and conditions for PhD studentships have recently been updated to specify that risk assessments should be carried out for students who are any of (i) pregnant (ii) breastfeeding or (iii) have given birth in the last 6 months, rather than only for students who are pregnant.

4. The requirement to conduct a risk assessment for these groups is already included in the University's Maternity Policy for staff. From a Health and Safety perspective, it is reasonable to apply the same principles to students who are also new or expectant mothers.

**Discussion**

5. The key change is the addition of a sentence in section 23:
"An individual risk assessment must be conducted for students who have given birth in the last six months and/or students who are breastfeeding."

6. The wording in section 3 has been amended to clarify that once the student notifies the School of their pregnancy, Schools <u>must</u> complete the necessary risk assessments. The reference to ensuring that "the student, or their pregnancy, are

not at any additional risk" has been removed, given that the risk assessment may identify additional risks which may not be possible to remove but only mitigate.

7. The new UKRI terms and conditions for PhD studentships come into effect from October 2025. Should APRC approve the proposed amendments, the updated policy would come into effect from 1 October 2025.

**Resource implications**

8. The amendment to the policy expands the group of students who would need a risk assessment. However, the numbers of students who fall into this category within each School are sufficiently small that we do not anticipate issues with resource implications.

**Risk management**

9. It is standard practice to conduct risk assessments for staff who are have recently given birth or who are breastfeeding. From a risk management perspective, it is reasonable to conduct similar risk assessments for students who meet these criteria, especially given that this is also now specified in the new UKRI terms and conditions for PhD studentships.

**Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals**

10. The policy contributes to the following Sustainable Development Goals:
    - SDG3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
    - SDG4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

**Equality & diversity**

11. A detailed Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was conducted as part of the review of the policy in 2023. The amendments to the policy expand the responsibilities of Schools towards students who have recently given birth or who are breastfeeding. This promotes equality particularly for the protected characteristic of pregnancy and breastfeeding. This minor amendment does not warrant a new EqIA.

**Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed**

12. Should the Committee approve the proposed policy, this would come into effect on 1 October 2025.

13. Academic Quality and Standards will amend and republish the policy, as well as confirm the amendments with the Doctoral College, following discussions on this point.

# APRC 2025-26 1F

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September 2025


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# Student Maternity and Parental Leave Policy

## Purpose of Policy

The policy seeks to provide flexibility for students who are parents, or who become parents during the course of their studies, to ensure that they are they are not disadvantaged in their studies. This policy also seeks to provide flexibility to applicants who are to become parents before, or soon after, the start of their studies.

## Overview

The policy provides guidance to students and staff on matters relating to students who are parents, as well as students and applicants who are pregnant, students and applicants who have a partner who is pregnant, or students who are to become parents through adoption, surrogacy or other means. For the purpose of this policy, parental leave includes adoption leave, partner leave following the birth of a child, or any other subsequent period of leave due to parental responsibilities.

## Scope: Mandatory Policy

The policy applies to:
- Any student who is a parent or guardian;
- Any student who is pregnant during their studies;
- Any student who has a partner who is pregnant;
- Any student who is to become a parent or guardian during their studies, including through adoption, surrogacy or other means;
- Any applicant who is pregnant at the time of application; and
- Any applicant who has a partner who is pregnant at the time of application

| Contact Officer | Cristina Matthews | Academic Policy Officer | academicpolicy@ed.ac.uk |
|---|---|---|---|

## Document control

| Dates | Approved: 21.03.24 | Starts: 01.05.24 | Equality impact assessment: 13.6.13 13.03.24 | Amendments: 01.06.2017 25.05.2023 18.08.2025 | Next Review: 2027/28 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| Approving authority | Academic Policy and Regulations Committee |
|---|---|
| Consultation undertaken | Academic Policy and Regulations Committee, Students' Association, Widening Participation, Student Parent Action Group, Doctoral College, Student Immigration Services, Legal Services. |
| Section responsible for policy maintenance & review | Academic Quality and Standards Services |
| Related policies, procedures, guidelines & regulations | N/A |
| UK Quality Code | N/A |
| Policies superseded by this policy | Maternity Leave policy for Postgraduate Students 2005 |
| Alternative format | If you require this document in an alternative format please email Aacademic.Servicespolicy@ed.ac.uk |
| Keywords | Student pregnancy, student maternity leave, parental leave, adoption, childcare |

# Student Maternity and Parental Leave Policy

1    The University is committed to providing adjustments to students who are parents, or who become parents during the course of their studies, to ensure that they are not disadvantaged in their studies. This policy also seeks to provide adjustments to students and applicants who are pregnant or who have a partner who is pregnant.


**Section A: Students who are to become parents**

**Pregnancy, wellbeing and health and safety**

2    Students who are pregnant may or may not wish to disclose their pregnancy to others. Any student who is pregnant, who has a partner who is pregnant, or who is to become a parent or guardian by other means, is encouraged to notify their Student Adviser, or Research Supervisor so that they can provide appropriate support and advice, including on health and wellbeing, maternity and parental leave, finance and scholarships, and signposting for visa advice. Students whose programme of study involves working in laboratories or clinical settings, or undertaking fieldwork or placements information are particularly encouraged to disclose their pregnancy in case there are additional risk assessments or adjustments to be made.

3    Once the student has given notification of their pregnancy, ~~T~~the School must~~will be responsible for~~ ensur~~ing~~ that all necessary risk assessments are carried out~~. to ensure that the student, or their pregnancy, are not at any additional risk~~. This is particularly important for students whose programme of study involves being in laboratories, clinical settings, undertaking fieldwork or placements.

4    Where a student has their pregnancy confirmed whilst studying abroad or at a partner institution, they are encouraged to contact their Student Adviser, Research Supervisor, Student Exchange Coordinator or other person nominated by the School, in order to ensure that adequate steps are taken to support them.

**Students living in University accommodation**

5    Students living in University accommodation whilst pregnant are encouraged to notify Residence Life staff in order for appropriate adjustments and risk assessments to be carried out, and to ensure that the accommodation provided to the student is appropriate.

6    Students living in University accommodation who have given birth to a child, or who have parental responsibilities, are entitled to be re-housed if their accommodation is unsuitable for infants or children. Should there be no suitable accommodation available, the student will be released from their lease and will not incur any penalties for non-fulfilment of the term of the lease, in order that the student may move to or seek other more suitable accommodation.

**Maternity leave, parental leave and adjustments to programme of study**

7    Student Advisers, Research Supervisors, or another person nominated by their School, will arrange to meet with students who are pregnant, who have a partner who is pregnant, or who are to become parents by other means, in order to discuss:

- Any necessary adjustments in order to attend medical appointments or antenatal classes throughout pregnancy, or to attend adoption placement meetings. If such appointments conflict unavoidably with lectures, tutorials or supervisory sessions, students will be entitled to flexible adjustments;
- Whether the student is fit to attend classes, attempt any assessments pending, and if so, whether there are necessary adjustments to be put in place, e.g. students may request to be reallocated to a different tutorial group, or may need an exemption for attending a compulsory session;
- Any wellbeing issues and relevant health and safety issues (see section 2);
- Arrangements for maternity leave, parental leave or adoption leave, including a proposed start and end date, which is to be submitted as an authorised interruption of studies request (see section 9). Authorised interruptions of study may have implications for visa sponsorship as well as fees and funding. Students who have visa sponsorship should seek advice from the Student Immigration Service at the earliest possible occasion (see section 21 *Students who have visa sponsorship*). Student Advisers should signpost students to sources of information and advice regarding fees and funding (see sections 11-20 *Finance, funding and scholarships);*
- Any steps to be taken to support a return to study following a period of leave, including support and facilities available upon return to study;

8    Students who have given birth should not return to the University within two weeks after the birth of their child, in line with legislation which applies to staff in s.8(b) of the '*Maternity and Parental Leave (etc) Regulations 1999':* www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1999/3312/contents/made. All students who are to become parents are encouraged to consider taking a period of maternity or parental leave (including adoption leave) beyond the minimum two weeks, and to agree the period of interruption of studies with their Student Adviser or Research Supervisor, prior to the birth or adoption of the child.

9    The mechanism used to enable a period of student maternity leave or parental leave (including adoption leave) is an authorised interruption of studies. Students may also apply for an authorised interruption of studies due to parental responsibilities at other times. Students should provide the necessary information in the interruption of studies request form, which will be reviewed and approved following the standard procedures.

10   Any agreed adjustments should be recorded on the student's record by the Student Adviser or Research Supervisor, following standard procedures.

## Finance, funding and scholarships

11   Students taking an authorised interruption of studies due to maternity leave or other parental leave should contact the Fees and Student Support Team (https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-funding/contact) to discuss any fee implications and confirm any fees to be charged when they resume their studies.

   *Undergraduate students*

12   Undergraduate students in receipt of funding should contact their funding body for advice on fee and loan-related issues, and notify them of any period of maternity leave or other parental leave.
- Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS): www.saas.gov.uk/

- Student Loans Company (SLC): www.slc.co.uk/
- The Advice Place can provide advice to students on a number of finance related issues: www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/advice/
- For queries relating to impact on fee liability, student should contact fees@ed.ac.uk or see https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-funding/tuition-fees/undergraduate/fee-policy

13    Lone Parents' Grant: Undergraduate students from Scotland who are lone parents with at least one dependent child can apply to the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) for the Lone Parents' Grant. More information is available from www.saas.gov.uk/.

14    Lone Parents' Childcare Grant: In addition to the Lone Parents' Grant, undergraduate students from Scotland can receive financial assistance for formal childcare costs such as childminders, after school clubs and providers of day care and pre-school education through the Lone Parents' Childcare Grant. More information is available via the Scholarships and Financial Support Team (https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-funding/contact)

15    Childcare Fund: Students in receipt of maintenance loans and who are using registered childcare may be eligible for means-tested childcare funds. More information is available via the Scholarships and Financial Support Team (https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-funding/financial-support/childcare-fund

*Postgraduate students*

16    Postgraduate research students who are in receipt of a studentship, scholarship or stipend with full maintenance from the University of Edinburgh will be entitled to the same terms and conditions for maternity and parental leave, and maternity pay, as those offered by the UK Research Councils as outlined in their Research Council Training Grant Guide. https://www.ukri.org/apply-for-funding/before-you-apply/your-responsibilities-if-you-get-funding/meeting-ukri-terms-and-conditions-for-funding/

17    For postgraduate research students who are in receipt of a studentship, scholarship or stipend with full maintenance from an external body which is administered by the University, and which does not cover the costs of maternity and parental leave, the University will match the maternity and parental leave funding offered by the UK Research Councils (see section 16).

18    Postgraduate taught and research students who are in receipt of funding from external bodies which is not administered by the University should contact their funding body for advice on funding related issues. Students undertaking a programme of study via a Postgraduate Sponsor have the responsibility to inform their Postgraduate Sponsor of any change of circumstance, including notification of maternity leave or other parental leave.

19    Any student who is also an employee of the University should contact HR for advice on their entitlement to maternity pay, maternity leave or parental leave, or if they have questions regarding whether staff or student policies apply to particular circumstances. Further on sources of information for financial support for students with children can be found at The Advice Place: www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/advice/ www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/adviceplace/money/benefits/studentparents

20    Please note that childcare fund awards are not available to postgraduate students, unless the student is in receipt of a postgraduate tuition fee loan from the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS).

**Students with student visa sponsorship**

21    Students in receipt of University student visa sponsorship must seek up-to-date immigration advice from the Student Immigration Service who will provide a confidential and supportive service, including written advice, to set out possible options for students and staff who are supporting them. There are no concessions within the student visa rules specifically allowing for maternity or parental leave. The period of authorised interruption of study will be considered on an individual basis but is similarly limited by UK Home Office regulations. Student Immigration Advisors can be contacted at visahelp@ed.ac.uk and further details are available on the Student Immigration Service webpages: https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-administration/immigration/contact-us

**Section B: Applicants who are to become parents**

22    Applicants who are pregnant, or who have a partner who is pregnant, are encouraged to notify Student Recruitment and Admissions and, where appropriate, Residence Life. Applicants are entitled to request deferred entry; however, deferral may not be possible in all cases, depending on the programme of study.

**Section C: resumption of studies following maternity or parental leave**

23    The student will be responsible for confirming whether or not they are ready to resume their studies at the end of any agreed period of interruption. Directly before, or as soon as is practicable after their return, the student should meet with their Student Adviser or Research Supervisor to ensure that appropriate academic and pastoral support is provided, and any necessary adjustments are made to facilitate a smooth return to their programme of study. An individual risk assessment must be conducted for students who have given birth in the last six months and/or students who are breastfeeding. Students who need to extend their period of maternity or parental leave should contact their Student Adviser or Research Supervisor to discuss this.

**Section D: Support for parents**

24    Student parents who require a period of leave due to caring responsibilities should request this via an authorised interruption of studies, following the standard procedures. Students who are in receipt of funding from external bodies or who have visa sponsorship should seek advice on any funding or visa implications in relation to taking an authorised interruption of study (see section *Students with student visa sponsorship*).

25    If the student requires, the Student Adviser, Postgraduate Supervisor or person nominated by their School, will advise on appropriate adjustments and provisions to allow the student to breastfeed or express milk. The University must provide space to accommodate breastfeeding.

26    Students may bring children into public areas of the University. Students are not routinely permitted to bring children into classrooms, and must ensure that they have suitable childcare arrangements in place at times when they have scheduled teaching or research activities. In an emergency situation, students may request to the relevant member of teaching staff to bring a child to a classroom or to a one-to-one meeting in advance of the start of the class or meeting, with as much notice as possible. For health and safety reasons, children are not allowed in areas such as, but not limited to, laboratories or equipment rooms, clinical spaces, animal houses, art studios or exam halls. Lecturers or tutors should consider requests on a case-by-case basis. Where a request is refused, the member of staff should provide an explanation, which may include, but is not limited to, one or more of the following reasons:

- There are health and safety concerns;
- The topic of the lecture would be inappropriate for a child;
- The child has been excluded from school or nursery because they have an infectious condition;
- There is not sufficient capacity in the teaching space to accommodate the child, where the child is not 'in arms' or on their parent's lap.

Where exceptions have been granted to allow children in the classroom, and a child is making noise or disturbance, the student must immediately exit the room with the child. In all circumstances students are wholly responsible for the supervision of their children. Students must ensure the safety of their children at all times and children must never be left unattended. Students who bring children on campus should be aware of the University's Health and Safety policies:
University Health and Safety Policy:
https://www.docs.csg.ed.ac.uk/Safety/Policy/UniversityHealthAndSafetyPolicy.pdf
University Health and Safety Policy – Framework: Arrangements:
https://www.docs.csg.ed.ac.uk/Safety/Policy/Framework_-_Arrangements.pdf

**Sources of advice for student parents**

27    The following sources may provide useful information.

- University Student Parents webpages: https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/health-wellbeing/student-parents

- University Health Service: www.health-service.ed.ac.uk/

- The Advice Place
  www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/advice/
  https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/adviceplace/money/benefits/studentparents

- Student Parent Facilities on campus:
  https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/health-wellbeing/student-parents/student-parent-facilities-on-campus

- Main Library Carer and Child Room: https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/students/study-space/carer-child-room

# Student Maternity and Parental Leave Policy

- Students' Association Student Parents' Community:
https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/activities/view/StudentParentsCommunity

- Council approved nurseries: https://www.mygov.scot/nursery-place

- Scholarships and Student Funding Services: https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-funding

- NHS (National Health Service) Scotland: www.nhsscotland.com/

**September 2025 [21 March 2024]**

**Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee**

**18 September 2025**

**Revised Student Complaints Relating to Staff Conduct Procedure**

**Description of paper**

1.  This paper presents the revised procedure for Student Complaints relating to Staff Conduct. The revised procedure aims to enhance fairness, transparency, and support for all parties involved.

2.  The proposed changes contribute to the Strategy 2030 outcome 'We will have more user-friendly processes and efficient systems to support our work' and the Equality Outcome 'Our staff and students feel confident and are supported to report harassment, hate crime and gender-based violence'

**Fit with remit**

| Academic Policy and Regulations Committee | Y/N |
|---|---|
| Ensure that the academic regulatory framework continues to evolve in order to meet organisational needs and is responsive to changes in University strategy, and in the internal and external environments. | **Y** |
| Consider the implications of the Committee's work and its decisions in the context of external initiatives and compliance and legal frameworks, particularly in relation to equality and diversity. | **Y** |

**Action requested / recommendation**

3.  The Committee is asked to <u>note</u> the revised Student Complaints Relating to Staff Conduct Procedure, following its approval by the University Executive on 9 September 2025.

**Background and context**

4.  The current 'Procedure for Handling Student Complaints which relate to the Conduct of University Staff' was launched in 2019 and has been prioritised for review in 2024/25. This procedure is jointly owned by HR and Registry Services.

5.  A comprehensive review was carried out, including benchmarking, research, legal advice and staff/student feedback. This review produced a set of recommendations which were approved by Staff Experience Committee in February 2025.

6.  A widespread consultation was conducted with staff across schools and departments, and those in key staff and student facing roles. Staff Experience Committee agreed the proposals for improvement at its 11 February 2025 meeting. The revised procedure was agreed with the Trade Unions at Policy

Consultation Forum on 30 July, and approved at the University Executive on 9 September 2025.

**7.** The updated procedure aims to enhance clarity, fairness, and consistency for students and staff.

**Discussion**
8.   The updated procedure provides clearer information on roles, principles, resolution pathways, investigation processes, and support mechanisms.

9.   Key changes are:
*   Change to name of procedure;
*   Inclusion of definitions;
*   Improved signposting of the available routes for submitting complaints;
*   Enhanced transparency around confidentiality protocols in student and staff support contexts;
*   Clearer emphasis on the provision of ongoing emotional and procedural support for students and staff involved in the complaint process;
*   Further explanation and signposting for precautionary action to support all parties;
*   Clearer outline of the initial complaint assessment process, led by the appropriate manager to determine procedural suitability;
*   Confirmation that students can request a review – not an appeal - through the Complaints Handling Procedure.

**Resource implications**
10. Implementation of the revised procedure will require learning and development for staff involved in complaint handling and investigation, as well as updates to internal systems and documentation. It is anticipated that resource can be met within existing budgets.

**Risk management**
11. There could be reputational, legal, or financial risks if the University fails to comply with its duties to prevent harassment and discrimination. The procedure includes risk assessments and precautionary actions to protect the University community during and post complaint investigations. It also addresses malicious complaints and legal compliance relating to data protection.

**Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals**
12. The proposed changes will support effective response to behavioural misconduct, contributing to SDG 3 (Good Health & Wellbeing), 5 (Gender Equality), 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth) and 10 (Reducing Inequalities).

**Equality & diversity**
13. These proposals have positive implications for equality, diversity and inclusion, including in meeting our legislative Equality Outcomes. An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and will be published on the launch date of the revised procedure.


**Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed**
14. Following University Executive approval on 9 September 2025, the revised procedure and support materials will be relaunched in October 2025, to coincide with the launch of the Report and Support platform to staff. We will work with the Communications and Marketing department to effectively communicate the changes.


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August 2025

**Presenter**
n/a


**Freedom of Information**
This paper is open.


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THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

## Student Complaints relating to Staff Conduct Procedure

### 1. Scope

This procedure applies to all University employees and matriculated students when a student raises concerns about staff behaviour towards students.

If the student is also employed by the University, and the behaviour occurs during their employment with the University, the Grievance policy will apply.

### 2. Definitions

**Investigating Officer** is the person appointed to investigate the student complaint

**Precautionary Action** is a measure imposed on a staff member if a risk assessment identifies a potential risk. Measures can include: partial or full suspension, restricted access (campus or facilities), contact with individuals or changes to duties. This action taken during the investigation process does not mean a decision has been taken about the alleged conduct. The action applies beyond cases of bullying, harassment, assault or a criminal offences

**Responsible Manager** is the person appointed to review, oversee and decide how to handle a student complaint about staff conduct. If required, they also act as the Chair of the Staff Disciplinary Panel

**Student Liaison Officer** is the person appointed to support the student with the complaints process

**Staff Liaison Officer** is the person appointed to support the staff member with the complaints process

**3. Principles**

The Procedure is underpinned by the following principles:

3.1 Individuals will be treated fairly, consistently and with respect, acknowledging the inherent value and dignity of each individual, irrespective of differing views or opinions

3.2 Complaints will be investigated promptly with sensitivity and objectivity while supporting lawful freedom of expression and respecting others

3.3 Appropriate support will be put in place to ensure individuals' wellbeing

3.4 Information disclosed will be treated as confidential and, so far as the University is able, will be shared on a limited basis

3.5 Students and staff will be advised with whom information needs to be shared and why

3.6 If necessary, risk-based precautionary actions will be taken to protect individuals during and after the complaint investigation

3.7 Students and staff have the right to be accompanied to meetings related to the complaint

3.8 Students and staff will be kept updated throughout the investigation

The Dignity and Respect Policy outlines the core values and standards of behaviour expected of all University members. The University's zero-tolerance approach means that all reports of bullying, harassment, victimisation and discrimination will be taken seriously. The University is committed to upholding the values of its community.

**4. Resolution**

If a student experiences unacceptable behaviour relating to a staff member(s), they should consider using one or more of the methods set out below as soon as possible. The student should choose the option they feel is safest and most appropriate for their situation.

**4.1 Individual Action and Assistance**

If a student is considering making a complaint about staff member conduct, and if they feel able to, they may first try resolving the issue directly with the staff member. Often this is sufficient to stop the behaviour. Students should speak with their Student Adviser or seek support from The Advice Place.

**5. Raising a Complaint**

If the behaviour does not improve, is serious, or the student doesn't feel they can address it directly, they should submit a complaint through the [Complaint Handling Procedure.](#)

**5.1 Complaint Handling Procedure**

The Complaint Handling Procedure outlines routes for raising a complaint. A complaint should be made at the earliest stage possible, and within 6 months of the event occurring or the student discovering they have a reason to complain. In exceptional circumstances, this timeframe may be extended e.g. circumstances prevented the student from raising their concerns earlier.

Upon receipt of a complaint, a member of the Complaint Handling Team will:

- Review the complaint to determine if it falls within the scope of the Complaint Handling Procedure
- Contact the Head of HR for the College or Professional Services Group to confirm how the complaint will be addressed through University procedures
- Promptly and sensitively acknowledge the student's complaint, outlining how it will be taken forward

**5.2 Responsible Manager Role**

The Head of HR will consult with the Head of School or Professional Service Group, to appoint the 'Responsible Manager' for handling the complaint. The Responsible Manager must remain impartial, as they may need to chair a staff disciplinary hearing. An HR Representative will also be appointed to provide procedural support.

The Responsible Manager will assess the complaint to determine whether it falls within the procedure's scope. Based on this evaluation, they will decide the appropriate next steps, which may include exploring alternative resolutions or referring the concerns to a more suitable University policy or process such as the Staff Disciplinary Policy. The student will be informed of the review outcome, any next steps and available support. If appropriate, the Responsible Manager may meet with the student to discuss the way forward.

**5.3 Alleged Harassment or Assault**

If a student's complaint involves alleged harassment or assault by a staff member, the Responsible Manager will urgently consult internally to assess the situation and determine appropriate actions. This includes conducting a risk assessment and considering precautionary measures as well as any requests from the student regarding interaction with the staff member.

**5.4 Alleged Criminal Offence**

If the alleged conduct by a staff member may constitute a criminal offence, the Responsible Manager will consult internally to undertake a risk assessment and determine necessary precautionary actions. This could also involve suspending or altering the scope of the complaint investigation pending the outcome of criminal proceedings. Any suspension of the investigation will be clearly communicated to both the student and the staff member.

**5.5 Witnessing Unacceptable Behaviour**

Students who witness, rather than experience, unacceptable behaviour by a staff member, are encouraged to engage in active bystander behaviours if safe and appropriate. A student should report the behaviour by contacting their Student Adviser, The Advice Place or using Report + Support. This may lead to an investigation where the student could be interviewed as a witness. Further information is available on Respect at Edinburgh.

**5.6 Malicious Complaints**

The University expects complaints to be made honestly and in good faith. However, if the complaint is found to be false, misleading or intended to cause harm or disruption, the Responsible Manager may discontinue its consideration. Examples include attempts to damage a staff member's reputation, deliberately interfere with another process or to demand unreasonable outcomes.

These types of complaints may lead to disciplinary action under the Code of Student Conduct.

If the complaint is discontinued for any of these reasons, both the staff member and the student will receive a clear explanation from the Responsible Manager. The Responsible Manager will also explain that if the student disagrees with this decision, they can contact the University's Complaint Handling Team.

## 6. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

The University will handle complaints with sensitivity and respect for everyone's privacy. All individuals in the complaints process must share information responsibly and only when appropriate. Misuse of shared information that breaches University policies may result in disciplinary action. The University will take reasonable steps to maintain confidentiality throughout the process.

Decisions about what information can be shared with students, staff or other parties will be made by the Investigating Officer, Responsible Manager or Chair of the Disciplinary Panel as appropriate. These decisions aim to strike a fair balance between transparency and confidentiality.

The University will comply with legal obligations, including data protection, and safeguard the rights of all individuals involved. It will also consider its legitimate interests, such as protecting its reputation and maintaining confidence in its complaints process. The type and amount of information shared will depend on the nature of the complaint, the outcome of any investigation or hearing, and any ongoing support or precautionary measures.

## 7. Support for Students and Staff

Students should seek advice and support from a staff member or from services including; The Advice Place, Counselling, The Equally Safe Team and other student support services. The Advice Place will outline the different ways of dealing with the matter such as raising with an appropriate staff member e.g. a Student Adviser, Cohort Lead, Programme Director, Supervisor or Residence Life staff. While The Advice Place offers impartial advice, it is the student's responsibility to decide how to proceed. The Equally Safe Team can provide specialist advice and support to students on gender-based violence.

If a student or staff member has experienced any form of bullying, harassment, discrimination, or gender-based violence, they can report it anonymously or speak to a specialist staff member through Report +Support.

Staff can seek advice and support from a manager, HR Representative or Trade Union representative.  The Employee Assistance Programme and other Wellbeing Services can be found on the Staff Health and Wellbeing Hub.

Student and Staff Liaison Officers will be appointed to support the student and staff member during the investigation.

Students and staff may share complaint details confidentially with chosen individuals or University support services for guidance throughout and after the process.

## 8. Right to be Accompanied

The student may be accompanied to all meetings by a member of the University community, including a member of Edinburgh University Students' Association (EUSA) or another student or a staff member.  The staff member has the right to be accompanied at meetings by a trade union representative or workplace colleague.

The student or staff member may also ask someone to accompany them if they have particular needs. For example, because English is not their first language or they need some other practical support such as a specialist provider of health and wellbeing support including reasonable adjustments.  This person may be in addition to a Trade Union representative, colleague or student who is accompanying the student or staff member. Such requests should be asked of the Investigating Officer in advance of the meetings as they may not be aware of the circumstances. Requests will not be unreasonably refused.

## 9. Timescales

The procedure's timeframes will normally be followed, but delays may occur due to the complexity or nature of the complaint. The student and staff member will be kept informed

of progress and any changes to timescales will be communicated in advance by the Responsible Manager or Investigating Officer.

To ensure compliance with the Complaint Handling Procedure, the Responsible Manager will provide the Complaint Handling Team with relevant updates throughout the course of the investigation, as necessary.

## 10. Case Conference

If the Responsible Manager has decided that some or all the complaint will be handled in accordance with this procedure, they will organise a case conference to consult internally for example, with colleagues from Human Resources and, Academic Quality and Standards to agree the following:

- the name of the Investigating Officer
- how the investigation will be carried out, especially in complex cases, for example, matters of an academic and personal nature
- who will be appointed as Liaison Officers to act as the primary point of contact and support for both the student and staff member during the investigation
- how best to communicate with the student and staff member, taking into account the nature of the complaint and their availability
- who will carry out a risk assessment and decide on any precautionary or additional action needed to protect individuals or the wider University community during the investigation.

The University will make every reasonable effort to hold the case conference and complete the risk assessment within two calendar weeks of receiving of the student's complaint.

## 11. Pre Investigation

### 11.1 Communication with Student

Before meeting with the student, the Responsible Manager will liaise with the Student Liaison Officer to agree how and by whom the relevant information will be communicated to the student.

Within one week of the case conference, the Responsible Manager will arrange to meet with the student to confirm:

– the name of the Investigating Officer
– contact details of the Student Liaison officer and other support options (see Section 7)
– next steps in the investigation including, what to expect during the investigation and indicative timescales. Should the complaint be complex, the Responsible Manager will explain how each aspect will be investigated
– availability of the student and their Liaison Officer for meetings
– the student's right to be accompanied and by whom
– any precautionary measures being put in place
– when the staff member will be informed of the complaint against them, and
– who else has been informed and why – only on a strict need to know basis, such as for precautionary measures.

The Responsible Manager will confirm all details in writing to the student and their Student Liaison Officer within three calendar weeks of receiving the complaint. If the student prefers not to share this information with the Liaison Officer, they must inform the Responsible Manager.

## 11.2 Communication with Staff Member

Within one week of the case conference, the Responsible Manager will arrange to meet with the staff member and where appropriate, their line manager to confirm:

– the nature of the complaint and who raised it
– the name of the Investigating Officer
– contact details for the Staff Liaison Officer and other available support (see Section 7)

- next steps in the investigation including, what to expect during the investigation and indicative timescales. Should the complaint be complex, the Responsible Manager will explain how each aspect will be investigated
- availability of the staff member and their Liaison Officer for meetings
- any precautionary measures being put in place
- the staff member's right to be accompanied and by whom
- who else has been informed and why - only on a strict need to know basis, such as for precautionary measures.

The Responsible Manager will confirm all details in writing to the staff member and their Staff Liaison Officer within three calendar weeks of receiving the complaint.  If the staff member prefers not to share the information with the Liaison Officer, they must inform the Responsible Manager.


## 12. Investigation


### 12.1 Investigation Meetings
Where possible, the Investigating Officer will meet with the student within four calendar weeks of receiving the complaint.  They will aim to structure the investigation so that only one meeting is needed and the student is not required to repeat the details of their complaint.

However, if the complaint is complex, the Investigating Officer may hold multiple meetings to clarify matters, including those raised by witnesses. Both the student and staff member will have the opportunity to respond to any points raised but they will not attend each other's meetings.

The Investigating Officer may question either the staff member or student directly. Those accompanying the student or staff member may contribute when invited and may also be asked to provide a statement.

Meetings will be supported by a note-taker and may include an HR representative in an advisory role.

To ensure the complaint is investigated promptly and without undue delay, if the student does not engage with the investigation despite reasonable attempts, the Investigating Officer may decide to proceed with the investigation without meeting the student.

Once the interview stage is complete, the Investigating Officer will notify the student, the staff member and their Liaison Officers and provide an estimated date for submitting the investigation report to the Responsible Manager.

### 12.2 Summary Meeting Notes

Following each investigation meeting, the Investigating Officer will prepare summary notes based on the meeting's content. These notes are not verbatim transcripts but may take the form of a personalised statement, depending on the nature of the complaint.

Each investigation participant - student, staff member or witness - will be asked to review their own summary notes and confirm it accurately reflects what they said during the meeting. If they disagree with any part, they may annotate the notes. Revisions will generally be accepted, if the Investigating Officer agrees they reflect the meeting.

To comply with data protection regulations, some content may be redacted such as references to individuals whose personal data cannot be shared. If anyone has concerns about their interview notes being shared under the procedure, they must inform the Investigating Officer, providing reasons for their concerns.

The Investigating Officer will consider these concerns when preparing the investigation report. However, the decision on what to include in the report rests solely with the Investigating Officer.

## 13. Investigation Report and Outcome

Once all the investigations meetings have concluded and any necessary documentation has been gathered, the Investigating Officer will prepare a report outlining their findings. The report and findings will be submitted to the Responsible Manager within two weeks of completing the investigation.

### 13.1 Investigation Outcomes

Based on their interviews with the student, the responding staff member, any witnesses and consideration of any supporting documentation, the Investigating Officer will conclude whether there is:

- <u>sufficient evidence</u> to suggest that the staff member has a case to answer at a disciplinary hearing; or
- <u>insufficient evidence</u> or the issues do not warrant proceeding to a disciplinary hearing

If there is insufficient evidence to support the complaint, the Responsible Manager will notify the Complaint Handling Team within three working days of completing the investigation.

### 13.2 Communication with Student

Within one calendar week of completing the investigation report, the Investigating Officer will notify the Student Liaison Officer of the outcome and agree how best way to communicate it to the student. This decision will take into account:

- the nature of the complaint
- the investigation outcome
- whether or not there is a case to answer
- any ongoing support or precautionary measures
- whether any of the complaint matters should be referred to another University process

If there is no evidence of a case to answer, the student will receive an explanation of the decision and the reasons behind it.

Information sharing decisions will be made in accordance with Section 6.

If the student has ongoing concerns about precautionary action or support, they can speak with their Student Liaison Officer or another designated contact listed in Section 7.

### 13.3 Communication with Staff Member

Within one calendar week of completing the investigation report, the Investigating Officer will notify the Staff Liaison Officer and write to the staff member to confirm:

- the investigation outcome and reasons for the decision
- next steps if there is a case to answer e.g. under the Disciplinary Policy
- any ongoing support or precautionary measures
- whether any of the complaint issues will be referred to another University process
- if there is no case to answer, what the student will be told about the decision

Information sharing decisions will be made in accordance with Section 6.

If the staff member has concerns about ongoing precautionary measures, they can speak with their Staff Liaison Officer or another designated contact listed in Section 7.

### 14. Outcome of Staff Disciplinary Procedure

### 14.1 Staff Disciplinary Hearing

If the Investigating Officer concludes there is sufficient evidence for a case to answer, the Responsible Manager will arrange for a disciplinary panel to consider the staff member's conduct. The Investigating Officer's report will be shared in advance with both the Panel and the Staff Member.

The Hearing will be conducted in line with the Staff Disciplinary Policy. During the Hearing, Panel members may ask questions of both the Investigating Officer and the staff member to inform their decision-making.

In accordance with the Staff Disciplinary Policy, neither the student nor any witnesses will attend the Hearing.

**14.2 Staff Disciplinary Hearing Outcome**

Once the Panel reaches a decision, the Chair will inform the staff member of the outcome, providing a detailed explanation of the decision and its rationale. The Chair, in collaboration with the Student Liaison Officer, will convey the Panel's decision and outcome to the student.

The Chair will decide how much information, if anything, can be appropriately shared with the student. Information sharing decisions will be made in accordance with Section 6. The Chair will also confirm any ongoing precautionary measures.

If there are concerns regarding ongoing precautionary action, the student or staff member should raise these with their Liaison Officer or another appointed individual.

The Chair will notify the Complaint Handling Team that the complaint is concluded and may share relevant outcomes if pertinent to the Complaint Handling Procedure.

**15. Review of Complaint Handling**

If a student is dissatisfied with the way the Student Complaints relating to Staff Conduct Procedure has been followed, they should refer to the Complaint Handling Procedure.

**16. Other Relevant Procedures, Policies and Guidance**
- Complaint Handling Procedure
- Code of Student Conduct
- Respect at Edinburgh
- Dignity and Respect Policy
- Staff Disciplinary Policy
- Staff Grievance Policy
- Expected Behaviour Policy
- Personal Relationships Policy

## 17. Document History and Review

Approval Date:

Approved By:

Date of Next Review: