

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

CONFIRMED MINUTES (OPEN)

Present: Professor Gill Aitken Katya Amott Victoria Buchanan Dr Adam Bunni Professor Jeremy Crang Lisa Dawson Amanda Fegan Dr Valentina Ferlito Clair Halliday Karen Howie Heather Innes Professor Linda Kirstein Professor Dave Laurenson Isabel Lavers Cristina Matthews (Secretary) Katy McPhail Catriona Morley Dr Chris Mowat Dr Donna Murray Dr Emily Taylor (Convener) Kirsty Woomble	Dean of Education (CMVM) Vice President Education, Students' Association Director, Disability and Learning Support Service (Co-opted member) Academic Policy Manager, Academic Quality and Standards Dean of Students (CAHSS) Academic Registrar, Registry Services Head of Postgraduate Research Student Administration (CSE) Senate representative (CMVM) Deputy Manager, The Advice Place Head of Digital Learning Applications and Media, Information Services Academic Engagement Coordinator, Students' Association (Co-opted member) Dean of Education (CSE) Senate representative (CSE) Academic Administration Manager (CMVM) Academic Policy Officer, Academic Quality and Standards Head of Taught Student Administration (CSE) Head of Taught Student Administration & Support (CAHSS) Dean of Students (CSE) Head of Taught Student Development (IAD) Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Validation (CAHSS) Head of Postgraduate Research Student Office (CAHSS)
In attendance: Beth Bicher Professor Alexander Corbishley Rosie Edwards Didier Rubayiza (Observer)	Administrative Officer (ECA - Seconded to Board of Examiners Project) BVM&S Programme Director (Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Sciences) Senior Business Analyst, Academic Quality and Standards Complaints Administrator, Office for Student Conduct and Complaints
Apologies: Professor Ruth Andrew Dr Matt Bell Lucy Evans	Director of Postgraduate Research (CMVM) Senate representative (CSE) Deputy Secretary, Students (Co-opted member)

1.	Welcome and apologies The Convener welcomed new members of the Committee, as well as staff who were in attendance in order to present a paper or observe the meeting.
-----------	--

	The Convener also noted apologies for the meeting and confirmed that there were no substitutions. The Convener reminded members that substitutions are not always necessary and that consideration should be given to the time commitment required in preparing for and attending Committee meetings. Where substitutions are considered necessary, the approval of these requests is at the discretion of the Convener.
2.	Minutes of the previous meeting To approve • 22 May 2025 The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting on 22 May 2025.
3.	3.1 Matters Arising • Convener's communications Committee review and approval of concessions APRC receives a large number of requests per year from the Colleges for concessions to policies or to the regulations. The vast majority of these concessions are for individual students, and the Committee has previously agreed that these requests can be reviewed and approved by Convener's action. Occasionally there are concessions which apply to student cohorts and/or which relate to industrial action. In both of these cases, these requests are circulated to the full Committee for comment. It is standard for the Convener not to review concessions which originate from their own College in order to avoid conflicts of interest. This is especially important given that the Convener is often involved in reviewing and/or approving the concession on behalf of the College. Given that the new Convener and the new vice-Convener, Dr Donna Murray, are from CAHSS, the Convener has delegated authority to review concession requests from CAHSS to Committee member Prof Linda Kirstein, Dean of Education at CSE. Concessions from CSE and CMVM will be reviewed by the Convener by Convener's action as normal. Position regarding Taught Assessment Regulation 58 Resubmission of postgraduate dissertations or research projects for 25/26 Academic Quality and Standards have recently received enquiries regarding how to approach cases of continuing PGT students with Exceptional Circumstances who have already had two or more dissertation submission attempts. The enquiries are in light of the additional wording to Taught Assessment Regulation 58 Resubmission of postgraduate dissertations or research projects for 25/26, whereby students have a maximum of three submission opportunities, including the initial submission, even where Exceptional Circumstances have been accepted. The Convener proposed the following approach for the Committee to consider: • For students with up to two submissions to date, the ruling can be applied with immediate effect, so they may get one more attempt (where this is offered as a result of accepted Exceptional Circumstances, or due to marginal failure) • For students with three or more submissions to date and who have been given to understand that there could be another opportunity after this, either by a Student Advisor, by assumption based on the regulations, or via a formal Board of Examiners decision, they can be offered a final opportunity, as long as it meets all the other conditions, i.e. it is either affected by Exceptional Circumstances (recognising that this does not inherently oblige a BoE to provide another opportunity), or a marginal fail, and the student will be offered a maximum of three months to re-submit.

The Committee agreed with the proposed approach to handling these cases. Schools or Colleges can get in touch directly with the Academic Policy team if they have cases they would like to discuss.

Report of e-business since the last meeting

1. Approved concession to UG degree regulation 30 regarding the expectations for minimum credit loads for students in CSE undertaking optional study abroad at a specific institution (ETH Zurich) – approved by the Committee in June 2025
2. Approved concession to TAR 27 to offer one resit attempt for courses offered by the University as part of MSc Sensor and Imaging Systems (joint taught with University of Glasgow) – approved by the Committee in July 2025
3. Approved concession to TAR 27 to offer one resit attempt for Foundation English courses within the Centre for Open Learning – approved by the Committee in August 2025
4. Two concessions for progression short of credit due to industrial action - approved by the Committee in September 2025

- **Actions log**

The actions log is up to date and actions have been completed, with the exception of the action noted below which is ongoing:

Action	Responsible	Target date	Action status
Confirm whether we can obtain data on degree completion rates for PGR students with concessions, as well as numbers of College-level concessions	APRC Administrator	Not defined	ongoing

The Committee had a discussion regarding whether or not this action was still a priority, particularly given that the Withdrawal and Exclusion from Studies Procedure was updated in 2024/25, making it easier for PGR students to withdraw and be reinstated.

College representatives noted that having completion rate data would be helpful in order to better inform decision-making related to concession requests at College level, and that it would be helpful to have data for taught students as well as PGR students. There was acknowledgement that collecting the data was likely to entail some resource from College Offices, Academic Quality and Standards, and possibly Student Records.

Members agreed that a good place to start would be to look at completion rates for students who had concessions approved in 2022/23, given that the years prior to that would have had the most impact from Covid.

One member noted that while the data was useful, the Committee and the Colleges should continue to consider students' individual circumstances when making decisions regarding concessions.

The Committee agreed that the action continued to be a priority.

The Committee also agreed that having more clarity regarding the readmission process would give staff more confidence to advise students to withdraw, where this was appropriate. At the moment staff do not feel confident talking students through the process of withdrawal and readmission.

Action: Academic Quality and Standards to discuss readmission processes following withdrawal with Student Recruitment and Admissions.

3.2 Report of Convener's Action

1. **Delegated the authority to the Colleges to approve additional credit on PGR programmes beyond the maximum of 20 credits.** This can be done as appropriate on a programme-by-programme basis, rather than for individual students.

The context for this are the recent requests for concessions to the regulations relating to additional credit on PhD programmes. The requests related to the routine practice in a couple of Schools of allowing, recommending, or even requiring students to take credit-bearing courses alongside their work towards their thesis in order to develop core skills. In some areas, this is dependent on an assessment of a student's individual needs, while in others, it is understood to be more of a blanket approach.

This issue is to be discussed more broadly with the Doctoral College Operations Group, including a potential review of PG degree regulation 19, which specifies the maximum number of additional credits, as well as a review of the relevant Degree Programme Tables. If these discussions result in proposed amendments to the regulations, these will be presented to the Committee.

2. **Summary of concessions approved by Convener's action**

- **2024/25 (from last meeting in May-end of July 2025)**
Total number of individual student concessions approved: 28
Total number of cohort concessions approved: 0
- **2025/26 (since start of August 2025)**
Total number of individual student concessions approved: 12
Total number of individual student concessions rejected: 1
Total number of cohort concessions approved: 0

4. SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

4.1	Board of Examiners Review – Implementation of Decision Trees for Exceptional Circumstances For discussion The paper was presented by Rosie Edwards, Senior Business Analyst, and Lisa Dawson, Academic Registrar. The Board of Examiners Review identified a number of recommendations for changes to Boards of Examiners, which were approved by the University Executive in May 2025. The recommendations aim to simplify and bring consistency to Board of Examiners processes. One of the recommendations is to develop standard decision trees for determining outcomes to Exceptional Circumstances in order for Schools to apply these decision trees consistently across the University. Eight Schools already make use of their own decision trees to determine these outcomes, whilst others do not use any; as a result of this there is significant variation across the
-----	---

University regarding how Boards of Examiners implement the outcomes in the Exceptional Circumstances policy, resulting in an inconsistent student experience.

The request to the Committee is to consider a standardised approach to the decision trees, specifically the approach to thresholds for discounting components of assessment when determining course results, and also thresholds for excluding course results when determining programme classification.

The Board of Examiners (BoE) project has a Sharepoint site which staff can refer to: [Board of Examiners Review Implementation](#)

The Academic Registrar explained that the project has gone through rounds of consultation with Schools and with the wider staff base via College Roadshows, and that the project team have listened and responded to staff feedback, e.g. regarding timelines. The project is also consulting with this Committee, as the Senate Standing Committee responsible for policies and regulations, although there is no expectation that there will be significant amendments to policy as part of this project. The end of the design phase will confirm policy changes which are expected to be minor, these will be presented to the Committee, most likely at its November meeting. The project will also present an update to Senate at its December meeting.

Members discussed a number of aspects of the proposal:

- **Matching assessments to learning outcomes:** Members noted that the way assessments map onto learning outcomes is not necessarily pre-defined and also varies across Schools. Undertaking this mapping exercise across the whole institution would therefore be highly complex. The paper authors acknowledged the complexity of setting a common threshold at course level, but it should be less complex to set a threshold at programme level. The paper authors also acknowledged the tension between having leaner assessment structures (i.e. less redundancy across learning outcomes) and the ability to discount assessments while still meeting all learning outcomes.
- **Need for decision trees and thresholds:** A number of members expressed support in principle for the use of decision trees and standard thresholds in order to ensure more clarity and consistency for students. One member noted that Boards of Examiners deliberate at length in order to arrive at the best outcome for individual students, and that making this an automated process incurs the risk of not making the best decision for an individual student. There was also discussion regarding how to articulate thresholds, and that if only a minimum number of credits was stipulated for classification, that this would not resolve the current inconsistencies. The paper authors noted that the project team were still collecting data from Schools which use decision trees, and that they would also consider benchmarking against other institutions.
- **Consideration of accredited programmes:** College representatives of CSE and CMVM noted that accredited programmes often do not allow credits to be discounted, and that due consideration should be given on how to make exceptions on the application of decision trees in such cases.
- **Consultation with stakeholders:** Following concerns expressed by academic and professional services staff about the pace of change and locus of decision-making, the project team ran a series of roadshow events in each College, open to all and which were all well attended. The project team then met with senior members of academic and professional services staff from each College to revise plans based on feedback received. Senate representatives reported Senate members felt there had been little to no consultation with academic staff within Schools and this raised a concern about the effectiveness of communication channels. Senate representatives reported significant concern with the project amongst a large proportion of the Senate membership, and that

	Senate members would like to be consulted on the broader vision of the project and the timeline for implementation, rather than be informed of changes. The Academic Registrar acknowledged that this project had originated and been approved by the University Executive, which does include School representation via Heads of School and Heads of College. The consultation with Senate is being done in line with the delegated authority model, and is therefore being discussed in detail via Senate Standing Committees, via which Senate can also provide feedback. - Approval process: Senate representatives reported significant concerns with the proposed approval process of mandatory outcomes of this project (e.g. decision trees), particularly the proposal that these may not be approved by this Committee. Senate members were also concerned with the proposal to bring amendments to the Committee for approval in November, and then bring these to Senate in December for information. Another member noted that the governance structures entail that APRC approval is Senate approval via a delegated authority. - Mandatory vs non-mandatory outcomes: Members agreed that for any changes to have an effect they would need to be mandatory, and that non-mandatory outcomes would be a continuation of the status quo. The Convener noted that, overall, there was support in principle for the use of decision trees and common thresholds for discounting elements in order to provide consistency to the student experience. The Convener also noted the potential need to operate a different process for accredited programmes, where the accrediting bodies have regulations that would impact the use of standardised decision trees and thresholds. The Academic Registrar noted that the BoE project has a formal “critical friends” group, and that a subset of APRC members would be welcome to work more closely with the project team if there is interest. - Clerks note – following the meeting, the elected Senate members were asked to join the critical friends group with all three accepting. Action: Senate representatives to send further feedback from Senate to the BoE project team. Action: CSE and CMVM representatives to send further information regarding implications for accredited programmes to the BoE project team. Action: BoE project team to invite Senate representatives to work with the project team as critical friends.
	The Committee had a short break.
4.3	Students’ Association Sabbatical Officer Priorities 2025/2026 For discussion The paper was presented by Katya Amott, Vice President Education, Edinburgh University Students’ Association (EUSA). The paper summarises the priorities of the Vice President (VP) Education and the Students’ Association Sabbatical Officer team for 2025/26. The VP Education presented the priorities, highlighting in particular the focus on addressing the attainment gap for widening participation students, and also on providing better material and community support to all students. The VP Education acknowledged that the University’s

	communications regarding its financial position and upcoming budget cuts were a concern for students, but the Students' Association is still hopeful that there will be opportunities to make improvements to the student experience within this context. One member noted the reference to the University's Graduate Attributes and explained that this framework was soon to be replaced by the new Skills for Success framework. The Convener commended the VP Education and the Sabbatical Officer for proposing a very thoughtful and attuned set of priorities.
4.5	Amendments to Student Maternity and Parental Leave policy To approve The paper was presented by Cristina Matthews, Academic Policy Officer, Academic Quality and Standards. The paper proposes minor amendments to the 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. The proposed amendments specify that risk assessments should be carried out for students who are pregnant, breastfeeding or have given birth in the last 6 months, rather than only for students who are pregnant. The requirement to conduct a risk assessment for these groups is already included in the University's Maternity Policy for staff. Members were broadly supportive of the amendment. Members noted however that, although the policy specifies the need for risk assessments, in practice there is a lack of clarity regarding who should conduct the risk assessments, with some Schools saying they do not have anyone qualified to do this. Members also noted it would be helpful to define an end point, or a review period, for the risk assessment, where necessary. The paper author noted that there should be a procedure for how risk assessments for staff are conducted and agreed to seek advice from Health and Safety in order to provide clarity regarding how the policy should be operationalised. The Committee agreed that the School should be responsible for ensuring that the risk assessment takes place, regardless of whether or not the School conducts it. The Committee approved the proposed amendments to the policy. Action: Academic Quality and Standards to consult with Health and Safety regarding who is to conduct the risk assessment and how these should be reviewed, where necessary.
5. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION/NOTING	
5.1	Revised Student Complaints Relating to Staff Conduct Procedure To note This paper was recently approved by the University Executive and is presented to the Committee to note. No action required.
5.2	Committee Administration: • APRC Membership • APRC Terms of Reference To note

	The membership and terms of reference are provided to members for information at the start of the academic year. There was a minor update to the Terms of Reference following the May 2025 meeting of Senate, as a consequence of the Knowledge Strategy Committee standing down: 3.2. The Committee may bring matters to the attention of the University Executive [ADDITION: 'and/or IT Committee'] as required. The composition of the membership is unchanged, although some of the members of staff taking up the roles within the Colleges have changed, and Senate representatives have changed. Committee Priorities 2025/26: To note • Development of curriculum framework arising from Learning and Teaching Workstream Note: Previous wording of this priority referred to the Curriculum Transformation Programme – this has been amended to Learning and Teaching Workstream in order to reflect changes across the University. • Scheduled review of policies
6.	Any Other Business No other business.
Date of next meeting: Thursday 20 November 2025, 2-5pm, Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House, Central area / Teams Deadline for papers: Thursday 6 November 2025	