

Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee**Thursday 22 January 2026 at 2:00pm****Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House / Teams****AGENDA**

1.	Welcome and apologies	
2.	Minutes of the previous meeting For information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 September 2025 OPEN • 18 September 2025 CLOSED 	APRC 25/26 2A (OPEN)
3.	3.1 Matters Arising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convener's communications • Actions log 3.2 Report of Convener's Action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of approved concessions 	Verbal Update
4. SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS		
4.1	Board of Examiners Review – Implementation of a New Late Applications Process for Exceptional Circumstances For discussion	APRC 25/26 2B
4.2	Academic Year Dates 2027/28 and Provisional Academic Year Dates 2028/29 For approval	APRC 25/26 2C
BREAK		
4.3	Appointment of APRC Vice-Convener For approval	Verbal item
4.4	Postgraduate Research Thesis Guidance For approval	APRC 25/26 2D
5. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION/NOTING		
5.1	APRC Priorities 2025/26 – mid-year update To note	APRC 25/26 2E
5.3	Committee Administration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APRC Membership • APRC Terms of Reference To note Committee Priorities 2025/26:	

	<p>To note</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of curriculum framework arising from Learning and Teaching Workstream• Scheduled review of policies	
6.	Any Other Business	
<p>Date of next meeting Thursday 19 March 2026, 2-5pm, Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House</p>		

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Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee

Thursday 18 September 2025 at 2:00pm

Liberton Tower, Murchison House, King's Buildings / Teams

CONFIRMED MINUTES (OPEN)

<p>Present: Professor Gill Aitken Katya Amott Victoria Buchanan</p> <p>Dr Adam Bunni Professor Jeremy Crang Lisa Dawson Amanda Fegan Dr Valentina Ferlito Clair Halliday Karen Howie</p> <p>Heather Innes</p> <p>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</p>	<p>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)</p>
<p>In attendance: Beth Bicher</p> <p>Professor Alexander Corbishley</p> <p>Rosie Edwards Didier Rubayiza (Observer)</p>	<p>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</p>
<p>Apologies: Professor Ruth Andrew Dr Matt Bell Lucy Evans</p>	<p>Director of Postgraduate Research (CMVM) Senate representative (CSE) Deputy Secretary, Students (Co-opted member)</p>

1.	<p>Welcome and apologies</p> <p>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.</p>
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	<p>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.</p>
2.	<p>Minutes of the previous meeting To approve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22 May 2025 <p>The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting on 22 May 2025.</p>
3.	<p>3.1 Matters Arising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convener's communications <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The Convener proposed the following approach for the Committee to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

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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.

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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

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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

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	<p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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. <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clerks note – following the meeting, the elected Senate members were asked to join the critical friends group with all three accepting. <p>Action: Senate representatives to send further feedback from Senate to the BoE project team.</p> <p>Action: CSE and CMVM representatives to send further information regarding implications for accredited programmes to the BoE project team.</p> <p>Action: BoE project team to invite Senate representatives to work with the project team as critical friends.</p>
	<p>The Committee had a short break.</p>
4.3	<p>Students’ Association Sabbatical Officer Priorities 2025/2026 For discussion</p> <p>The paper was presented by Katya Amott, Vice President Education, Edinburgh University Students’ Association (EUSA).</p> <p>The paper summarises the priorities of the Vice President (VP) Education and the Students’ Association Sabbatical Officer team for 2025/26.</p> <p>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</p>

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	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The Convener commended the VP Education and the Sabbatical Officer for proposing a very thoughtful and attuned set of priorities.</p>
4.5	<p>Amendments to Student Maternity and Parental Leave policy To approve</p> <p>The paper was presented by Cristina Matthews, Academic Policy Officer, Academic Quality and Standards.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The Committee approved the proposed amendments to the policy.</p> <p>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.</p>
5. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION/NOTING	
5.1	<p>Revised Student Complaints Relating to Staff Conduct Procedure To note</p> <p>This paper was recently approved by the University Executive and is presented to the Committee to note.</p> <p>No action required.</p>
5.2	<p>Committee Administration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APRC Membership • APRC Terms of Reference <p>To note</p>

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	<p>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:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">3.2. The Committee may bring matters to the attention of the University Executive [ADDITION: 'and/or IT Committee'] as required.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Committee Priorities 2025/26: To note</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>No other business.</p>
<p>Date of next meeting: Thursday 20 November 2025, 2-5pm, Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House, Central area / Teams</p> <p>Deadline for papers: Thursday 6 November 2025</p>	

Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee**22 January 2026****Board of Examiners Review – Implementation of a New Late Applications Process for Exceptional Circumstances****Description of paper**

1. The paper seeks discussion and endorsement of a proposed new late Exceptional Circumstances (EC) application process, which is being developed as part of the Board of Examiners Review. Endorsement by APRC would enable system development work to commence with APRC recommending this to Senate for approval to enable implementation. 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. APRC is asked to endorse the proposals for a revised process for handling late Exceptional Circumstances applications, outlined in sections 11-15 of this paper, and recommend the proposals to Senate for approval.

Background and context

3. The Late Exceptional Circumstances workstream is a critical strand of the wider Board-of-Examiners Review, which is considering every stage from mark entry to award publication. While other workstreams are seeking to streamline course-mark ratification, asynchronous board approval and external-examiner engagement, Late ECs tackles the single greatest source of last-minute disruption to Board of Examiners processes: EC cases that arrive after Schools have compiled marks.

Challenges of the current process

4. Honours marks must be ratified by the first week in June, yet the present late EC deadline is set for the Friday after the exam diet finishes, leaving only seven calendar days for EC validation, School EC committees, mark recalculation and Board-paper production. Thirty per cent of all ECs arrive in the final 48 hours before the relevant EC deadline. Cases still awaiting evidence are auto-rejected at the current deadlines, and frequently return as “retrospective” requests via Schools.
5. Currently, students are required to submit EC applications by the relevant deadline for their School. This can be particularly confusing for students taking courses across different Schools, in particular joint degree students. Applications submitted after the relevant School deadline, but before the final deadline published by the EC service are regarded as “late”, and must include a reason for the lateness and evidence to support this. However, for several Schools, there is little or no gap between the School deadline and the final EC deadline, meaning that the volume of “late” cases is low.¹ Where a student wishes to apply for ECs after the final EC deadline, they generally approach their School and ask for their case to be considered by the relevant Board of Examiners. Where the School is supportive of the student’s case, they liaise with the EC service to enable the student to submit the application. These cases are usually referred to as “retrospective”, as opposed to “late” cases.
6. The majority of cases impacted by the proposed process would currently be classed as “retrospective”. These are cases that come in after the final EC deadline, and are considered in the first instance by Schools. Where the School is supportive of reconvening in a specific case, they ask the EC Service to process the case so that it can be taken forward by the Board, usually by Convener’s Action. This process not only involves a significant amount of work for Schools, but crucially poses risks in terms of the consistency of decision-making between different Schools as to whether individual cases will be accepted. The retrospective process is also not transparent to students, not being articulated in the EC policy, and is therefore more likely to be used by students who are more assertive and/or more engaged with their Schools.

Consultation regarding the proposals

7. Schools and Colleges were consulted regarding a set of proposals for a revised process for handling what would currently be referred to as late and retrospective ECs. The proposals consulted upon included the following elements:
 - Setting earlier deadlines for EC cases;
 - Changes to exam scheduling to run Honours exams earlier in the Semester 2 diet;

¹ It is not possible currently to provide accurate data regarding the volume late and retrospective ECs. The EC system does not hold details regarding course delivery periods or EC deadlines. Retrospective ECs are handled in the first instance by Schools, who are not asked to maintain data regarding these, with only those cases supported by Boards of Examiners being subsequently processed by the EC service.

- Introducing separate, earlier deadlines for Honours students relative to pre-Honours students;
 - Introducing an earlier deadline for EC applications relating to coursework, as opposed to centrally arranged exams;
 - Introducing a consistent process to allow students to apply for late ECs via the EC service, where students would be required to provide a reason and evidence to support the lateness of the application;
 - Where late cases were accepted, Schools would not be expected to take these through Boards in time for publication of results, but could do so if they were able to.
8. Stakeholder consultations (Schools of Law, SPS, ECA, GeoSciences, Mathematics, Informatics, LLC; Registry Exams; the Exceptional Circumstances service, Board of Examiners Critical friends group Advice Place, and 60 members of the EC User group) supported moving the deadline earlier and prioritising Honours exams. They also all agreed that the current time constraints in the academic calendar in Semester 2 is incredibly challenging and there is no contingency. Many School staff are working late and at weekends across the Boards period to enable the graduation timetable. This is a very high-risk period and these proposals are an attempt to enable Schools to manage EC work, and more broadly, the Board of Examiners work, as their capacity allows.
9. Through the consultation process, the following concerns regarding the proposals were raised:
- a. Impact on students - Three-week Honours exam block is viewed as “highly unpopular and potentially harmful” to student wellbeing (student-rep, SPS).
 - b. Honours-exam clustering: scepticism that all Honours papers can be accommodated in Weeks 1-3 without creating student “bunching”, accessibility issues for special-arrangement candidates, or spill-over into Week 4 that would undermine an earlier Honours EC deadline.
 - c. Multiple cut-offs: fear that having different EC deadlines for Honours, pre-Honours (and possibly coursework) will confuse visiting students and joint-programme cohorts and generate more enquiries.
 - d. Students applying twice: concerns that separate deadlines for coursework and exams may lead to students needing to apply twice for the same circumstances, where they affect both coursework and exams;
 - e. Late-case workload: concern that drip-fed Convener’s-action cases will force repeated updates to “golden-copy” Board reports, increasing version-control risk and staff hours.
 - f. Threshold dilution: concern that adding a “reason for lateness” field could be perceived as lowering the bar for acceptance, normalising late submissions and shifting volume to Appeals unless the TAR 64.1 “good-reason” test is applied rigorously.

- g. Resource strain: concern that the EC Service and Appeals Team have capacity to meet tighter turnaround targets if late-case numbers rise, especially during system outages or staff absences.
- h. Equity of application: Schools that currently manage small numbers of late cases locally fear losing the flexibility to act quickly for genuine emergencies if the process becomes wholly centralised.

Discussion

10. Based on the feedback received in the consultation, the proposals have been refined as outlined below.

Late with evidence route

11. Students will be able to use the EC system to apply for late ECs (i.e. after the initial deadline for applications). Where a student submits an EC application late, they will be required to provide an explanation for the lateness of their application, and provide evidence which specifically supports the reason for lateness. This will be assessed by the EC team in line with the threshold currently exercised by the Appeals team in regard to cases submitted as appeals relating to late ECs (under “ground A”). In these cases, students are required to demonstrate not only that their ECs should be accepted, but also a “good reason” why they were late in making their application. Since current “retrospective” EC cases – “late” cases under the proposed process – could also be submitted as appeals, it is vital that the threshold applied in each process is equally rigorous. As such, the EC team will receive support and training from staff with responsibility for handling academic appeals regarding the approach taken to “ground A” appeals cases.
12. This approach would provide significant benefits for students over the current “retrospective” process. As noted above (see section 5), the current retrospective process is not transparent to students, since it is not articulated in the EC policy or elsewhere. It is therefore much less likely to be used by students who feel less able to request additional consideration from their School, for example because they are a member of a minoritised, or protected characteristic group. Where students apply for retrospective ECs currently, the fact that decision-making is handled locally by Schools based only on minimal information provided in the [Taught Assessment Regulations](#) (64.1) means that there is likely to be significant inconsistency in terms of the outcomes students receive. This inconsistency is likely to be most acutely experienced by students on joint degree programmes.

13. For Schools, the proposed process would reduce the workload currently expended on handling retrospective EC cases, and liaising with the EC service about these, since Schools will now only receive late EC cases which have already been accepted by the EC service. It must be recognised, however, that a risk inherent to formalising and making more transparent the current retrospective EC process through the proposed late EC process is that it will make the process more prominent and therefore have the potential to lead to an increase in late cases, at least initially. The volume of cases will be handled in the first instance by the EC service, with only those late cases which are accepted being passed to Schools for action. From the perspective of Schools, this is therefore likely to offset any increase in cases, since Schools currently review all potential retrospective EC cases, including those which are not accepted. The application of the strict “good reason” for lateness approach applied as part of the appeals process should have the effect of ensuring that only those cases where there is a clear and valid reason for lateness are accepted.
14. The introduction of a more formalised process for handling late ECs also has the potential to lead to a reduction in academic appeal cases, the majority of which currently relate to late notification of ECs. In 2024/25, 64% of academic appeals related to ground A only, “substantial information directly relevant to the quality of performance in the assessment which for good reason was not available to the examiners when their decision was taken”. Providing this information to Boards of Examiners in a timely fashion for use in their decision-making is the purpose of the EC process, so having a more transparent process for late ECs should reduce the need for students to make use of the appeals process for this purpose.

Handling of accepted cases

15. Students will be advised at the point of submitting a late application for ECs that it is unlikely that any outcomes for accepted cases will be applied in time for the normal publication of their results, and that this may also have an impact on graduation for students due to graduate. Schools are naturally keen to try to take late EC cases through promptly and in advance of finalising decisions at Boards, where this is possible. However, this can lead to a significant amount of re-work, with Board reports being revised, presenting challenges with “golden copy” and leading to a greater risk of errors. It may be appropriate to allow Schools discretion as to whether they should attempt to take cases through Boards before the standard publication dates, where this is seen as being in the student’s and/or the School’s interest. However, this will likely lead to a degree of inconsistency of experience for students, with some Schools routinely expediting late EC cases, and others choosing to leave them until after the standard publication date. One way to mitigate against this risk of inconsistency would be to instruct Schools to

take forward in advance of publication only those late EC cases which relate to students due to graduate imminently, and only where this is feasible. All other cases would be held over until after the publication date and handled together, usually via Convener's Action, with students subsequently notified of any changes to their course or degree outcomes.

Deadlines for "on-time" and late cases

16. In order to support a change in process to allow students to make late applications with evidence in the EC system, it will be necessary to move from having individual School deadlines for "on-time" EC cases to a single University deadline. The final deadline for ECs is currently set by the EC service in consultation with Colleges and Schools, with individual School deadlines being set by Schools. The harmonisation of School deadlines around a single date has long been discussed as a potential way to mitigate inconsistency in the student experience, especially for students taking courses in more than one School (see section 5).
17. The final deadline set by the EC service is generally one week after the end of the Semester 2 exam period. Several Schools currently align their deadline with the final EC deadline, while others set their deadline up to a week earlier than this. Under the proposed approach, the deadline for "on-time" EC cases would be set the next working day after the end of the Semester 2 exam diet, in order to reduce the challenge for the EC service and Schools in processing cases in time for Boards.
18. The final deadline for the submission of late cases would align with the publication date for ratified results for graduating students. Students seeking to apply for late ECs after the deadline will be directed to the normal Academic Appeals process, which includes provision for appeals relating to what would constitute ECs under ground A:

"Substantial information directly relevant to the quality of performance in the assessment which for good reason was not available to the examiners when their decision was taken."
19. The table below demonstrates the planned amendment to deadlines with reference to the existing deadlines for Semester 2, 2025/26. These dates are indicative and may be subject to change, based on discussion with Schools and Colleges.

	Deadline for on-time cases	Final deadline for late cases	Final deadline for retrospective cases
Current approach	22 – 29 May 2026 (dependent upon School)	29 May 2026	2 years after the original Board decision
Proposed approach	25 May 2026	15 June 2026	All retrospective cases are directed to the Appeals process

20. The EC service will take forward discussions with Schools and Colleges regarding the amendment to EC deadlines, in line with normal practice. In the event that the overall approach to late ECs (as set out in sections 11-15, above) is not supported by Senate, the revised dates remain compatible with the existing approach to late ECs, but provide the benefit of consistency across Schools.

Elements of previous proposals not taken forward

21. As noted above, the proposals consulted upon included consideration of split deadlines for EC applications relating to coursework, as opposed to exams, and for Honours and pre-Honours/PGT students, based on ensuring an earlier finish to Honours exams in the Semester 2 diet. The consultation yielded significant concerns about the feasibility and desirability of these elements of the design. Further consideration will be given to these issues. In the event that the concerns raised can be effectively mitigated, there would be the potential to make incremental changes to the process to incorporate these elements, subject to further consideration by APRC and Senate.

Summary of proposals

22. APRC is asked to endorse the proposed process for handling late ECs, as set out in sections 11-15 above, taking account of information about relevant EC deadlines in sections 16-20. In summary, the proposed process is:

- Students will be able to apply for late ECs using the EC system after the relevant “on-time” deadline has passed;
- A student making a late EC application will be required to provide a reason and evidence for the lateness of their application, in addition to providing an adequate reason and evidence to support their ECs;
- The student’s application will be assessed by the EC service against the criteria used in the Academic Appeals process to assess “good reason” for lateness in ground A appeals;

- Where late cases are accepted – as having both valid ECs, and a “good reason” for lateness – by the EC service, they will be passed to Schools for outcome decisions to be made;
- Schools will be under no obligation to process late EC cases by standard deadlines for publication of results, with students made aware that their outcome is likely to be delayed until after the relevant publication date;
- After the final deadline for late ECs passes, students will be informed that they can no longer apply for ECs using the EC process, but will instead be directed to the Academic Appeals process.

The proposed process represents a change in practice as regards the handling of late ECs, but does not involve a change in underlying policy, since it remains compatible with section 4.6 of the EC Policy:

“Deadlines for submission of Exceptional Circumstances are set in such a way as to allow ample time for students to submit their applications. The EC service will therefore only consider accepting submissions after the relevant School deadline where students provide an explanation for why they were unable to submit on time, with sufficient evidence to support this. No late applications will be considered after the final deadline for the relevant Semester published on the EC web pages.”

Resource implications

23. The resource implications for Schools and the EC service in terms of staff workload are outlined in the Discussion section above (especially sections 13-14). Registry Services have stated that, with additional training provided to the EC service, the planned activity indicated by the proposals can be supported by the relevant teams.
24. The proposed process for handling late ECs will require changes to be made to the EC system. These changes will enable the system to receive additional reasons for lateness and relevant evidence based on agreed University-wide semester late EC start and end deadlines. Assuming availability of resources, deadlines and an implementation start date in early Feb 2026, Student Systems have confidence that these changes can be implemented by the May 2026 ECs deadlines. Prioritisation of this work may have implications for the release of Path however expediting these changes can mitigate this risk. It is accepted as a risk that Senate may not support the proposed process change for late ECs, meaning that the work on systems development may be curtailed. However, delaying development until after the Senate meeting in March 2026 would mean that implementation of the proposed process for late ECs from May 2026 would not

be possible. Senate members receive copies of Standing Committee papers and have elected members representing their voice on the Committee.

Risk management

25. The discussion section notes a risk of the proposed process leading to a potential increase in applications for late ECs. This may be offset, however, by a reduction in academic appeals cases relating to late ECs.
26. The existing risk to the student experience regarding the inconsistency of process and outcome inherent to the current retrospective EC process is significant. The fact that the proposed process offers effective mitigation for this risk is a profound benefit.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

27. The proposed process does not have any implications regarding responding to the climate emergency or Sustainable Development Goals.

Equality & diversity

28. As noted above (section 11), the proposed process should offer benefits to all students, but especially those from marginalised groups, or with protected characteristics by providing a transparent and consistent route for handling late ECs.

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

29. Should APRC endorse the proposals in the paper, approval to introduce the process will be sought from Senate at its March 2026 meeting. The process would be introduced for use from May 2026.

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Open**

If you require this document in an alternative format, such as large print or a coloured background, please contact academicpolicy@ed.ac.uk or Academic Quality and Standards, Old College, South Bridge, Edinburgh, EH8 9YL.

Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee

22 January 2026

Academic Year Dates 2027/28 and Provisional Academic Year Dates 2028/29

Description of paper

1. This paper requests Committee approval for the academic year dates for 2027/28, which were approved as provisional dates at the 21 November 2024 meeting of APRC. The paper also requests Committee approval for the provisional academic year dates for 2028/29. The paper also provides information regarding the December 2026 and December 2027 examination diets and seeks Committee input on this matter.

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

Action requested / recommendation

2. The Committee is invited to **approve** the proposed academic year dates 2027/28 provided in Appendix 1.
3. The Committee is invited to **approve** the provisional academic year dates 2028/29 provided in Appendix 1.
4. The Committee is asked to **discuss and comment upon** the issues relating to the December 2026 and December 2027 exam diets, covered in sections 8 to 13 of the paper.

Background and context

5. APRC is responsible for approving annually the academic year dates for future years. In practice, there is a very limited degree of flexibility in the Semester dates, as these are structured according to a model approved by Senate in 2009 and published at [Academic year structure](#).

Discussion

6. The Committee approved the provisional dates 2027/28 at its November 2024 meeting. These dates are now being presented for final approval.

7. The provisional dates for 2028/29 are being presented to the Committee for the first time.

December 2026 and December 2027 exam diets

8. Due to constraints regarding when Semester 1 can start, the University experiences acute challenges during some years around the time available following the end of Semester 1 to allow for both a revision period and an exam diet of adequate length to accommodate all exams. During the Covid-19 period and subsequent years, the volume of exams was significantly reduced, alleviating the pressure on the Semester 1 diet, but the volume of exams has risen in recent years to approach pre-Covid levels. There were 726 exams scheduled in December 2019, dropping to 335 – predominantly online – exams in December 2020. This figure has risen back up to 500 exams in the December 2025 diet.
9. There is a longstanding agreement between the University and EUSA that exams will finish no later than 21 December. The University aims, when possible, to allow a full week of revision prior to the beginning of exams, following the end of Semester 1 teaching. In the next two academic years, Semester 1 teaching is due to end on Friday 4th 2026 and Friday 3rd December 2027 respectively. Were exams to commence on the Monday following a full week of revision, this would allow only 7 days (in 2026) and 8 days (in 2027) for exams, even if one Saturday is used for exams in each year. As is demonstrated in the below table, there is no precedent for a December exam diet of less than 10 days' duration, even where fewer exams were scheduled. The return to two-session exam days creates greater capacity within the diet, but the need to accommodate students' Schedules of Adjustments means that it is not possible to reduce the length of the diet.

Exam Diet	Exam Start Date	Exam Finish Date	Actual Exam Duration (Days) (not including Fixed date Exams)
2016/17 Dec	08 December 2016	21 December 2016	12
2017/18 Dec	08 December 2017	21 December 2017	12
2018/19 Dec	10 December 2018	21 December 2018	11
2019/20 Dec	09 December 2019	20 December 2019	11
2020/21 Dec	10 December 2020	21 December 2020	10
2021/22 Dec	10 December 2021	21 December 2021	10
2022/23 Dec	09 December 2022	21 December 2022	11
2023/24 Dec	11 December 2023	21 December 2023	10
2024/25 Dec	09 December 2024	20 December 2024	11
2025/26 Dec	08 December 2025	19 December 2025	11

10. The Exams team within Registry Services have modelled the December 2026 diet based on the volume of exams offered in December 2025. Were there to be

no increase in the volume of exams, it may be possible to schedule the diet within 10 days – which is equal to the shortest duration for the December diet. The Exams team have noted, however, that reducing the duration of the diet to the minimum possible has the following consequences:

- More students will have exams on consecutive days (650% increase relative to December 2025);
- More students will have two exams on the same day (708% increase relative to December 2025);
- More students will have exams on a Saturday (11% increase relative to December 2025);
- More exams will be split across multiple venues, causing logistical challenges for Schools regarding exam paper drop-off and collection (26% increase relative to December 2025);
- Greater demand for invigilators for exams, given the increased number of venues required;
- Staff across Schools and the Exams team being required to work on two weekends.

11. If the constraint around finishing exams on 21 December is adhered to, this would require both a reduction in the length of the revision period, and the use of up to two Saturdays for exams in each diet (unless the revision period were drastically reduced in length). The University has traditionally been required to use Saturdays for exams in order to allow for adequate capacity in the exam diet, but it should be noted that this is an unpopular measure for several reasons:

- Saturday exams conflict with religious observance for some Jewish students, with alternative arrangements being made where possible for students affected by this;
- Staff in Schools and the Exams team are required to work on weekends in the run up to Christmas;
- Where questions arise or errors are identified in exam papers, it can be more challenging to contact academic staff in order to resolve these issues at the weekend.

However, even making use of two Saturdays in each of December 2026 and 2027, and allowing only 10 days for exams, would mean starting the exam diet on the Thursday (10th December 2026) and the Friday (10th December 2027) of the week allocated to revision.

12. There is precedent in several previous academic years of curtailing the December revision period in order to accommodate the exam diet, with the earliest start of an exam diet being on the Thursday of the week allocated to revision, as is projected for December 2026. Where this has occurred in the past, Schools have been instructed to avoid teaching new material – offering only revision sessions or similar – during the final two to three days of the final week of teaching, in order to avoid a reduction in the revision period. Based

upon this precedent, the most likely approach for the December 2026 diet would be as follows:

- Teaching of new material to finish on Wednesday 2nd December;
- Exams to commence on Thursday 10th December and conclude on Monday 21st December;
- Exams would be scheduled on Saturday 12th and Saturday 19th December.

13. Alternatively, or as an additional measure, the University could schedule exams beyond 21st December. The University generally remains open until 23rd December (inclusive). Extending the diet into 22nd or 23rd December would either allow the retention of more of the revision period, or a longer diet, with less impact in terms of e.g. students having two exams on the same day. However, such a measure is likely to be unpopular with students who have exams near the end of the diet, and may not wish to travel home so close to Christmas.
14. APRC is asked to comment upon the above issues and the proposed approach set out in section 12, taking account of the constraints identified. With regard to 2027, there may be more flexibility to consider the relative detriment of shortening the revision period versus using Saturdays for exams: APRC is asked to provide a view on these issues.

Resource implications

15. There are resource implications related to the approach to the December exam diet. These are discussed in sections 10-12, above.

Risk management

16. The risks associated with the scheduling of the December exam diet are discussed in sections 10-11, above.

Equality and diversity

17. Section 11 includes discussion of a specific impact upon some Jewish students of scheduling exams on Saturdays. There is provision in the Taught Assessment Regulations (25.2) for Schools and Registry Services to make alternative arrangements for students unable to attend an exam due to religious observance.

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

18. If the academic year dates are approved, these will be published on the University's Semester Dates web pages.

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Appendix 1: Final Academic Year Dates 2027/28 and Provisional Academic Year Dates 2028/29

Academic Year Dates 2027/28

1	13 September 2027	Welcome Week
2	20 September 2027	T1
3	27 September 2027	T2
4	04 October 2027	T3
5	11 October 2027	T4
6	18 October 2027	T5
7	25 October 2027	T6
8	01 November 2027	T7
9	08 November 2027	T8
10	15 November 2027	T9
11	22 November 2027	T10
12	29 November 2027	T11
13	06 December 2027	Revision/Exams
14	13 December 2027	Exams
15	20 December 2027	Exams
16	27 December 2027	Winter vac 1
17	03 January 2028	Winter vac 2
18	10 January 2028	Winter vac 3
19	17 January 2028	T1
20	24 January 2028	T2
21	31 January 2028	T3
22	07 February 2028	T4
23	14 February 2028	T5
24	21 February 2028	Flexible Learning Week
25	28 February 2028	T6
26	06 March 2028	T7
27	13 March 2028	T8
28	20 March 2028	T9
29	27 March 2028	T10
30	03 April 2028	T11
31	10 April 2028	Spring vac 1

32	17 April 2028	Spring vac 2
33	24 April 2028	Revision
34	01 May 2028	Exams
35	08 May 2028	Exams
36	15 May 2028	Exams
37	22 May 2028	Exams
38	29 May 2028	Summer vac 1
39	05 June 2028	Summer vac 2
40	12 June 2028	Summer vac 3
41	19 June 2028	Summer vac 4
42	26 June 2028	Summer vac 5
43	03 July 2028	Summer vac 6
44	10 July 2028	Summer vac 7
45	17 July 2028	Summer vac 8
46	24 July 2028	Summer vac 9
47	31 July 2028	Summer vac 10
48	07 August 2028	Summer vac 11
49	14 August 2028	Summer vac 12
50	21 August 2028	Summer vac 13
51	28 August 2028	Summer vac 14
52	04 September 2028	Summer vac 15

Additional notes 2027/28 - to be incorporated on the University website

Semester 1

Date	Event
13 September 2027	Welcome Week
20 September 2027	Semester 1 starts / Teaching block 1 starts
22 October 2027	Teaching block 1 ends
25 October 2027	Teaching block 2 starts
To be confirmed	Graduations
3 December 2027	Teaching block 2 ends
To be confirmed	Revision
To be confirmed	Examinations
21 December 2027	Semester 1 ends
22 December 2027	Winter teaching vacation starts
To be confirmed	University closed
14 January 2028	Winter teaching vacation ends

Semester 2

Date	Event
12-14 January 2028	January Welcome
17 January 2028	Semester 2 starts / Teaching block 3 starts
18 February 2028	Teaching block 3 ends

Date	Event
21-25 February 2028	Flexible Learning Week
28 February 2028	Teaching block 4 starts
7 April 2028	Teaching block 4 ends
10-21 April 2028	Spring teaching vacation
To be confirmed	Revision
To be confirmed	Examinations
27 May 2028	Semester 2 ends
29 May 2028	Summer teaching vacation starts
To be confirmed	Graduations
To be confirmed	Resit examinations

Provisional Academic Year Dates 2028/29

1	11 September 2028	Welcome Week
2	18 September 2028	T1
3	25 September 2028	T2
4	02 October 2028	T3
5	09 October 2028	T4
6	16 October 2028	T5
7	23 October 2028	T6
8	30 October 2028	T7
9	6 November 2028	T8
10	13 November 2028	T9
11	20 November 2028	T10
12	27 November 2028	T11
13	04 December 2028	Revision/Exams
14	11 December 2028	Exams
15	18 December 2028	Exams
16	25 December 2028	Winter vac 1
17	01 January 2029	Winter vac 2
18	08 January 2029	Winter vac 3
19	15 January 2029	T1
20	22 January 2029	T2
21	29 January 2029	T3
22	05 February 2029	T4
23	12 February 2029	T5
24	19 February 2029	Flexible Learning Week
25	26 February 2029	T6
26	05 March 2029	T7
27	12 March 2029	T8
28	19 March 2029	T9
29	26 March 2029	T10
30	02 April 2029	T11
31	09 April 2029	Spring vac 1
32	16 April 2029	Spring vac 2
33	23 April 2029	Revision

34	30 April 2029	Exams
35	07 May 2029	Exams
36	14 May 2029	Exams
37	21 May 2029	Exams
38	28 May 2029	Summer vac 1
39	04 June 2029	Summer vac 2
40	11 June 2029	Summer vac 3
41	18 June 2029	Summer vac 4
42	25 June 2029	Summer vac 5
43	02 July 2029	Summer vac 6
44	09 July 2029	Summer vac 7
45	16 July 2029	Summer vac 8
46	23 July 2029	Summer vac 9
47	30 July 2029	Summer vac 10
48	06 August 2029	Summer vac 11
49	13 August 2029	Summer vac 12
50	20 August 2029	Summer vac 13
51	27 August 2029	Summer vac 14
52	03 September 2029	Summer vac 15

Additional notes 2027/28 - to be incorporated on the University website

Semester 1

Date	Event
11 September 2028	Welcome Week
18 September 2028	Semester 1 starts / Teaching block 1 starts
20 October 2028	Teaching block 1 ends
23 October 2028	Teaching block 2 starts
To be confirmed	Graduations
1 December 2028	Teaching block 2 ends
To be confirmed	Revision
To be confirmed	Examinations
21 December 2028	Semester 1 ends
22 December 2028	Winter teaching vacation starts
To be confirmed	University closed
12 January 2029	Winter teaching vacation ends

Semester 2

Date	Event
10-12 January 2029	January Welcome
15 January 2029	Semester 2 starts / Teaching block 3 starts
16 February 2029	Teaching block 3 ends
19-23 February 2029	Flexible Learning Week
26 February 2029	Teaching block 4 starts

Date	Event
6 April 2029	Teaching block 4 ends
09-20 April 2029	Spring teaching vacation
To be confirmed	Revision
To be confirmed	Examinations
26 May 2029	Semester 2 ends
28 May 2029	Summer teaching vacation starts
To be confirmed	Graduations
To be confirmed	Resit examinations

Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee

22 January 2026

Postgraduate Research Thesis Guidance

Description of paper

1. This paper requests Committee approval of a new Postgraduate Research Thesis Guidance document, which seeks to incorporate several existing guidance documents into a single document.

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

Action requested / recommendation

2. The Committee is invited to **approve** the proposed Postgraduate Research Thesis Guidance document, provided in Appendix 1.

Background and context

3. Several guidance documents related to postgraduate research theses are scheduled for review during the current session.
 - [Thesis Format Guidance](#)
 - [Including Publications in Postgraduate Research Theses](#)
 - [Lay Summary in Theses](#)
4. Since these documents all relate to the format of postgraduate research theses, we approached the review with the goal of consolidating them into a single document. In doing so, we also included a further document – [Signed Declaration in a Postgraduate Research Thesis](#) – in our consideration, since it belongs in the same family of guidance documents.
5. We produced a draft version of a consolidated document, incorporating relevant content from each of the existing documents. We circulated this to each of the Colleges for circulation among Graduate Schools to allow them to provide comments. We amended the draft based on the feedback provided by Colleges and Graduate Schools, before taking an updated version for comment to the Doctoral College Operations Group in December 2025. The version provided for approval in Appendix 1 takes account of all of the feedback received to date.

Discussion

6. The draft Postgraduate Research Thesis Guidance provided in Appendix 1 incorporates the vast majority of content from each of the existing guidance documents without amendment. Some content has been removed where there was repetition between the different documents (e.g. relating to the inclusion of research publications within a thesis). Some further, minor amendments are proposed to the content:
- 1.2 – reference to a “signed” declaration has been removed – CAHSS use an electronic submission process which does not require a signature from students;
 - 1.2, 1.4 – reference has been added to declaring any use of generative AI in the composition of the thesis within the thesis declaration, with a link provided to the guidance for PGR students regarding the use of generative AI;
 - 3.1 – it is proposed to remove the Lay Summary Form. The Lay Summary is included within the submitted thesis. The form appears to be redundant, with Colleges and Graduate Schools raising no concerns about its removal;
 - 4.7 – clarification added that articles may be included in the thesis for which the student does not retain copyright, with the permission of the copyright holder.
7. APRC is invited to approve the proposed guidance document, for introduction on 1 August 2026. The existing guidance documents (noted in Sections 3 and 4, above) would be removed from publication and archived at the same time.

Resource implications

8. The consolidation of several existing guidance documents into a single document should save time for staff and students by removing the need to find and look through multiple documents in search of relevant information.

Risk management

9. The proposed approach to consolidating existing guidance does not present any new risks. There will be clear communication to Graduate Schools regarding the introduction of the new guidance, to ensure that they are well placed to advise students regarding where to find relevant information regarding postgraduate research theses.

Equality and diversity

10. The proposed new guidance does not present any new equality and diversity implications.

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

11. If the proposed guidance is approved, Academic Quality and Standards will include content regarding the guidance in the annual New and Updated Policies email communication to Schools and Colleges in summer 2026 and on relevant web pages. The guidance will be published for use from 1 August 2026, with the existing guidance documents removed at that time.

H/02/27/02

APRC 25/26 2D

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Postgraduate Research Thesis Guidance

Purpose of Guidance

The guidance sets out standards for the format of postgraduate research theses to provide clarity and consistency. This applies to theses submitted for assessment under the University's [Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees](#). This guidance is not applicable to MSc by Research students.

Scope: Guidance is not Mandatory

Postgraduate research students, supervisors of postgraduate research students, academic and professional support staff involved with postgraduate research thesis submission.

Contact

Students are asked to contact their Graduate School office with any queries about the format of a thesis that are not covered in this guidance note.

Document control

Dates	Version Approved: 22.01.26	Effective Date: 01.08.26	Equality impact assessment: 23.05.12	Last Reviewed: 22.01.26	Next Review: 2029/30
Approving authority	Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC)				
Related policies, procedures, guidelines & regulations	Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study www.drps.ed.ac.uk/ Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/copsupervisorsresearchstudents.pdf Glossary of Terms www.drps.ed.ac.uk/ Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/pgr_assessmentregulations.pdf				
Alternative format	If you require this document in an alternative format please email academicpolicy@ed.ac.uk				
Keywords	Assessment, research assessment, thesis format				

Postgraduate Research Thesis Guidance

1. Submission of theses for assessment

1.1 Students are asked to submit their thesis for assessment electronically.

1.2 Every student must incorporate a declaration at the front of the thesis submitted for assessment, stating:

- (a) that the thesis has been composed by the student, and
- (b) either that the work is the student's own, or, if the student has been a member of a research group, that the student has made a substantial contribution to the work, such contribution being clearly indicated, and
- (c) that the work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified, and
- (d) that any included publications are the student's own work, except where indicated throughout the thesis and summarised and clearly identified on the declarations page of the thesis
- (e) (where relevant) any use of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the composition of the thesis.

1.3 Appendix 1 includes exemplar signed declarations for use in theses.

1.4 Guidance for postgraduate research students regarding the use of generative AI is provided on the University's web pages.

[Generative AI Guidelines for Postgraduate Research Students](#)

2. Formatting of theses for assessment

2.1 Where there is a choice of character style or font, a sans serif font (for example, Helvetica or Arial) should be used for the main text. Character size should be 12 points.

2.2 Text should be set to ensure an even spacing between words for any particular line. Word division at the ends of lines (hyphenation) should be avoided if possible. Further guidance on accessible formatting can be found at:

- [Creating accessible materials](#)

2.3 The title page should have:

- Title of thesis
- Author's name

And at the foot of the page:

- Name of degree
- The University of Edinburgh
- Year of presentation*

Postgraduate Research Thesis Guidance

*The year of presentation refers to the year in which the thesis is submitted for assessment. In the case of a thesis which is resubmitted, the year in which the thesis is resubmitted should be shown as the year of presentation.

2.4 An abstract and lay summary should be included in the thesis after the title page. For more information about the lay summary, see section 3 of this document.

2.5 A full table of contents should follow the abstract and include a list of tables, photographs and any other materials.

2.6 Where diagrams, maps, illustrations or other images are included in the thesis, these should be good quality and high resolution.

2.7 If you use third party material (images, photos, diagrams etc.) within the thesis, the use must be fair and the material correctly attributed. Third party material is any material that is not originally created by you and is borrowed from another source of origin. The use must be limited to what is necessary for the purpose of your work, and it must not negatively impact on the economic rights of the original work. This may mean limiting copying to shorter extracts of a work.

- [University copyright guidance](#)

2.8 We would recommend finding openly licensed content which can be freely shared online.

- [Finding open content](#)

2.9 For accessibility reasons, it is recommended to provide an alternative text to images. Alternative text ("alt text") is a machine-readable tag that describes an image in words if the image cannot be displayed, for example for someone using a screen reader.

- [University accessibility guidelines, policy and legislation](#)

2.10 Formatting of notes should be consistent, inserting the notes at the foot of the page, or at the end of each chapter, or at the end of the thesis. All separate sections, for example bibliography, list of abbreviations, should be identified on the contents page.

3. Abstract and lay summary

3.1 A lay summary must be incorporated at the beginning of the thesis submitted for assessment, and must be included in the final version of the submitted thesis. Lay summaries should conform to the formatting guidance in section 2 of this document. The lay summary is not included in the word count for the thesis.

3.2 A lay summary is intended to facilitate knowledge exchange, public engagement and outreach. It should be written in simple, non-technical terms that are easily understandable by a lay audience, who may be non-professional, non-scientific and outside the research area.

Postgraduate Research Thesis Guidance

3.3 Abstracts, particularly in science, engineering, medicine and veterinary medicine, may be highly technical or contain scientific language that is not easily understandable to readers outside the research area. Therefore, the lay summary is supplementary to the abstract.

3.4 Students may seek advice on the lay summary at any point from their Principal Supervisor.

4. Including publications in Postgraduate Research theses

4.1 There is no requirement in the assessment regulations for publications to be included in theses. This guidance is for students who choose to include publications as a part of their thesis. It is not for students who are matriculated for PhD by Research Publications, for whom there are separate regulations and guidance.

4.2 All PhD theses must form a coherent body of interrelated work that shows the student's ability for critical analysis. Where publications are to be included in the thesis submitted for assessment, they should in effect form a thesis chapter with introductory and concluding text added to place the publication within the structure of the thesis (see example below).

Example of chapter structure:

- Chapter X
- Introduction
- Published journal manuscript*
- Conclusion

*Published articles need not be reformatted and can be inserted, as they appear in the publication.

4.3 Published journal articles cannot be expected to be subject to correction. However, corrections the student may wish to make, or indicated by the thesis examiners, can be dealt with in the introduction or conclusion of the chapter containing the publication.

4.4 Articles included in the thesis which have been submitted for pre-publication (for example in pre-print servers such as bioRxiv, arXiv, SSRN etc) or for publication but which have not been published, or which are in proof, will be included in a format comparable to monograph thesis content. For example, text from unpublished or proof articles can be copied and pasted to match the format of the body of the thesis.

4.5 The complete body of work submitted, including published articles, should be equivalent to that expected of a monograph thesis and adhere to similar word lengths, as laid out within University regulations and local discipline-specific guidance.

Postgraduate Research Thesis Guidance

4.6 It should be emphasised that while peer reviewing of publications is a good measure of progress, it does not guarantee success at examination. The assessment of the standard of the submitted thesis rests with the examiners. Examiners will assess the standard and appropriateness of papers and publications included within a thesis.

4.7 Articles may not be included in the thesis for which students do not retain copyright, except with permission from the copyright holder. As students are responsible for the quality of the submitted thesis, it is therefore also the student's responsibility to ensure that the thesis complies with copyright law and advice should be sought in relation to copyright implications. Open access papers with a Creative Commons licence can be included in a PhD thesis without the need to seek permission from the journal. Supervisors may be able to offer advice in relation to copyright matters.

4.8 Jointly or multiple-authored publications can be included but students must ensure appropriate permission is obtained and their contribution is clearly indicated. Supervisors will be able to advise on discipline-specific expectations.

4.9 The inclusion of journal articles is also permissible for other postgraduate research degrees which are exit routes for the PhD, for example MPhil and MSc by Research.

5. Portfolios of musical compositions

5.1 Portfolios of musical compositions should be submitted digitally.

6. Thesis and non-textual elements for Practice-led MPhil and Doctorates

6.1 The thesis should follow guidance at 1-4 above. Final copies lodged in the Library will contain a permanent record of the exhibit, attached to the thesis (see section 7, on Final thesis submission).

7. Final thesis submission

7.1 The final version of the thesis is submitted electronically only. A declaration is not required in the final version.

- [How to submit the final version of your PhD thesis](#)

22 January 2026

Postgraduate Research Thesis Guidance

Appendix 1 – Exemplar Signed Declarations for use in theses

Examples of a standard declaration:

1. I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where states otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.
2. I confirm that this thesis presented for the degree of [*degree sought*], has
 - i) been composed entirely by myself
 - ii) been solely the result of my own work
 - iii) not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification
3. I declare that this thesis was composed by myself, that the work contained herein is my own except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text, and that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified.

Parts of this work have been published in [*state previous publication*].

Examples of a declaration including collaborative work:

1. The data presented in this thesis was obtained in an experiment carried out by the [*name of collaboration*] in [*location of experiment/where collaboration happened*]. I played a major role in the preparation and execution of the experiment, and the data analysis and interpretation are entirely by own work. Any contributions from colleagues in the collaboration, such as diagrams or calibrations, are explicitly referenced in the text.

I am aware of and understand the university's policy on plagiarism and I certify that this thesis is my own work, except where indicated by referencing, and the work presented in it has not been submitted in support of another degree or qualification from this or any other university or institute of learning.

2. I declare that this thesis is an original report of my research, has been written by me and has not been submitted for any previous degree. The experimental work is almost entirely my own work; the collaborative contributions have been indicated clearly and acknowledged. Due references have been provided on all supporting literatures and resources.

I declare that this thesis was composed by myself, that the work contained herein is my own except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text, and that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Example of a declaration including jointly authored publications:

Postgraduate Research Thesis Guidance

1. I declare that the thesis has been composed by myself and that the work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification. I confirm that the work submitted is my own, except where work which has formed part of jointly-authored publications has been included. My contribution and those of the other authors to this work have been explicitly indicated below. I confirm that appropriate credit has been given within this thesis where reference has been made to the work of others.

The work presented in Chapter [*chapter number*] was previously published in [*publication name*] as [*title of article*] by [*authors – clearly indicate which is the student and author of the declaration. If the supervisor is a co-author this should be clearly indicated as well*]. This study was conceived by all of the authors. I carried out [*description of student's contribution*]. [*This paragraph should be repeated for each journal article included in the thesis.*]



Postgraduate Research Thesis Guidance

Purpose of Guidance

The guidance sets out standards for the format of postgraduate research theses to provide clarity and consistency. This applies to theses submitted for assessment under the University's [Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees](#). This guidance is not applicable to MSc by Research students ~~who submit a dissertation~~.

Scope: Guidance is not Mandatory

Postgraduate research students, supervisors of postgraduate research students, academic and professional support staff involved with postgraduate research thesis submission.

Contact

Students are asked to contact their Graduate School office with any queries about the format of a thesis that are not covered in this guidance note.

Document control

Dates	Version Approved: 22.01.26	Effective Date: 01.08.26	Equality impact assessment: 23.05.12	Last Reviewed: 22.01.26	Next Review: 2029/30
Approving authority	Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC)				
Related policies, procedures, guidelines & regulations	Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study www.drps.ed.ac.uk/ Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/copsupervisorsresearchstudents.pdf Glossary of Terms www.drps.ed.ac.uk/ Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/pgr_assessmentregulations.pdf				
Alternative format	If you require this document in an alternative format please email academicpolicy@ed.ac.uk				
Keywords	Assessment, research assessment, thesis format				

~~Thesis Format Guidance~~Postgraduate Research Thesis Guidance

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~~1. Thesis submitted~~Submission of theses for assessment

1.

1.1 ~~1.1~~ — Students are asked to submit their thesis for assessment electronically.

1.2 Every student must incorporate a ~~signed~~ declaration at the front of the thesis submitted for assessment, stating:

1.2 — Signed Declaration

~~Every student must incorporate a signed declaration* in the thesis submitted for assessment, stating:~~

- (a) ~~(a)~~ that the thesis has been composed by the student, and
- (b) ~~(b)~~ either that the work is the student's own, or, if the student has been a member of a research group, that the student has made a substantial contribution to the work, such contribution being clearly indicated, and
- (c) ~~(c)~~ that the work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified, and
- (d) ~~(d)~~ that any included publications are the student's own work, except where indicated throughout the thesis and summarised and clearly identified on the declarations page of the thesis
- (e) ~~(d)~~ (where relevant) any use of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the composition of the thesis.

1.3 * Signatures may be electronic, for example when sent from a University email address.

1.3 The University's guidance on Signed Declaration in a Postgraduate Research Thesis includes exemplar declarations: Signed Declaration in a Postgraduate Research Thesis guidance Appendix 1 includes exemplar signed declarations for use in theses.

1.4 Guidance for postgraduate research students regarding the use of generative AI is provided on the University's web pages.
Generative AI Guidelines for Postgraduate Research Students

2. Formatting of theses for assessment

2.1 Where there is a choice of character style or font, a sans serif font (for example, Helvetica or Arial) should be used for the main text. Character size should be 12 points.

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2.2 Text should be set to ensure an even spacing between words for any particular line. Word division at the ends of lines (hyphenation) should be avoided if possible. Further guidance on accessible formatting can be found at:

- Creating accessible materials

2.3 The title page should have:

- Title of thesis
- Author's name

And at the foot of the page:

- Name of degree
- The University of Edinburgh
- Year of presentation*

*The year of presentation refers to the year in which the thesis is submitted for assessment. In the case of a thesis which is resubmitted, the year in which the thesis is resubmitted should be shown as the year of presentation.

2.4 An abstract and lay summary should be included in the thesis after the title page. For more information about the lay summary, see section 3 of this document.

2.5 A full table of contents should follow the abstract and include a list of tables, photographs and any other materials.

2.6 Where diagrams, maps, illustrations or other images are included in the thesis, these should be ~~Good quality and~~ high resolution photographic illustrations and diagrams should be used.

2.7 If you use third -party material (images, photos, diagrams etc.) within the thesis, the use must be fair and the material correctly attributed. Third party material is any material that is not originally created by you and is borrowed from another source of origin. The use must be limited to what is necessary for the purpose of your work, and it must not negatively impact on the economic rights of the original work. This may mean limiting copying to shorter extracts of a work.

- University copyright guidance

2.8 We would recommend finding openly licensed content which can be freely shared online.

- Finding open content

2.9 For accessibility reasons, it is recommended to ~~Accessibility:~~ provide an alternative text to images. Alternative text ("alt text") is a machine-readable tag that describes an image in words if the image cannot be displayed, for example for someone using a screen reader.

- University accessibility guidelines, policy and legislation

2.10 Formatting of notes should be consistent, inserting the notes at the foot of the page, or at the end of each chapter, or at the end of the thesis. All separate sections, for example bibliography, list of abbreviations, should be identified on the contents page.

3. Abstract and lay summary

3.1 A lay summary must be incorporated at the beginning of the thesis submitted for assessment, and must be included in the final version of the submitted thesis. Lay summaries should conform to the formatting guidance in section 2 of this document. The lay summary is not included in the word count for the thesis.

3.22 A lay summary is intended to facilitate knowledge exchange, public engagement and outreach. It should be written in simple, non-technical terms that are easily understandable by a lay audience, who may be non-professional, non-scientific and outside the research area.

3.33 Abstracts, particularly in science, engineering, medicine and veterinary medicine, may be highly technical or contain scientific language that is not easily understandable to readers outside the research area. Therefore, the lay summary is supplementary to the abstract.

3.4 The lay summary should be incorporated at the beginning of each copy of the thesis submitted for assessment, and must be included in the final version of the submitted thesis. Students should use the University lay summary form. The lay summary is not included in the word count. Lay summaries should conform to the formatting guidance in section 2 of this document.

3.54 Students may seek advice on the lay summary at any point from their Principal Supervisor. Support and advice on training is available from the Institute for Academic Development:

3.6 Download the lay summary form:

2.4. 1.3—Including published Papers in Postgraduate Research theses

4.1 There is no requirement in the assessment regulations for publications to be included in PhD theses. This guidance is for students who choose to include publications as a part of their thesis. It is not for students who are matriculated for PhD by Research Publications, for whom there are separate regulations and guidance. Where published papers are to be included as a thesis chapter these must include an introduction and

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conclusion and be incorporated into the thesis at the appropriate point*. It is in the interests of students to include any relevant published papers in their thesis. These should either be included as a chapter, an appendix or an electronic copy. If copies of published papers are to be included in the thesis, the publisher's formal permission should be obtained and, where appropriate, the permission of any joint authors. A note that permission has been obtained should be included in the thesis. (Permission from the publisher is not required for papers published in Open Access journals, or openly licensed, for example using Creative Commons licence.)

*Further guidance on including publications in a thesis is available at:
https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/publications_in_thesis.pdf

4.2 All PhD theses must form a coherent body of interrelated work that shows **the student's** ability for critical analysis. Where publications are to be included in the thesis submitted for assessment, they should in effect form a thesis chapter with introductory and concluding text added to place the publication within the structure of the thesis (see example below).

Example of chapter structure:

- Chapter X
- Introduction
- Published journal manuscript*
- Conclusion

*Published articles need not be reformatted and can be inserted, as they appear in the publication.

4.3 Published journal articles cannot be expected to be subject to correction. However, corrections the student may wish to make, or indicated by the thesis examiners, can be dealt with in the introduction or conclusion of the chapter containing the publication.

4.4 Articles included in the thesis which have been submitted for pre-publication (for example in pre-print servers such as bioRxiv, arXiv, SSRN etc) or for publication but which have not been published, or which are in proof, will be included in a format comparable to monograph thesis content. For example, text from unpublished or proof articles can be copied and pasted to match the format of the body of the thesis.

4.5 The complete body of work submitted, including published articles, should be equivalent to that expected of a monograph thesis and adhere to similar word lengths, as laid out within University regulations and local discipline-specific guidance.

4.6 It should be emphasised that while peer reviewing of publications is a good measure of progress, it does not guarantee success at examination. The assessment of the standard of the submitted thesis rests with the examiners. Examiners will assess the standard and appropriateness of papers and publications included within a thesis.

Thesis Format Guidance

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4.7 Articles may not be included in the thesis for which students do not retain copyright, except with permission from the copyright holder. As students are responsible for the quality of the submitted thesis, it is therefore also the student's responsibility to ensure that the thesis complies with copyright law and advice should be sought in relation to copyright implications. Open access papers with a Creative Commons licence can be included in a PhD thesis without the need to seek permission from the journal. Supervisors may be able to offer advice in relation to copyright matters.

4.8 Jointly or multiple-authored publications can be included but students must ensure appropriate permission is obtained and their contribution is clearly indicated. Supervisors will be able to advise on discipline-specific expectations. (See also the University's guidance on Signed Declaration in a Research Thesis.)

4.9 The inclusion of journal articles is also permissible for other postgraduate research degrees which are exit routes for the PhD, for example MPhil and MSc by Research.

~~Good quality, high resolution photographic illustrations and diagrams should be used.~~

~~If you use third party material (images, photos, diagrams etc) within the thesis the use must be fair and the material correctly attributed. Third party material is any material that is not originally created by you and is borrowed from another source of origin. The use must be limited to what is necessary for the purpose of your work, and it must not negatively impact on the economic rights of the original work. This may mean limiting copying to shorter extracts of a work.~~

~~•~~

~~We would recommend finding openly licensed content which can be freely shared online.~~

~~•~~

~~Accessibility: provide an alternative text to images. Alternative text ("alt text") is a machine readable tag that describes an image in words if the image cannot be displayed, for example for someone using a screen reader.~~

~~•~~

3.5. 3. Portfolios of musical compositions

5.1 Portfolios of musical compositions should be submitted digitally. Further advice and guidance is available on the Scholarly Communications Team website:

Or by contacting: scholcomms@ed.ac.uk

4.6. 4. Thesis and non-textual elements for Practice-led MPhil and Doctorates

6.1 The thesis should follow guidance at 1-~~4~~ and ~~2~~ above. Final copies lodged in the Library will contain a permanent record of the exhibit, attached to the thesis (see section 7, on Final thesis submission).

5.7. 5. A note on Final Thesis thesis Submissionsubmission

7.1 The final version of the thesis is submitted electronically only. A ~~signed~~ declaration is not required in the final version.

- [How to submit the final version of your PhD thesis](#)

14 August 2023 **22 January 2026**

Appendix 1 – Exemplar Signed Declarations for use in theses

Examples of a standard declaration:

1. I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where states otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.
2. I confirm that this thesis presented for the degree of [degree sought], has
 - i) been composed entirely by myself
 - ii) been solely the result of my own work
 - iii) not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification
3. I declare that this thesis was composed by myself, that the work contained herein is my own except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text, and that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified.

Parts of this work have been published in [state previous publication].

Examples of a declaration including collaborative work:

1. The data presented in this thesis was obtained in an experiment carried out by the [name of collaboration] in [location of experiment/where collaboration happened]. I played a major role in the preparation and execution of the experiment, and the data analysis and interpretation are entirely by own work. Any contributions from colleagues in the collaboration, such as diagrams or calibrations, are explicitly referenced in the text.

I am aware of and understand the university's policy on plagiarism and I certify that this thesis is my own work, except where indicated by referencing, and the work presented in it has not been submitted in support of another degree or qualification from this or any other university or institute of learning.

2. I declare that this thesis is an original report of my research, has been written by me and has not been submitted for any previous degree. The experimental work is almost entirely my own work; the collaborative contributions have been indicated clearly and acknowledged. Due references have been provided on all supporting literatures and resources.

I declare that this thesis was composed by myself, that the work contained herein is my own except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text, and that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Example of a declaration including jointly authored publications:

1. I declare that the thesis has been composed by myself and that the work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification. I confirm that the work submitted is my own, except where work which has formed part of jointly-authored publications has been included. My contribution and those of the other authors to this work have been explicitly indicated below. I confirm that appropriate credit has been given within this thesis where reference has been made to the work of others.

The work presented in Chapter [chapter number] was previously published in [publication name] as [title of article] by [authors – clearly indicate which is the student and author of the declaration. If the supervisor is a co-author this should be clearly indicated as well]. This study was conceived by all of the authors. I carried out [description of student's contribution]. [This paragraph should be repeated for each journal article included in the thesis.]

Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee**22 January 2026****APRC Priorities 2025/26 – mid-year update****Description of paper**

1. This paper provides the Committee with an update regarding progress against APRC's agreed priorities for 2025/26.

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

Action requested / recommendation

2. The paper is provided for information only, with the Committee invited to note its contents.

Background and context

3. In April 2025, APRC agreed the following priorities for the 2025/26 academic year.

Proposed priority	Curriculum Transformation
Rationale and fit with remit	<p>The Curriculum Transformation Programme is a major University strategic priority which aligns to Strategy 2030. It is also relevant to the committee remit:</p> <p>2.1 Oversee the development, maintenance and implementation of an academic regulatory framework which effectively supports and underpins the University's educational activities.</p> <p>2.2 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.</p>
Area of focus and objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider regulatory implications of elements of the PGT curriculum, including progression points, awarding criteria, programme length, pass marks, and Recognition of Prior Learning;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider and approve where relevant policies to articulate the PGT programme archetypes (contingent on approval of the archetypes by Senate).
Regulatory/external requirement?	No

Proposed priority	Scheduled review of policies
Rationale and fit with remit	<p>APRC revised the schedule of reviews for policies in March 2023 to group these more thematically and address a backlog in reviews generated during the pandemic period. The review of some policies scheduled for 2024/25 has been postponed to 2025/26.</p> <p>Maintenance of the framework of policies and regulations is central to APRC's remit:</p> <p>2.1 Oversee the development, maintenance and implementation of an academic regulatory framework which effectively supports and underpins the University's educational activities.</p>
Area of focus and objectives	<p>Policies scheduled for review during 2025/26 include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Code of Student Conduct Dual, Double and Multiple Awards Policy Various documents relating to PGR assessment
Regulatory/external requirement?	Yes. Regular review of core practices as enshrined in policy is an expectation under the QAA UK Quality Code.

Discussion

- The below provides an update regarding progress against the priorities for the current session.

Curriculum Transformation

- The University has refined its approach to curriculum development, with prioritised components of the programme now being taken forward via a Curriculum Development and Innovation Group aligned to the Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Plan and reporting to Senate Education Committee. While the programme of work will change, APRC will be consulted as appropriate where developments relate to areas of policy within the Committee's remit.

Scheduled review of policies

- Progress is being made with regard to the review schedule for policies, with guidance documents relating to PGR theses being brought for approval to the

January meeting of APRC. The Code of Student Conduct is currently being reviewed by the Office of Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals (OSCCA). It is anticipated that proposed revisions to the Code will be brought for approval to the May 2026 meeting of APRC (before proceeding through the Court Resolution process). Colleges and Schools are being consulted about requested amendments to the Assessment and Degree Regulations, with any proposals for essential updates coming for approval to the March or May meetings of APRC.

7. Due to the reallocation of staff resources within Academic Quality and Standards to meet institutional priorities (e.g. relating to the Learning and Teaching Workstream, and the Board of Examiners Project), some policy reviews scheduled for the current session will not be completed by the end of the session. The below table provides information regarding the status of documents scheduled for review in the current session. Academic Quality and Standards will seek to take forward the outstanding reviews on a prioritised basis, and provide an update to APRC in due course.

Document	Status of review
Course Organiser Outline of Role	Not started.
Degree Regulations – Postgraduate	Consultation with Colleges and Schools underway. Expected at March 2026 APRC.
Degree Regulations – Undergraduate	Consultation with Colleges and Schools underway. Expected at March 2026 APRC.
Degree Programme Specification Guidance	Not started.
Dual, Double and Multiple Awards Policy	Not started.
Code of Student Conduct	Being reviewed by OSCCA. Expected at May 2026 APRC.
Expected Behaviour Policy in relation to Appeals, Complaints, Student Conduct and Related Procedures	Being reviewed by OSCCA. Expected at May 2026 APRC.
Framework for Curricula	Not started.
Models for Degree Types	Not started.
Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees	Consultation with Colleges and Schools underway. Expected at May 2026 APRC.
Taught Assessment Regulations	Consultation with Colleges and Schools underway. Expected at May 2026 APRC.
Thesis Format Guidance	For approval at January 2026 APRC.

Including Publications in Postgraduate Research Thesis: Guidance	For approval at January 2026 APRC.
Lay Summary in Theses - Guidance	For approval at January 2026 APRC.
PhD by Research oral examinations by video link (Videolinked PhD oral)	Not started.

Resource implications

8. The paper notes some resource challenges with regard to fulfilling to planned review schedule for policies in section 7.

Risk management

9. Section 7 notes a delay to the scheduled review of some policies. It is not anticipated that delays to scheduled reviews should lead to significant risks to the experience of students or staff, or to compliance with external requirements.

Equality and diversity

10. The paper does not carry any equality and diversity implications.

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

11. APRC will be provided with further verbal updates regarding progress against agreed priorities at future meetings.

Author

Dr Adam Bunni
Head of Academic Policy and Regulations
Academic Quality and Standards

Presenter

Dr Adam Bunni

Freedom of Information Open