

The University of Edinburgh

Senate Quality Assurance Committee

Thursday 23rd April 2026, 2-5pm
Hybrid meeting: Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House
and Microsoft Teams

AGENDA

1.	Welcome and Apologies	
2.	Minutes of the previous meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none">February 2026	SQAC 25/26 4A
3.	Matters Arising <ul style="list-style-type: none">Convener's communications	Verbal Update
SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS		
4.	Degree Outcomes Analysis For discussion.	SQAC 25/26 4B
5.	Proposed updates to the Programme and Course Approval and Management Policy and Boards of Studies Terms of Reference For approval.	SQAC 25/26 4C
6.	External Examiners – Exceptional Appointments For noting.	SQAC 25/26 4D
7.	Any Other Business	
8.	Date of next meeting Thursday 14 th May 2026 2-5pm, Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House and Microsoft Teams	

The University of Edinburgh
Senate Quality Assurance Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on
Thursday 26th February 2026, 14:00-17:00
Hybrid meeting: Business School Boardroom, George Square
and Microsoft Teams

1. Attendance

Present:	Position:
Professor Tina Harrison	Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) (Convener)
Faten Adam	School Representative of CSE
Katya Amott	Vice President (Education), Students' Association
Professor Matthew Bailey	Dean of Quality, CMVM
Dr Michael Barany	Senate Representative
Professor Cathy Bovill	Head of Programme Development and Teaching Enhancement, Institute for Academic Development
Marianne Brown	Head of Academic Planning, Registry Services (co-opted)
Brian Connolly	Academic Policy Manager, Academic Quality and Standards, Registry Services
Dr Anne Desler	School Representative of CAHSS
Professor James Hopgood	Dean of Quality and Enhancement, CSE
Heather Innes	Academic Engagement and Policy Co-ordinator, Student's Association
Dr Jill Mackay	School Representative of CMVM
Dr Sari Pennings	Senate Representative
Professor Carol Richardson	Senate Representative
Dr Emily Taylor	Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Validation, CAHSS
Sinéad Docherty	Committee Secretary, Academic Quality and Standards, Registry Services
In attendance:	
Fiona Buckland	Learning Technology Team Manager, Learning Teaching and Web Services, Information Services Group
Cristina Matthews	Senior Academic Quality and Standards Manager (Projects), Academic Quality and Standards, Registry Services
Ailsa Taylor	Academic Policy Officer, Office for Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals
Amy Willis	Appeals and Complaints Team Lead (Acting Up), Office for Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals
Apologies:	
Professor Laura Bradley	Doctoral College Representative (CAHSS, PGR)
Professor Ramon Grima	Director of Quality, School of Biological Sciences, CSE (co-opted)
Professor Nazira Karodia	Deputy Vice Chancellor and Vice Principal of Learning & Teaching, Edinburgh Napier University
Dr Neneh Rowa-Dewar	Director of Students, EFI (co-opted)

2. Welcome

The Convener welcomed members to the meeting and noted the apologies from those members unable to attend.

3. Minutes of previous minutes (SQAC 25/26 3A)

The Convener informed members that some amendments had been made to the minutes prior to the meeting, following circulation and feedback on the initial draft.

Action: Committee Secretary to amend minutes to reflect the agreed changes and publish on Committee webpage.

4. Matters Arising

Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP)

The Committee were informed that the University of Edinburgh has created a reporting template which has been circulated to Scottish institutions as part of STEP activity. This template requests information on data collection and institutional practices to address the awarding gap. Responses will be collated and shared with the Committee in due course.

Self-Evaluation Action Plan (SEAP)

Colleagues in EUSA have undertaken roadshows around the Colleges and campuses in order to raise student awareness of the SEAP and allow students to engage with the themes. Students were invited to input into the document and EUSA will build actions around the student input. Assessment and Feedback, as a theme, had the highest level of student engagement during the roadshows. Outcomes from these roadshow sessions will feed into the SEAP submission for 2025/26.

Annual Monitoring Themes – University Response

The Convener informed the Committee that the Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary, Students has been asked for further response to the issues raised through the annual monitoring process on the theme of Staff and Student Experience. This response will be presented to the next meeting of SQAC.

There was discussion of how best to move forward with the theme of English Language skills within the student population. Interventions and enhancement must be considered within the existing budgets. Peer support was proposed as an effective way to improve language skills. The Convener proposed that a short life working group be set up, within the Learning and Teaching workstream, to take this work forward. Members of the Committee will be invited to contribute through the group.

Action: Convener to arrange the creation of an English Language Skills Short Life Working Group.

QAA Report on Glasgow University

The Committee were informed that the QAA has completed its Targeted Peer Review of the University of Glasgow to assess its academic standards and that report is available online.

Members were advised that the Academic Development Team within the University of Edinburgh have developed a new training course around Competence Standards and Reasonable Adjustments and, in light of the sector review that is anticipated following the Glasgow report, staff are encouraged to complete this training. It was noted that without training being mandatory, it is difficult to motivate all staff to undertake the training course, although even mandated training does not always have full uptake amongst staff. It was acknowledged that a University-level initiative would be required to enforce mandatory training and ensure compliance.

5. Annual Reports 2024/25

Student Conduct (SQAC 25/26 3B closed paper)

A colleague from the Office for Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals (OSCCA) was in attendance to speak to the Student Conduct report. Key information highlighted to the Committee included the increased numbers of cases considered by Student Discipline Committees in 2024/25 and the resulting increase in workload for colleagues within OSCCA.

The Committee noted the range of issues from academic misconduct to criminal investigations involving the Police. The University does not investigate conduct allegations at the same time as a police investigation, and therefore must wait until police proceedings are complete. This can cause a long delay for students. It was suggested that support mechanisms should be put in place for students returning after a long suspension when an allegation has not been upheld. In such cases, the student may have been subject to a compulsory Authorised Interruption of Studies (AIS) whilst investigations took place. It was also noted that suspensions can have an impact on stipends and visa requirements.

The College Dean of Quality and Enhancement for CSE questioned the rate of misuse of GenAI within CSE which was reported as zero in table 6 of the paper. It was observed that this might reflect an issue with recording cases within the College.

Action: Colleagues in CSE Quality Office to raise this at the College Quality Committee and clarify the process for reporting instances of misuse of GenAI within the College.

Academic Appeals (SQAC 25/26 3C - closed paper)

The paper was presented by the Appeals and Complaints Team Lead (Acting Up) from within OSCCA. The Committee was informed that the number of appeals has been increasing both at the University of Edinburgh and across the sector. 539 cases were

received by the University in 2024/25, and of these 7.2% (39 cases) were upheld. The upheld rate in recent years at the University of Edinburgh has been between 5 -11%. Committee members were reminded that Schools can take action, where possible, before an appeal goes through the full appeal process by committee and around 5% of total cases are resolved this way.

Members were informed that legal challenges are becoming more common with students appointing solicitors to submit an academic appeal on their behalf. The responses required from the Appeals team have become more complex as cases have become more intricate. However, the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) is confident in the University's process to investigate and respond to appeals. There is no evidence of trends or patterns which indicate systematic issues leading students to submit academic appeals. It was noted that students can submit an appeal as a group. There was an appeal received on behalf of a group of students within the School of Economics which was not upheld.

There was discussion of the need to better establish staff and student expectation of what the academic appeals process is for and what is within its remit. It was reported that there is a misconception from some appellants that marks can be overturned, and some concerns that staff may be directing students to the appeals procedure when it may be appropriate for the School to discuss with the student(s) why a decision was made in the first instance. The Appeals and Complaints Team Lead reflected that the appeals department may not be perceived as an area which staff can ask for advice but the team are happy to engage with staff and offer advice before a situation escalates to a formal appeal.

With regard to enhancing staff knowledge of the appeals remit and process, it was suggested that a "process spotlight" could be helpful. This is a practice used within the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies to highlight a service, incorporate learnings and raise awareness amongst School based staff. The Appeals and Complaints Team Lead agreed to be involved in this and to produce some short guidance for the benefit of staff more widely.

Action: Appeals and Complaints Team Lead to produce short guidance on the academic appeals remit and process that can be shared with staff across Schools.

Complaints (SQAC 2/26 3D - closed paper)

The Committee were informed that the Complaints report for 2024/25 has been enhanced from the reports in previous years. Attention has been given to better categorisation of themes and surfacing areas where complaints are under reported. Stage 1 complaints are mostly resolved by the local area. Stage 2 complaints, which are managed by the OSCCA team, are more complex cases, not all of which are upheld.

It was noted that some Schools within CAHSS reported notably higher levels of complaints. The Complaints Lead observed that this may be due to Schools having better recording and reporting practices, rather than a higher proportion of cases. The Complaints team wish to highlight to Schools that they all have a responsibility for dealing with complaints and managing cases at local level, where possible. This is intended to

empower Schools to be open and responsive to complaints and take opportunities to apply learnings and enhancement where appropriate.

Action: CAHSS Dean and Complaints Team Lead to review case numbers within CAHSS and identify any work needed around reporting communication with Schools.

The Committee were made aware that colleagues within OSCCA had experienced several instances of unacceptable behaviour throughout their casework investigations. The team are feeding into the review of the Dignity & Respect Policy and the appropriate management areas are aware of the team's experiences. Members were reminded that the complaints team deal with members of the public and family members of students, and therefore the Dignity and Respect Policy has its limitations.

6. Student Support Evaluation (SQAC 25/26 3E)

The Committee received the first annual report evaluating the Student Support Model, submitted on behalf of the Student Support Continuous Improvement Group (SSCIG) which is currently overseeing the evaluation of the model. The Committee discussed a key point identified in the report; the need to maintain and build capacity within Student Support Teams across Schools. Stress points are evident in particular areas where the Student Advisor workload is high and students may not have timely access to individual meetings with their advisors.

With regard to evidencing student advisor capacity, the Committee proposed that SSCIG ask Schools for the current ratios of Student Advisors to students and compare this with the original model and budget. HR data is informed by staff turnover but this does not capture instances of a staff member leaving for an internal role. This needs to be tracked locally by Schools and it is not expected that Schools would have this data readily available. Committee members agreed that the report had analysed the available data well, but questions remain about areas which are not well covered by available data, such as timely conversations with Student Advisors about course enrolment options, and may which need further targeting to better understand the effectiveness of the student support model.

Action: SSCIG to send communication to Schools and collect information on ratios of student advisors to students.

Action: Head of Academic Planning to clarify whether Student Advisor roles can be filled in the current recruitment freeze.

On behalf of students and in relation to academic conversations, the EUSA VP Education reported that students can feel as if academic staff do not want to engage with them. Students have also reported uncertainty on whether office hours are mandatory and seek clarity on opportunities to engage with academic staff. It was recognised that differing experiences across the student community creates a disparity and there must be a consistent approach with institutional guidance. The Committee were informed that academic advice is an area of focus for SSCIG and the group are looking to enhance the role descriptor for Cohort Leads to assist with improvements in this area.

Future reports to the Committee may include recommendations from SSCIG as to how to develop and refine the model, and the Group may seek the support of the Committee in these areas. The Committee will retain its role in overseeing quality assurance of the model and its effectiveness in supporting students.

7. Programme and Course Approval and Management Policy (SQAC 25/26 3F)

The Committee discussed proposed changes to the Programme and Course Approval and Management Policy (PCAM), now overseen by SQAC instead of the Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC). A colleague from Academic Quality and Standards (AQS) attended to present the paper.

Proposed changes include shifting from using credit percentages to focusing on total credit numbers, adding a section to cover UKVI requirements around remote delivery and clarifying publishing requirements in line with Competition and Markets Authority standards. There is a common understanding that marketing law relates to 20% change within the programme, but for a PGT programme with 20 credit courses, anything more than one change at course level constitutes a major change. The threshold for changes within a programme and the obligation to inform students of significant change within the programme should be clearly outlined in the revised policy.

It was also proposed that non-credit bearing provision be clearly included within the policy, rather than as an appendix which risks being overlooked. The Dean for CAHSS emphasised that the Centre for Open Learning has a significant offering of non-credit bearing provision and the policy review must be mindful of incorporating their requirements into the content. Members further advised that the SFC and QAA should be referenced in the document, as the policy and practice also needs to align with requirements set by these external bodies.

Discussion considered whether operational guidance for Boards of Studies should be integrated into the policy, as it currently is, or whether it should be embedded instead into the Boards of Studies terms of reference (TOR). Members agreed that it would be better suited to the TORs and then colleagues need only consult one document to understand the Boards of Studies terms and processes. The TOR are governed by University Court and amendments require Court resolution. It was agreed that the operational guidance remain within the PCAM policy in the interim, until the BoS TORs are updated by Court and the guidance be relocated to that document.

Action: Senior Academic Quality and Standards Manager to revise policy to reflect above changes and return the policy for approval in the April meeting of the Committee.

Action: Senior Academic Quality and Standards Manager to propose revisions to Boards of Studies Terms of Reference to University Court.

Members agreed that it would be beneficial to create institution-wide standardised forms at institutional level to streamline processes and clarify responsibilities, and have these replace School-specific versions which can lead to variation in process and interpretation

of policy. Standardised forms are already utilised in CMVM and members from that College reported that this was helpful for establishing accountability and setting expectations. The presenter of this paper noted that standardised forms will be considered alongside development of the guidance to accompany the policy.

8. Annual Monitoring Templates (SQAC 25/26 3G)

The Committee discussed the annual monitoring templates which will be circulated at programme, School and College level in order for areas to report on their annual QA activity. Members were informed of updates already made to the templates, including greater emphasis on identifying and effectively addressing awarding gaps and a bullet point approach to questions in order to gather more consistent responses which address all aspects of the guidance.

The Committee agreed that it was too early to ask for responses against the implementation of the new Skills for Success framework, since this was introduced at the start of AY 26/27. A section has been included to ask for reporting on the Learning and Teaching Strategy. It was acknowledged that the templates can reference the L&T strategy to raise awareness but the implementation plan is still being developed. The Learning and Teaching Strategy Group has responsibility for guiding and supporting Schools in the implementation of the strategy.

Members were informed that the Academic Quality & Standards team are exploring more effective ways to manage the submission and analysis of the School reports. AQS will meet with the Digital Efficiency Programme team to review the process and look for improvements.

It was agreed that the templates would be circulated via e-business for final comments from members before the final drafts are published. Members were encouraged to share the drafts with School Directors of Quality who can advise if the guidance provided is helpful and surface any concerns about data analysis at School and programme level.

Action: Committee Secretary to circulate annual monitoring templates drafts via e-business for final comments and approval.

9. Short Courses Annual Report (SQAC 25/26 3H)

The Learning Technology Team Manager from the Learning Teaching and Web Services team was in attendance to present the report to the Committee. Members were informed that the report included the annual update on short courses and the evaluation of the platform. However, going forward these will be presented in two different reports.

Discussion amongst members highlighted some workload challenges with short courses going through the Boards of Studies process. The scale of work and number of courses in some areas has necessitated that consideration be managed via e-business following board meetings. To help with these challenges, Committee members were supportive of the creation of a standardised course approval form designed for non-credit bearing courses and institutional issued guidance around incorporating the approval and oversight into existing processes.

It was noted that the report demonstrates improved insight into tracking students into the University, as requested following the previous years' report. The Committee encouraged more data on the impact of short courses, including data at the point of completion as well as entry. However, the Learning Technology Team Manager advised that this is difficult to track on Coursera because the platform owns that data. The team within the University report on the impact that they can evidence with the data available to them.

10. Committee Priorities – mid-year update (SQAC 25/26 3I)

The Committee noted an update outlining the progress against the Committee's priorities for 2025/26. Members were reminded that the same update will also be presented to the March meeting of Senate. No comments were received in relation to the update.

11. A.O.B.

The Head of Academic Planning advised members that a package surrounding Student Voice and Student-Staff Liaison Committees will be brought to SQAC for consideration before the end of the academic year. Consultation with Schools and Colleges is planned within the next month to get their input into the policy and practices review.

The Dean of Quality for CMVM informed members that he would be stepping down from the role at the end of the academic year. Within the College, and following the restructuring, Directors of Quality are still to be appointed to research focused Schools which only have PGR students. The restructuring of Schools has had an impact on the IPR schedule within the College and a postponement will be requested from the SFC for the Clinical Sciences PGT review, which is now within the Edinburgh Medical School portfolio.

Action: Convener to communicate with new Schools in CMVM around the timeframe for appointing School Directors of Quality.

Action: AQS colleagues and CMVM Dean of Quality to follow up with IPR scheduling arrangements.

12. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 23rd April February 2026, 2-5pm.

Senate Quality Assurance Committee

April 2026

2024/25 Degrees Awarded Analysis

Description of paper

1. This paper provides an overview of the degree outcomes awarded to students who completed their studies in 2024/25 academic year. This includes outcomes at institutional and School level, and across key student groups.

Fit with remit

Quality Assurance Committee	Y/N
Oversee the delivery and enhancement of the University's quality assurance framework, ensuring that it meets external requirements.	Y
Maintain oversight of the outcomes of the quality assurance framework, ensuring that actions are addressed, and support the sharing of good practice.	Y
Promote the quality assurance framework as an important part of the University's activities and ensure that the outcomes inform relevant University business.	Y
Support the University's engagement with external quality requirements and activities, including: Enhancement-Led Institutional Review, the UK Quality Code, and responses to consultations and initiatives.	Y
Identify areas for innovation and enhancement of the student experience and ensure that these inform Senate Education Committee's policy development.	Y
Consider the implications of the Committee's work and its decisions in the context of external initiatives and compliance and legal frameworks, particularly in relation to equality and diversity.	Y

Action requested / recommendation

2. The committee are asked to note and discuss this paper.

Background and context

3. Analysis of the degree outcomes awarded by the University is reviewed annually by Senate Quality Assurance Committee as part of ensuring academic standards are monitored and maintained.
4. Outcomes are presented across a five-year period to illustrate trends over time, with summaries of year-on-year changes and overall shifts across the period. It should be noted in reviewing changes over this five-year period (2020/21 to 2024/25) that several factors impacted outcomes during this time, therefore change across this period should be understood in this context.
5. Known factors that have impacted degree outcomes across all, or parts of, the University within the five-year period include:
 - **2020/21** – On-going impact of Covid 19

- **2022/23** – Marking and assessment boycott
6. The paper also provides insights into the awarding gap between key student groups.

Discussion

7. Full analysis and data are presented within the main body of the paper. At institutional level, the key outcomes are:
- In 2024/25, approximately one-third (33.6%) of undergraduate students at the University achieved a First Class degree. This represents a significant decrease of 1.8 percentage points compared to 2023/24.
 - 88.6% of students at the University obtained a degree with a high classification. This reflects a significant decrease of 1.6 percentage points compared to 2023/24.
8. An awarding gap persists between student groups across the demographic and widening participation factors analysed. The awarding gap for high classification degrees awarded has increased across sex, disability, ethnicity and widening participation groups. The gap between Scottish domiciled students and RUK and Overseas students has decreased for high classification awards but has increased for attainment of First-Class degrees.

Resource implications

9. There are no resource implications of this work.

Risk management

10. The University must maintain oversight of the distribution of degrees awarded to ensure academic standards are monitored.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

11. This paper does not contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Equality & diversity

12. Outcomes across key student groups are included in analysis to allow oversight of awarding gaps.

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

13. This paper presents an update for discussion. Outcomes will be shared with local areas and the Data Monitoring Task Group for consideration.

Author

Vivian So – Senior Analyst

*Marianne Brown – Head of Academic
Planning, Registry Services*

April 2026

Presenter

Marianne Brown

Freedom of Information

Open

Degrees Awarded Analysis

Student Analytics, Insights & Modelling

April 2026

Introduction

This report presents analysis on degree award outcomes for undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate taught (PGT) students at the University over the past five academic years from 2020/21 to 2024/25. The data is obtained internally from the Student Record system¹, and includes award classification information for all students who completed their degree programmes of study:

- All awards, including both exit and interim awards.
- All award qualifications, including Degrees, Undergraduate Certificate of Higher Education, and Undergraduate Diploma of Higher Education.
- All programmes, including integrated masters, medical, dental and veterinary medicines degrees.
- All SRUC programmes are excluded.
- High classification is defined as follow:
 - Undergraduate:
 - Honours programmes: First Classification or Second Class, Division 1
 - Integrated masters, MBChB and BVM&S programmes: Target award is the same as the award they received (e.g., Pass or above)
 - Postgraduate Taught:
 - Distinction or Merit: Target award is the same as the awarded qualification
- Low classification is defined as follow:
 - Undergraduate:
 - Second Class, Division 2 or Third Class

The analysis examines trends in the proportion of students who achieved a First Class degree (or equivalent degree for programmes using different classification systems), a high classification degree, and a low classification degree, at both University and School levels. It also examines differences in awarding outcomes between student demographic groups and widening participation² factors for undergraduate degrees.

As with previous reports, data is analysed over a five-year period. Factors which have impacted outcomes across all, or parts, of the University during this period are:

¹ The data is a snapshot taken on 12 January 2025.

² Widening participation data is only available for UK-domiciled undergraduate students.

- **2022/23** – Marking and assessment boycott
- **2024/25** – Impact of CMVM Restructuring on data reporting, from August 2025 onwards,
 - All programmes (both taught and research) for the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies will remain unchanged
 - All programmes (both taught and research) Edinburgh Medical School will remain unchanged
 - All taught programmes from Deanery of Biomedical Sciences, Deanery of Clinical Sciences, and Deanery of Molecular, Genetic and Population Health Sciences will transfer to Edinburgh Medical School

Undergraduate

First Class Degrees

In the 2024/25 academic year, about one-third (33.6%) of UG students at the University received a First Class degree (or Distinction for MBChB and MVM&S programmes). This marks a significant decrease of 1.8% from the 2023/24 session, and a significant decline of 12.9% over the past five years.

Year	% First Class
2020/21	46.5%
2021/22	39.4%
2022/23	35.7%
2023/24	35.4%
2024/25	33.6%

The School of Informatics continuously had the highest proportion students achieving a First Class degree (59.1%) in 2024/25. It was followed by the School of Chemistry with 49.4%, the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies at 43.9%, the School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures at 42.2%, and the School of Mathematics, which saw 40.5% receiving this classification.

Most Schools maintained a steady trend in the proportion of First Class degrees awarded between 2023/24 and 2024/25. However, the School of Chemistry saw a significant increase of 13.7%, whereas significant decreases were noted in the Edinburgh Medical School (-5.6%) and the School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures (-6.6%). Substantial declines were also experienced by the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies (-10.0%) and the School of Divinity (-9.1%), but these changes were not statistically significant.

Over the five-year period, a downward trend was observed in the proportion of First Class degrees awarded. Declines varied, from 3.3% in the School of Economics to 30.3% in the Edinburgh Law School, with fourteen Schools experiencing significant decreases from 2020/21 to 2024/25.

		2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	YoY Change	5-Year Change
CAHSS	BUS	36.3%	33.0%	33.9%	26.4%	30.0%	3.5%	-6.3%
	DIV	38.0%	19.4%	23.9%	32.2%	23.1%	-9.1%	-15.0%
	ECA	45.5%	41.6%	36.5%	38.2%	37.3%	-0.9%	-8.2% [†]
	ECN	39.0%	29.4%	33.9%	34.7%	35.7%	1.0%	-3.3%

	EDU	52.0%	24.1%	32.8%	31.7%	26.4%	-5.3%	-25.6% [†]
	HCA	45.8%	32.8%	29.8%	33.6%	30.0%	-3.6%	-15.8% [†]
	HEA	62.2%	51.1%	32.7%	32.2%	39.4%	7.2%	-22.8% [†]
	LAW	58.4%	42.3%	30.2%	33.2%	28.2%	-5.0%	-30.3% [†]
	LLC	70.1%	57.1%	49.1%	48.9%	42.2%	-6.6% [†]	-27.9% [†]
	PPL	48.5%	39.1%	33.3%	37.2%	35.5%	-1.7%	-13.0% [†]
	SPS	42.5%	36.1%	31.3%	32.7%	36.3%	3.6%	-6.2%
CSE	BIO	42.3%	42.4%	33.7%	33.8%	30.6%	-3.2%	-11.8% [†]
	CHE	69.2%	52.6%	45.1%	35.7%	49.4%	13.7% [†]	-19.7% [†]
	ENG	41.7%	35.5%	26.9%	32.1%	37.1%	5.0%	-4.6%
	GEO	42.0%	37.7%	30.7%	33.5%	31.0%	-2.5%	-11.1% [†]
	INF	73.4%	61.4%	57.5%	56.2%	59.1%	2.9%	-14.4% [†]
	MAT	58.4%	55.9%	64.0%	45.1%	40.5%	-4.6%	-17.9% [†]
	PHY	45.9%	48.6%	46.0%	35.8%	34.1%	-1.7%	-11.8% [†]
CMVM	EMS	19.3%	18.7%	20.5%	20.3%	14.7%	-5.6% [†]	-4.7% [†]
	VET	51.4%	60.9%	56.8%	53.9%	43.9%	-10.0%	-7.4%

[†] The YoY/5Y difference is statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval.

High Classification Degrees

In the 2024/25 academic year, 88.6% of students at the University achieved degrees with a high classification. There was a significant decrease of 1.6% compared to 2023/24, and a significant decrease in 5.6% over the last 5 years.

Year	% High Classification
2020/21	94.2%
2021/22	91.0%
2022/23	89.2%
2023/24	90.3%
2024/25	88.6%

More than 77% of students from all Schools attained a high classification degree in 2024/25. The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies consistently had the highest proportion of students (99.3%) receiving a high classification degree. The lowest proportions were seen in the School of Physics and Astronomy (77.1%), the Moray House School of Education and Sport (78.9%), the School of Mathematics (78.9%), and the School of Economics (79.4%).

The majority of the Schools maintained a steady trend (with variation +/- 3%) in the proportion of high classification degrees awarded between the 2023/24 and 2024/25 academic years. However, the School of Economics saw the only significant decrease, with an 8.4% drop.

Over the past five years, there was a general decrease in the proportion of high classification degrees awarded across all Schools. In particular, the School of Physics and Astronomy saw a significant decline of -16.1%. Other significant reductions include the Moray House School of Education and Sport (-15.8%), the School of Mathematics (-11.6%), the School of Biological Sciences (-11.1%), the School of Economics (-9.4%), the Edinburgh Law School (-9.4%), the School of History,

Classics and Archaeology (-7.6%), the School of Engineering (-7.1%), and the School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures (-5.0%)..

		2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	YoY Change	5-Year Change
CAHSS	BUS	93.9%	94.2%	88.2%	91.7%	91.5%	-0.2%	-2.4%
	DIV	98.6%	95.5%	93.5%	98.3%	93.8%	-4.5%	-4.7%
	ECA	88.7%	91.2%	86.2%	86.1%	85.3%	-0.8%	-3.4%
	ECN	88.8%	86.4%	84.1%	87.8%	79.4%	-8.4% [†]	-9.4% [†]
	EDU	94.7%	77.5%	81.4%	80.9%	78.9%	-2.0%	-15.8% [†]
	HCA	97.5%	89.5%	87.5%	87.0%	89.8%	2.9%	-7.6% [†]
	HEA	95.6%	93.6%	84.6%	83.1%	87.9%	4.8%	-7.7%
	LAW	96.3%	93.4%	87.0%	89.1%	86.9%	-2.2%	-9.4% [†]
	LLC	99.1%	97.1%	94.9%	95.7%	94.1%	-1.6%	-5.0% [†]
	PPL	91.9%	88.2%	90.3%	91.7%	89.4%	-2.4%	-2.6%
SPS	95.0%	91.1%	91.2%	93.3%	91.8%	-1.5%	-3.2%	
CSE	BIO	93.9%	90.9%	87.4%	84.5%	82.7%	-1.8%	-11.1% [†]
	CHE	96.2%	89.6%	88.5%	88.9%	90.8%	1.9%	-5.4%
	ENG	92.5%	87.6%	82.7%	88.8%	85.4%	-3.4%	-7.1% [†]
	GEO	93.4%	90.5%	88.4%	93.3%	90.7%	-2.6%	-2.7%
	INF	94.2%	87.3%	87.3%	90.0%	94.2%	4.2%	0.0%
	MAT	90.5%	88.8%	92.0%	82.1%	78.9%	-3.2%	-11.6% [†]
	PHY	93.2%	83.6%	84.7%	82.5%	77.1%	-5.4%	-16.1% [†]
CMVM	EMS	95.2%	95.9%	94.3%	94.6%	93.5%	-1.1%	-1.7%
	VET	100.0%	99.5%	98.8%	99.4%	99.3%	-0.1%	-0.7%

[†] The YoY/5Y difference is statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval.

Low Classification Degrees

In the 2024/25 academic year, 8.7% of students at the University were awarded degrees with a low classification. There was a slight decrease of 1.1% compared to the 2023/24 academic year, and a significant increase of 4.2% over the last 5 years.

Year	% Low Classification
2020/21	4.4%
2021/22	6.7%
2022/23	8.0%
2023/24	7.6%
2024/25	8.7%

The School of Mathematics recorded the highest proportion of low classification degrees at 18.3% in 2024/25, followed by the Moray House School of Education and Sport at 17.6%, and the School of Economics at 14.5%. In contrast, the School of Chemistry had the lowest percentage, with just 2.3% of its students receiving low classification degrees. Both the School of Divinity and the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies reported no students graduating with low classification.

While most of the Schools maintained a steady trend (with variation +/- 3%) in the proportion of low classification degrees awarded between the 2023/24 and 2024/25 academic years, only the School of History, Classics and Archaeology experienced a significant decrease of 5.1%. Although the School of Economics and the School of Health in Social Science noted substantial changes of +5.2% and -5.4% respectively, these changes were not statistically significant.

Over the past five years, half of the Schools saw significant increases in the proportion of low classification degrees awarded. In particular, the Moray House School of Education and Sport had the largest increase at +12.7%, followed by the School of Mathematics at +10.3%.

		2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	YoY Change	5-Year Change
CAHSS	BUS	4.4%	2.9%	8.6%	5.8%	8.3%	2.5%	3.9% [†]
	DIV	1.4%	0.0%	2.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-1.4%
	ECA	8.0%	7.5%	9.9%	10.2%	10.6%	0.4%	2.6%
	ECN	10.2%	12.7%	15.5%	11.8%	17.0%	5.2%	6.8% [†]
	EDU	4.9%	18.2%	14.7%	16.9%	17.6%	0.7%	12.7% [†]
	HCA	1.7%	6.9%	7.3%	11.1%	6.0%	-5.1% [†]	4.4% [†]
	HEA	0.0%	2.1%	7.7%	8.5%	3.0%	-5.4%	3.0%
	LAW	3.7%	6.1%	10.7%	6.2%	7.8%	1.5%	4.1%
	LLC	0.4%	1.6%	3.0%	2.9%	4.6%	1.8%	4.2% [†]
	PPL	5.4%	10.0%	7.9%	7.6%	9.8%	2.2%	4.4% [†]
SPS	4.2%	7.2%	5.5%	4.2%	5.8%	1.5%	1.6%	
CSE	BIO	5.6%	7.6%	11.6%	14.0%	14.5%	0.5%	8.9% [†]
	CHE	2.3%	5.2%	4.1%	4.8%	2.3%	-2.5%	0.0%
	ENG	4.9%	9.1%	13.8%	9.4%	11.7%	2.3%	6.7% [†]
	GEO	6.2%	7.0%	8.9%	5.4%	8.0%	2.6%	1.8%
	INF	3.4%	8.8%	7.9%	5.6%	3.9%	-1.7%	0.5%

	MAT	8.0%	8.9%	6.3%	15.4%	18.3%	2.9%	10.3% [†]
	PHY	4.8%	9.6%	9.5%	12.4%	13.4%	1.0%	8.6% [†]
CMVM	EMS	4.1%	3.2%	4.7%	4.9%	4.9%	0.0%	0.8%
	VET	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

[†] The YoY/5Y difference is statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval.

Awarding Gap

The report further analyses awarding gaps in First Class, high classification and low classification degrees among undergraduate students based on demographic and widening participation factors.

Sex

In 2024/25, female students achieving a First Class degree (34.0%) were slightly more common than male students (32.9%), with other students achieving slightly higher proportion (35.5%) compared to male students. However, these awarding gaps were not statistically significant.

Meanwhile, a significantly higher proportion of female students (90.7%) attained a high classification degree in comparison to the male students (85.1%). In contrast, the percentage of female students graduating with a low classification degree was significantly lower (7.0%) than that of male students (11.4%).

Moreover, a slightly higher proportion of students identifying as other achieved high classification degrees (90.3%) and a lower proportion received low classification degrees compared to male students, yet these differences were not statistically significant.

	First Class Degree			High Classification Degree		
	Male	Female	Other	Male	Female	Other
2020/21	42.9%	48.7% (5.8% [†])	83.3% (40.5% [†])	91.8%	95.7% (3.9% [†])	91.7% (-0.2%)
2021/22	36.6%	40.9% (4.3% [†])	60.0% (23.4% [†])	88.0%	92.8% (4.7% [†])	96.0% (8.0%)
2022/23	35.3%	35.8% (0.4%)	47.4% (12.0%)	86.8%	90.6% (3.8% [†])	92.1% (5.3%)
2023/24	35.4%	35.4% (0.0%)	37.5% (2.1%)	87.9%	91.8% (3.8% [†])	81.3% (-6.7%)
2024/25	32.9%	34.0% (1.2%)	35.5% (2.6%)	85.1%	90.7% (5.6% [†])	90.3% (5.2%)

Note: The figure in the parenthesis indicates the awarding gap between “Male” and the corresponding sex.

[†] The awarding gap between “Male” and the corresponding sex is statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval, with a Bonferroni correction applied to adjust for multiple comparisons.

	Low Classification Degree		
	Male	Female	Other
2020/21	6.2%	3.3% (-2.9% [†])	0.0% (-6.2%)
2021/22	8.4%	5.8% (-2.6% [†])	4.0% (-4.4%)
2022/23	9.7%	6.9% (-2.8% [†])	2.6% (-7.1%)
2023/24	9.3%	6.6% (-2.7% [†])	6.3% (-3.0%)
2024/25	11.4%	7.0% (-4.4% [†])	9.7% (-1.7%)

Note: The figure in the parenthesis indicates the awarding gap between “Male” and the corresponding sex.

[†] The awarding gap between “Male” and the corresponding sex is statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval, with a Bonferroni correction applied to adjust for multiple comparisons.

Disability

Around one-third of students, regardless of their disclosed disability status, achieved First Class degrees in 2024/25. The awarding gap between students with and without disclosed disability has

narrowed slightly, decreasing from -2.7% in 2023/24 to -0.5% in 2024/25. However, students with a disclosed disability were significantly less likely to obtain high classification degrees, with an awarding gap of -4.0%. In particular, this gap has widened from -1.4% to -4.0% compared to the previous year. Similarly, students with a disclosed disability (10.0%) were significantly more likely to graduate with low classification degrees (10.0%) compared to their peers without disclosed disabilities (8.1%), resulting in a significant awarding gap of 1.9%.

	First Class Degree			High Classification Degree		
	No disclosed disability	Disclosed Disability	Awarding Gap	No disclosed disability	Disclosed Disability	Awarding Gap
2020/21	46.6%	45.9%	-0.6%	94.5%	92.9%	-1.7% [†]
2021/22	39.7%	38.3%	-1.4%	91.5%	89.2%	-2.2% [†]
2022/23	36.3%	34.0%	-2.3%	89.6%	87.9%	-1.7%
2023/24	36.2%	33.5%	-2.7%	90.7%	89.2%	-1.4%
2024/25	33.7%	33.3%	-0.5%	89.8%	85.7%	-4.0% [†]

[†] The awarding gap is statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval.

	Low Classification Degree		
	No disclosed disability	Disclosed Disability	Awarding Gap
2020/21	4.4%	4.8%	0.4%
2021/22	6.6%	7.1%	0.4%
2022/23	8.0%	8.0%	0.0%
2023/24	7.5%	7.9%	0.5%
2024/25	8.1%	10.0%	1.9% [†]

[†] The awarding gap is statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval.

Disability Type

The Data Task Group has previously worked with colleagues in Disability and Learning Support Service to determine more granular categories for students who have disclosed a disability. The mapping between the disability type used in this paper and in the Student Record is shown in Appendix D.

Students with various types of disabilities, including long-standing health conditions, mental health conditions, specific learning difficulties, multiple disabilities, other disabilities, or those who preferred not to disclose their disability, generally were less likely to attain a First Class degree compared to those with no known disability. However, the awarding gaps in these cases were not statistically significant.

Compared to students with no known disability, those with long-standing health conditions, mental health conditions, social/communication impairments, specific learning difficulties, multiple disabilities, or other disabilities were less likely to graduate with a higher classification degree, but again, the differences were not statistically significant. However, the awarding gap between students with no known disability (89.8%) and those who preferred not to disclose their disability (84.7%) was significant at -5.1%.

Additionally, students with social/communication impairments (20.5%) were significantly more likely to obtain a low classification degree compared to students without any known disability (8.1%),

showing an awarding gap of 12.4%. Meanwhile, students with long-standing health conditions, and those with physical impairments/mobility issues were also less likely to graduate with a low classification degree, though the difference was not statistically significant.

First Class Degree

	No known disability	A long-standing health condition	A mental health condition	A physical impairment/mobility issue	A social/communication impairment	A specific learning difficulty	Multiple disabilities	Other disability/condition	Prefer not to say
2020/21	46.6%	60.0%* (13.4%)	45.8% (-0.8%)	45.5% (-1.1%)	39.0% (-7.6%)	42.4% (-4.2%)	38.3% (-8.3%)	54.8% (8.3%)	70.0% (23.4% [†])
2021/22	39.7%	30.0% (-9.7%)	35.2% (-4.5%)	41.7% (2.0%)	40.9% (1.2%)	38.9% (-0.8%)	39.0% (-0.7%)	41.8% (2.1%)	45.8% (6.1%)
2022/23	36.3%	32.6% (-3.7%)	27.3% (-9.0% [†])	28.6% (-7.7%)	29.2% (-7.1%)	35.5% (-0.8%)	31.3% (-5.0%)	44.1% (7.8%)	37.4% (1.1%)
2023/24	36.2%	42.9% (6.7%)	33.1% (-3.1%)	30.8% (-5.4%)	23.1% (-13.1%)	33.0% (-3.2%)	28.0% (-8.2%)	46.5% (10.4%)	35.1% (-1.1%)
2024/25	33.7%	32.1% (-1.6%)	33.2% (-0.5%)	34.0% (0.3%)	43.6% (9.8%)	31.1% (-2.6%)	32.8% (-0.9%)	31.0% (-2.8%)	34.4% (0.6%)

Note: The figure in the parenthesis indicates the awarding gap between “No known disability” and the corresponding disability.

* There were less than 10 students with “A long-standing health condition” in 2020/21.

[†] The awarding gap between “No known disability” and the corresponding disability is statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval, with a Bonferroni correction applied to adjust for multiple comparisons.

High Classification Degree

	No known disability	A long-standing health condition	A mental health condition	A physical impairment/mobility issue	A social/communication impairment	A specific learning difficulty	Multiple disabilities	Other disability/condition	Prefer not to say
2020/21	94.5%	100.0%* (5.5%)	92.7% (-1.8%)	90.9% (-3.6%)	82.9% (-11.6% [†])	94.0% (-0.5%)	89.4% (-5.2%)	92.7% (-1.8%)	97.5% (3.0%)
2021/22	91.5%	80.0% (-11.5%)	87.1% (-4.4% [†])	86.1% (-5.4%)	81.8% (-9.7%)	90.5% (-1.0%)	92.2% (0.7%)	90.4% (-1.1%)	100.0% (8.5%)
2022/23	89.6%	93.5% (3.9%)	83.4% (-6.2% [†])	91.4% (1.8%)	87.5% (-2.1%)	92.1% (2.5%)	85.0% (-4.6%)	89.8% (0.2%)	87.9% (-1.8%)
2023/24	90.7%	95.2% (4.6%)	88.7% (-2.0%)	100.0% (9.3%)	76.9% (-13.8% [†])	92.1% (1.4%)	86.2% (-4.5%)	81.4% (-9.3%)	89.2% (-1.5%)
2024/25	89.8%	85.7% (-4.1%)	85.6% (-4.2%)	92.0% (2.2%)	76.9% (-12.9%)	86.8% (-3.0%)	86.6% (-3.2%)	88.1% (-1.7%)	84.7% (-5.1% [†])

Note: The figure in the parenthesis indicates the awarding gap between “No known disability” and the corresponding disability.

* There were less than 10 students with “A long-standing health condition” in 2020/21.

[†] The awarding gap between “No known disability” and the corresponding disability is statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval, with a Bonferroni correction applied to adjust for multiple comparisons.

Low Classification Degree

	No known disability	A long-standing health condition	A mental health condition	A physical impairment/mobility issue	A social/communication impairment	A specific learning difficulty	Multiple disabilities	Other disability/condition	Prefer not to say
2020/21	4.4%	0.0%* (-4.4%)	4.6% (0.2%)	4.5% (0.2%)	7.3% (3.0%)	4.5% (0.1%)	4.3% (-0.1%)	6.5% (2.1%)	2.5% (-1.9%)
2021/22	6.6%	10.0% (3.4%)	7.4% (0.7%)	11.1% (4.5%)	11.4% (4.7%)	7.4% (0.8%)	3.9% (-2.8%)	6.8% (0.2%)	0.0% (-6.6%)
2022/23	8.0%	4.3% (-3.6%)	8.5% (0.5%)	5.7% (-2.3%)	0.0% (-8.0%)	5.0% (-3.0%)	10.1% (2.2%)	6.8% (-1.2%)	9.6% (1.7%)
2023/24	7.5%	4.8% (-2.7%)	7.7% (0.2%)	0.0% (-7.5%)	17.9% (10.5%)	6.1% (-1.3%)	9.1% (1.6%)	11.6% (4.2%)	8.5% (1.0%)
2024/25	8.1%	7.1% (-0.9%)	9.2% (1.1%)	6.0% (-2.1%)	20.5% (12.4% [†])	9.8% (1.7%)	9.6% (1.5%)	9.5% (1.4%)	10.7% (2.7%)

Note: The figure in the parenthesis indicates the awarding gap between “No known disability” and the corresponding disability.

* There were less than 10 students with “A long-standing health condition” in 2020/21.

[†] The awarding gap between “No known disability” and the corresponding disability is statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval, with a Bonferroni correction applied to adjust for multiple comparisons.

Domicile

Scotland domiciled students (26.0%) were significantly less likely than Rest of UK (RUK)³ students (40.9%) and Overseas students (32.6%) to graduate with a First Class degree. The awarding gap between Scotland domiciled and RUK students increased from 13.1% to 15.0%, and between Scotland and Overseas students from 6.2% to 6.6%.

Additionally, a significant higher proportion of RUK students (94.5%) achieved a high classification degree compared to Scotland domicile students (85.0%). There was a significant awarding gap of 9.5%. The proportion of Overseas students obtaining a high classification degree (85.7%) was similar to that of Scotland students.

Despite the widening gap for First Class degree to 15.0% between Scotland domiciled and RUK students – the largest since 2020/21 – the gap for high classification degree reduced from 10.3% to 9.5%. Meanwhile, the gap between Scotland domiciled and Overseas students for high classification degree decreased to 0.7%, the lowest since 2021/22.

On the other hand, a significantly higher proportion of Scotland domiciled students (11.0%) obtained a low classification degree compared to their RUK peers (3.7%). However, the difference between Scotland domiciled and Overseas students was not significant.

	First Class Degree			High Classification Degree		
	Scotland	RUK	Overseas	Scotland	RUK	Overseas
2020/21	39.3%	52.3% (13.0% [†])	46.6% (7.3% [†])	92.9%	96.6% (3.7% [†])	92.5% (-0.4%)
2021/22	31.5%	43.9% (12.4% [†])	41.1% (9.6% [†])	87.5%	94.5% (7.0% [†])	90.2% (2.8% [†])
2022/23	29.1%	40.5% (11.5% [†])	36.1% (7.0% [†])	85.1%	94.5% (9.4% [†])	87.0% (1.9%)
2023/24	28.4%	41.6% (13.1% [†])	34.6% (6.2% [†])	85.6%	95.9% (10.3% [†])	88.3% (2.7% [†])
2024/25	26.0%	40.9% (15.0% [†])	32.6% (6.6% [†])	85.0%	94.5% (9.5% [†])	85.7% (0.7%)

Note: The figure in the parenthesis indicates the awarding gap between “Scotland” and the corresponding domicile.

[†] The awarding gap between “Scotland” and the corresponding domicile is statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval, with a Bonferroni correction applied to adjust for multiple comparisons.

	Low Classification Degree		
	Scotland	RUK	Overseas
2020/21	5.3%	2.8% (-2.5% [†])	5.7% (0.4%)
2021/22	9.2%	4.1% (-5.1% [†])	7.5% (-1.7%)
2022/23	10.5%	3.6% (-6.8% [†])	10.3% (-0.2%)
2023/24	10.7%	3.1% (-7.6% [†])	9.7% (-1.0%)
2024/25	11.0%	3.7% (-7.3% [†])	11.7% (0.8%)

Note: The figure in the parenthesis indicates the awarding gap between “Scotland” and the corresponding domicile.

[†] The awarding gap between “Scotland” and the corresponding domicile is statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval, with a Bonferroni correction applied to adjust for multiple comparisons.

³ RUK include England, Wales, and Northern Ireland

Ethnicity (All students)

Regardless of students domiciles, BAME students continuously showed a lower likelihood of achieving both First Class and high classification degrees compared to their White peers, with awarding gaps of 10.6% and 8.5% respectively.

The awarding gap for First Class degree has decreased from -13.7% in 2023/24 to 10.6% in 2024/25. However, the gap for high classification degree slightly widened from -6.6% to -8.5%. In contrast, 13.5% of BAME students graduated with a low classification degree, which was significantly higher than the 6.2% among White students.

	First Class Degree			High Classification Degree		
	White	BAME	Awarding Gap	White	BAME	Awarding Gap
2020/21	49.1%	36.7%	-12.4% [†]	95.1%	91.1%	-4.0% [†]
2021/22	42.7%	30.1%	-12.5% [†]	92.3%	87.6%	-4.7% [†]
2022/23	39.1%	27.6%	-11.5% [†]	91.5%	84.1%	-7.4% [†]
2023/24	39.4%	25.6%	-13.7% [†]	92.5%	85.9%	-6.6% [†]
2024/25	37.0%	26.5%	-10.6% [†]	91.5%	83.0%	-8.5% [†]

[†] The awarding gap is statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval.

	Low Classification Degree		
	White	BAME	Awarding Gap
2020/21	3.6%	7.4%	3.8% [†]
2021/22	5.7%	9.6%	4.0% [†]
2022/23	5.8%	12.6%	6.8% [†]
2023/24	5.4%	12.2%	6.8% [†]
2024/25	6.2%	13.5%	7.3% [†]

[†] The awarding gap is statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval.

Ethnicity: Asian, Black, Chinese, Mixed, and White (All students - including Scotland, RUK, and Overseas students.)

While BAME students (regardless of their domiciles) continuously demonstrated lower proportions of achieving First Class and high classification degrees compared to their White peers, significant differences were observed within the BAME group, particularly among the Asian, Black and Chinese students.

In 2024/25, only 16.2% of Black students, 21.3% of Chinese students, and 29.4% Asian students achieved First degrees, with awarding gaps of -20.8%, -21.3% and -7.7%, respectively compared to White students. Similarly, Black (79.7%), Chinese (79.3%), and Asian students (86.3%) were less likely to graduate with a high classification degree compared to their White peers, with these awarding gaps being statistically significant for both First Class and high classification degrees.

The awarding gap between Black and White students has widened from -14.4% to -20.8% for First Class degree, and from 0.0% to -11.8% for high classification degree between 2023/24 and 2024/25. Meanwhile, the difference between Asian and White students has decreased from -16.7% to -7.7% for First Class degree, and slightly increased from -4.4% to -5.2% for high classification degree.

In contrast, there were significantly higher proportions of Asian (11.0%) and Chinese (17.1%) students obtaining a low classification degree compared to White students (6.2%). Black (10.8%) and Mixed students (6.8%) were also somewhat more likely to graduate with a low classification degree, though the differences compared to their White peers were not considered statistically significant.

	First Class Degree				
	White	Asian	Black	Chinese	Mixed
2020/21	49.1%	31.3% (-17.8% [†])	38.8% (-10.3%)	33.9% (-15.3% [†])	47.7% (-1.5%)
2021/22	42.7%	20.7% (-21.9% [†])	24.1% (-18.6% [†])	29.5% (-13.2% [†])	44.2% (1.6%)
2022/23	39.1%	26.3% (-12.8% [†])	15.4% (-23.7% [†])	25.6% (-13.4% [†])	38.5% (-0.6%)
2023/24	39.4%	22.6% (-16.7% [†])	25.0% (-14.4%)	23.5% (-15.9% [†])	36.8% (-2.6%)
2024/25	37.0%	29.4% (-7.7% [†])	16.2% (-20.8% [†])	21.3% (-15.7% [†])	36.7% (-0.3%)

Note: The figure in the parenthesis indicates the awarding gap between “White” and the corresponding ethnicity.

[†] The awarding gap between “White” and the corresponding ethnicity is statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval, with a Bonferroni correction applied to adjust for multiple comparisons.

	High Classification Degree				
	White	Asian	Black	Chinese	Mixed
2020/21	95.1%	91.7% (-3.4% [†])	86.6% (-8.6% [†])	90.5% (-4.7% [†])	93.2% (-2.0%)
2021/22	92.3%	85.8% (-6.5% [†])	78.5% (-13.8% [†])	85.6% (-6.7% [†])	95.7% (3.4%)
2022/23	91.5%	85.3% (-6.2% [†])	73.6% (-17.9% [†])	82.2% (-9.3% [†])	91.8% (0.3%)
2023/24	92.5%	88.0% (-4.4% [†])	92.5% (0.0%)	82.3% (-10.1% [†])	93.0% (0.5%)
2024/25	91.5%	86.3% (-5.2% [†])	79.7% (-11.8% [†])	79.3% (-12.2% [†])	90.7% (-0.8%)

Note: The figure in the parenthesis indicates the awarding gap between “White” and the corresponding ethnicity.

[†] The awarding gap between “White” and the corresponding ethnicity is statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval, with a Bonferroni correction applied to adjust for multiple comparisons.

Low Classification Degree

	White	Asian	Black	Chinese	Mixed
2020/21	3.6%	6.1% (2.5%)	10.4% (6.9% [†])	8.1% (4.5% [†])	6.0% (2.4%)
2021/22	5.7%	10.8% (5.2% [†])	16.5% (10.8% [†])	11.4% (5.8% [†])	3.6% (-2.1%)
2022/23	5.8%	10.2% (4.4% [†])	24.2% (18.3% [†])	14.4% (8.5% [†])	6.2% (0.4%)
2023/24	5.4%	10.9% (5.6% [†])	2.5% (-2.9%)	15.5% (10.1% [†])	4.7% (-0.7%)
2024/25	6.2%	11.0% (4.9% [†])	10.8% (4.6%)	17.1% (10.9% [†])	6.8% (0.6%)

Note: The figure in the parenthesis indicates the awarding gap between “White” and the corresponding ethnicity.

[†] The awarding gap between “White” and the corresponding ethnicity is statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval, with a Bonferroni correction applied to adjust for multiple comparisons.

Ethnicity (UK-domiciled students)

UK-domiciled BAME and White students were comparably likely to achieve a First Class degree in 2024/25, with 32.9% of BAME students receiving First Class honours compared to 34.3% of White students. The awarding gap decreased from -8.8% in 2023/24 to -1.4% in 2024/25. Although the awarding gap between White and BAME students for First Class degree was not statistically significant, there was a significant awarding gap of -3.1% high classification degree. About 90% of White students obtained a high classification degree, whereas only 87.6% of BAME students graduated with a high classification degree.

Moreover, there was significantly higher proportion of BAME students obtaining a low classification degree compared to White students, with a significant awarding gap of 2.7%.

First Class Degree

High Classification Degree

	White	BAME	Awarding Gap	White	BAME	Awarding Gap
2020/21	47.1%	39.7%	-7.3% [†]	95.1%	93.4%	-1.7%
2021/22	39.3%	33.5%	-5.8% [†]	91.5%	90.8%	-0.6%
2022/23	36.3%	29.5%	-6.8% [†]	90.8%	88.0%	-2.8%
2023/24	36.9%	28.1%	-8.8% [†]	91.5%	92.1%	0.6%
2024/25	34.3%	32.9%	-1.4%	90.7%	87.6%	-3.1% [†]

[†] The awarding gap is statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval.

Low Classification Degree

	White	BAME	Awarding Gap
2020/21	3.8%	5.3%	1.6%
2021/22	6.3%	6.5%	0.1%
2022/23	6.3%	8.6%	2.4%
2023/24	6.2%	6.1%	-0.1%
2024/25	6.6%	9.3%	2.7% [†]

[†] The awarding gap is statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval.

Widening Participation (UK-domiciled students only)

Widening participation* (WP) students were significantly less likely to be awarded a First Class degree (26.3%) or a high classification degree (83.2%) degrees compared to the non-WP students (First Class degree: 38.6%; High Classification degree: 92.3%). Additionally, there was a significantly higher proportion of WP students (11.3%) graduating with low classification degrees compared to non-WP students (5.6%).

While the awarding gap for First Class degree remained around 10% from the previous year, the gap for high classification degree worsen from -6.8% to -9.3%. A similar trend was observed in the awarding gap for low classification degree (increased from 3.4% to 5.7%).

	First Class Degree			High Classification Degree		
	Not WP	WP	Awarding Gap	Not WP	WP	Awarding Gap
2020/21	50.5%	39.1%	-11.4% [†]	96.7%	91.8%	-4.9% [†]
2021/22	41.6%	31.7%	-9.9% [†]	93.4%	87.1%	-6.4% [†]
2022/23	38.2%	29.1%	-9.1% [†]	93.1%	83.8%	-9.3% [†]
2023/24	38.2%	27.9%	-10.2% [†]	92.9%	86.2%	-6.8% [†]
2024/25	36.6%	26.3%	-10.3% [†]	92.3%	83.2%	-9.1% [†]

[†] The awarding gap is statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval.

	Low Classification Degree		
	Not WP	WP	Awarding Gap
2020/21	2.7%	6.0%	3.2% [†]
2021/22	4.8%	9.6%	4.8% [†]
2022/23	4.5%	11.9%	7.4% [†]
2023/24	5.6%	9.0%	3.4% [†]
2024/25	5.6%	11.3%	5.7% [†]

[†] The awarding gap is statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval.

*WP students is based on the WP flag from the student data. If a student has fulfilled at least one of the following criteria, they will be flagged at a WP student.

- Access Bursary
- Access Programme
- Accom Bursary
- Care Leaver
- Low Performing School
- RUK Bursary
- SHEP
- SIMD (SIMD 1 or SIMD 2)

Widening Participation – Based on SIMD20 and ACORN 5/6 (UK-domiciled students only)

UK-domiciled students who lived in SIMD20 or ACORN 5/6 postcodes when applying to the University were significantly less likely to achieve a First Class degree (17.9%) or a high classification degree (77.7%), and more likely to obtain low classification degree (17.4%) compared to those who from other postcode areas. The proportion of students from these more deprived areas achieving both First Class and high classification degrees declines from 22.5% to 17.9% and from 82.9% to 77.7% respectively.

The awarding gaps for First Class and high classification degrees widened from -14.4% to -17.7%, and from -9.2% to -13.7% compared to the previous year. Additionally, the gap for low classification degree also increased from 6.6% to 11.5%.

	First Class Degree			High Classification Degree		
	Not WP	WP	Awarding Gap	Not WP	WP	Awarding Gap
2020/21	47.7%	26.8%	-20.9% [†]	95.5%	85.5%	-10.0% [†]
2021/22	39.6%	24.7%	-14.9% [†]	92.0%	83.7%	-8.4% [†]
2022/23	36.8%	21.5%	-15.3% [†]	91.7%	76.3%	-15.3% [†]
2023/24	36.9%	22.5%	-14.4% [†]	92.1%	82.9%	-9.2% [†]
2024/25	35.8%	17.9%	-17.9% [†]	91.5%	77.7%	-13.7% [†]

[†] The awarding gap is statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval.

	Low Classification Degree		
	Not WP	WP	Awarding Gap
2020/21	3.4%	11.4%	8.0% [†]
2021/22	5.9%	11.8%	5.9% [†]
2022/23	5.6%	18.0%	12.4% [†]
2023/24	5.9%	12.5%	6.6% [†]
2024/25	5.9%	17.4%	11.5% [†]

[†] The awarding gap is statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval.

Report Author:

Vivian So

Senior Analyst

Academic Planning, Registry Services

Appendix

Appendix A: First Class Degree (UG)

This table shows the total number of undergraduate students who achieved a First Class degree, with the number in parentheses representing the total student population at the school level.

		2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
CAHSS	BUS	107 (295)	91 (276)	103 (304)	105 (397)	137 (457)
	DIV	27 (71)	13 (67)	11 (46)	19 (59)	15 (65)
	ECA	238 (523)	184 (442)	196 (537)	190 (498)	218 (585)
	ECN	80 (205)	67 (228)	83 (245)	100 (288)	111 (311)
	EDU	127 (244)	45 (187)	58 (177)	58 (183)	60 (227)
	HCA	164 (358)	100 (305)	110 (369)	124 (369)	139 (463)
	HEA	28 (45)	24 (47)	17 (52)	19 (59)	26 (66)
	LAW	111 (190)	83 (196)	65 (215)	64 (193)	58 (206)
	LLC	324 (462)	254 (445)	248 (505)	240 (491)	237 (561)
	PPL	162 (334)	149 (381)	131 (393)	162 (435)	167 (470)
	SPS	162 (381)	155 (429)	136 (434)	162 (495)	195 (537)
CSE	BIO	83 (196)	84 (198)	64 (190)	70 (207)	78 (255)
	CHE	92 (133)	81 (154)	55 (122)	45 (126)	43 (87)
	ENG	161 (386)	140 (394)	109 (405)	106 (330)	137 (369)
	GEO	95 (226)	75 (199)	69 (225)	75 (224)	70 (226)
	INF	152 (207)	154 (251)	145 (252)	141 (251)	153 (259)
	MAT	80 (137)	100 (179)	112 (175)	111 (246)	115 (284)
	PHY	67 (146)	71 (146)	63 (137)	49 (137)	61 (179)
CMVM	EMS	113 (585)	115 (616)	140 (684)	145 (716)	117 (798)
	VET	76 (148)	112 (184)	96 (169)	97 (180)	65 (148)
	Total	2,449 (5,272)	2,097 (5,324)	2,011 (5,636)	2,082 (5,884)	2,202 (6,553)

Appendix B: High Classification Degree (UG)

This table shows the total number of undergraduate students who achieved a High Classification degree, with the number in parentheses representing the total student population at the school level.

		2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
CAHSS	BUS	277 (295)	260 (276)	268 (304)	364 (397)	418 (457)
	DIV	70 (71)	64 (67)	43 (46)	58 (59)	61 (65)
	ECA	464 (523)	403 (442)	463 (537)	429 (498)	499 (585)
	ECN	182 (205)	197 (228)	206 (245)	253 (288)	247 (311)
	EDU	231 (244)	145 (187)	144 (177)	148 (183)	179 (227)
	HCA	349 (358)	273 (305)	323 (369)	321 (369)	416 (463)
	HEA	43 (45)	44 (47)	44 (52)	49 (59)	58 (66)
	LAW	183 (190)	183 (196)	187 (215)	172 (193)	179 (206)
	LLC	458 (462)	432 (445)	479 (505)	470 (491)	528 (561)
	PPL	307 (334)	336 (381)	355 (393)	399 (435)	420 (470)
	SPS	362 (381)	391 (429)	396 (434)	462 (495)	493 (537)
CSE	BIO	184 (196)	180 (198)	166 (190)	175 (207)	211 (255)
	CHE	128 (133)	138 (154)	108 (122)	112 (126)	79 (87)
	ENG	357 (386)	345 (394)	335 (405)	293 (330)	315 (369)
	GEO	211 (226)	180 (199)	199 (225)	209 (224)	205 (226)
	INF	195 (207)	219 (251)	220 (252)	226 (251)	244 (259)
	MAT	124 (137)	159 (179)	161 (175)	202 (246)	224 (284)
	PHY	136 (146)	122 (146)	116 (137)	113 (137)	138 (179)
CMVM	EMS	557 (585)	591 (616)	645 (684)	677 (716)	746 (798)
	VET	148 (148)	183 (184)	167 (169)	179 (180)	147 (148)
Total		4,966 (5,272)	4,845 (5,324)	5,025 (5,636)	5,311 (5,884)	5,807 (6,553)

Appendix C: Low Classification Degree (UG)

This table shows the total number of undergraduate students who achieved a Low Classification degree, with the number in parentheses representing the total student population at the school level.

		2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
CAHSS	BUS	13 (295)	8 (276)	26 (304)	23 (397)	38 (457)
	DIV	1 (71)	0 (67)	1 (46)	0 (59)	0 (65)
	ECA	42 (523)	33 (442)	53 (537)	51 (498)	62 (585)
	ECN	21 (205)	29 (228)	38 (245)	34 (288)	53 (311)
	EDU	12 (244)	34 (187)	26 (177)	31 (183)	40 (227)
	HCA	6 (358)	21 (305)	27 (369)	41 (369)	28 (463)
	HEA	0 (45)	1 (47)	4 (52)	5 (59)	2 (66)
	LAW	7 (190)	12 (196)	23 (215)	12 (193)	16 (206)
	LLC	2 (462)	7 (445)	15 (505)	14 (491)	26 (561)
	PPL	18 (334)	38 (381)	31 (393)	33 (435)	46 (470)
	SPS	16 (381)	31 (429)	24 (434)	21 (495)	31 (537)
CSE	BIO	11 (196)	15 (198)	22 (190)	29 (207)	37 (255)
	CHE	3 (133)	8 (154)	5 (122)	6 (126)	2 (87)
	ENG	19 (386)	36 (394)	56 (405)	31 (330)	43 (369)
	GEO	14 (226)	14 (199)	20 (225)	12 (224)	18 (226)
	INF	7 (207)	22 (251)	20 (252)	14 (251)	10 (259)
	MAT	11 (137)	16 (179)	11 (175)	38 (246)	52 (284)
	PHY	7 (146)	14 (146)	13 (137)	17 (137)	24 (179)
CMVM	EMS	24 (585)	20 (616)	32 (684)	35 (716)	39 (798)
	VET	0 (148)	0 (184)	2 (169)	0 (180)	0 (148)
Total		234 (5,272)	359 (5,324)	449 (5,636)	447 (5,884)	567 (6,553)

Appendix D: First Class Degree (PGT)

This table shows the total number of postgraduate taught students who achieved a First Class degree, with the number in parentheses representing the total student population at the school level.

		2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
CAHSS	BUS	234 (687)	206 (661)	155 (688)	158 (684)	153 (629)
	DIV	14 (28)	12 (29)	15 (43)	13 (36)	17 (55)
	ECA	179 (486)	163 (588)	173 (882)	129 (808)	123 (660)
	ECN	12 (82)	19 (86)	17 (85)	7 (68)	15 (65)
	EDU	125 (1042)	69 (1001)	61 (935)	45 (900)	36 (869)
	HCA	31 (119)	32 (125)	33 (206)	42 (192)	32 (170)
	HEA	94 (288)	125 (340)	65 (410)	92 (439)	75 (432)
	LAW	136 (674)	121 (549)	99 (606)	95 (519)	82 (521)
	LLC	141 (336)	113 (364)	102 (471)	95 (430)	99 (445)
	PPL	95 (219)	77 (176)	89 (274)	70 (210)	111 (259)
	SPS	129 (482)	129 (605)	128 (681)	102 (677)	90 (683)
CSE	BIO	43 (155)	56 (137)	33 (147)	29 (117)	29 (144)
	CHE	21 (31)	12 (49)	13 (44)	8 (46)	14 (63)
	ENG	70 (270)	61 (214)	24 (267)	30 (223)	25 (168)
	GEO	158 (384)	169 (411)	142 (359)	133 (358)	124 (311)
	INF	77 (301)	146 (400)	79 (367)	69 (341)	72 (307)
	MAT	114 (333)	134 (301)	113 (298)	80 (210)	62 (201)
	PHY	22 (35)	21 (44)	13 (28)	9 (41)	15 (57)
CMVM	EMS	104 (341)	114 (360)	68 (343)	80 (354)	77 (361)
	VET	10 (53)	14 (44)	8 (47)	8 (44)	6 (30)
	Total	1,809 (6,346)	1,793 (6,484)	1,430 (7,181)	1,294 (6,697)	1,257 (6,430)

Appendix E: High Classification Degree (PGT)

This table shows the total number of postgraduate taught students who achieved a High Classification degree, with the number in parentheses representing the total student population at the school level.

		2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
CAHSS	BUS	628 (687)	600 (661)	618 (688)	607 (684)	581 (629)
	DIV	28 (28)	25 (29)	37 (43)	31 (36)	46 (55)
	ECA	402 (486)	463 (588)	612 (882)	518 (808)	463 (660)
	ECN	58 (82)	63 (86)	63 (85)	49 (68)	47 (65)
	EDU	691 (1042)	637 (1001)	496 (935)	465 (900)	473 (869)
	HCA	103 (119)	93 (125)	142 (206)	142 (192)	124 (170)
	HEA	253 (288)	294 (340)	306 (410)	327 (439)	314 (432)
	LAW	432 (674)	351 (549)	385 (606)	307 (519)	304 (521)
	LLC	304 (336)	315 (364)	394 (471)	366 (430)	363 (445)
	PPL	196 (219)	152 (176)	227 (274)	191 (210)	232 (259)
	SPS	382 (482)	449 (605)	505 (681)	477 (677)	506 (683)
CSE	BIO	139 (155)	117 (137)	126 (147)	89 (117)	107 (144)
	CHE	30 (31)	40 (49)	37 (44)	40 (46)	52 (63)
	ENG	213 (270)	190 (214)	145 (267)	135 (223)	121 (168)
	GEO	335 (384)	354 (411)	323 (359)	308 (358)	274 (311)
	INF	220 (301)	337 (400)	265 (367)	226 (341)	228 (307)
	MAT	253 (333)	257 (301)	223 (298)	172 (210)	177 (201)
	PHY	32 (35)	39 (44)	23 (28)	26 (41)	42 (57)
CMVM	EMS	274 (341)	281 (360)	209 (343)	226 (354)	255 (361)
	VET	28 (53)	30 (44)	33 (47)	31 (44)	25 (30)
	Total	5,001 (6,346)	5,087 (6,484)	5,169 (7,181)	4,733 (6,697)	4,734 (6,430)

Appendix F: Disability Type Definition

Disability Type	EUCLID Disability
No known disability	No disability
	No known disabilities, health condition or learning difference
A long-standing health condition	Long-term illness or health condition such as cancer, HIV, diabetes, chronic heart disease, or epilepsy
	You have a long standing illness or health conditi
A mental health condition	Mental health
	Mental health condition, challenge or disorder, such as depression, schizophrenia or anxiety
	You have a mental health condition, such as depres
A physical impairment/mobility issue	Physical impairment (a condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities such as walking, climbing stairs, lifting or carrying).,
	Wheelchair/mobility
	D/deaf or have a hearing loss/impairment
	Deaf/partial hearing
	Blind or have a visual impairment uncorrected by glasses
	Blind/partial sight
	You are blind or have a serious visual impairment
	You are deaf or have a serious hearing impairment
	You have physical impairment or mobility issues, s
A social/communication impairment	Development condition that you have had since childhood which affects motor, cognitive, social and emotional skills, and speech and language,
	Autistic disorder
	Social/communication conditions such as a speech and language impairment or an autistic spectrum condition
	You have a social/communication impairment such as
A specific learning difficulty	Learning difference such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or AD(H)D
	Learning difficulty
	You have a specific learning difficulty such as dy
Multiple disabilities	Multiple disabilities,
	You have two or more impairments and/or disabling
Other disability/condition	A disability, impairment, health condition or learning difference not listed above,
	Other disability
	Personal care support
	Unseen disability
	You have a disability, impairment or medical condition
Prefer not to say	Information refused
	Prefer not to say

Senate Quality Assurance Committee

23 April 2026

Proposed updates to the Programme and Course Approval and Management Policy and Boards of Studies Terms of Reference

Description of paper

1. Following discussion of key changes to the Programme and Course Approval and Management Policy, as part of its periodic review, this paper now presents the Committee with a draft policy for approval (Appendix 1). The paper also proposes amendments to the Boards of Studies Terms of Reference (Appendix 2), to be endorsed by the Committee, and approved by Court Resolution. A number of proposed changes aim to make the policy more user-friendly, which aligns with the Strategy 2030 outcome 'We will have more user-friendly processes and efficient systems to support our work.'

Fit with remit

Quality Assurance Committee	
Oversee the delivery and enhancement of the University's quality assurance framework, ensuring that it meets external requirements.	Y
In partnership with Edinburgh University Students' Association, ensure effective student engagement and representation of student voices in the University's quality framework.	Y
Maintain oversight of the outcomes of the quality assurance framework, ensuring that actions are addressed, and support the sharing of good practice.	Y
Promote the quality assurance framework as an important part of the University's activities and ensure that the outcomes inform relevant University business.	Y
Support the University's engagement with external quality requirements and activities, including: Enhancement-Led Institutional Review, the UK Quality Code, and responses to consultations and initiatives.	Y
In relation to academic collaborations with partner institutions: maintain oversight of development, approval, monitoring and review / renewal processes; receive annual reports on activity and identify any areas where action is required to maintain academic standards and the quality of the student experience.	Y

Action requested / recommendation

2. The Committee is asked to **approve** proposed changes to the structure and scope of the policy, as well as key policy changes, as part of its periodic review. The Committee is also asked to **endorse** amendments to the Board of Studies Terms of Reference, to be approved by Court Resolution in the 2026/27 session.

Background and context

3. The Programme and Course Approval and Management Policy is due for periodic review in 2025/26. An outline of the consultation undertaken as part of the policy review, and proposed key changes to the policy, were presented at the February

2026 meeting of this Committee. Following feedback from the Committee, further consultation has been undertaken in three key areas:

- Definition of major changes to programmes
 - Definition and governance of non-credit bearing courses
 - Information in the Board of Studies Terms of Reference
4. In addition to the above, the draft policy has also incorporated governance and approval mechanisms for competence standards, as part of the agreed actions from the Bristol Case Working Group. The policy also includes responsibilities for communicating information about competence standards to current and prospective students.
 5. The policy review has been conducted in alignment with principles in the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education 2024, particularly Principle 7: Designing, developing, approving and modifying programmes. The advice and guidance underpinning the Quality Code principles is expected to be published in June 2026, and will be reviewed to align with any guidance produced to accompany this policy.
 6. The policy review has additionally been conducted in alignment with the headline principles of the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF), particularly in relation to the *Excellence in Learning, Teaching & Assessment* and *Enhancement & Quality Culture* principles.

Discussion

7. The consultation with College Offices indicated that staff in Schools find the policy to be disjointed, long and difficult to navigate. The Committee also raised a number of points at its meeting in February 2026, including minor vs major changes to programmes, governance of non-credit bearing courses (also known as 'short courses'), and the relation between Board of Studies information contained in this policy vs information contained in the Board of Studies Terms of Reference. The issues raised, and proposed amendments, are included below: table in (9) for amendments to the Programme and Course Approval and Management policy and table in (10) for amendments to the Boards of Studies Terms of Reference.
8. A number of proposed amendments relate to the policy **structure**, including:
 - **A more coherent document structure with distinct sections** for:
 - i. the development and approval of new programmes and courses, and the processes associated with these
 - ii. the management of programme and courses, including monitoring and review, approval of minor and major amendments, and the processes associated with these
 - **Removal of sections which are guidance, rather than policy.** The removal of these sections ensures that the policy does not include content which is more appropriate for guidance documents, and also aims to remove detail which is likely to change with more frequency than the policy is reviewed, e.g. information to be included in business cases.

- **Include numbered paragraphs**, in order to follow the formatting of other policies, and to help the referencing of particular sections, and reformatting of tables, to make the information clearer

9. At its meeting in February 2026, the Committee agreed that the information regarding the remit, composition, governance and operation of **Boards of Studies** should be included within the existing Board of Studies Terms of Reference policy, in order to avoid duplication of information across the two policies, and to make it easier for staff to find this information. The proposed amendments to the Board of Studies Terms of Reference are presented in the table in (10).

10. The table below summarises the **proposed key changes to the Programme and Course Approval and Management policy**:

Section of policy	Amendment
Cover sheet and Overview	<p>Purpose of Policy section: Removal of “how Boards of Studies operate” from this section, given that going forward this will primarily be covered in the updated Boards of Studies Terms of Reference.</p> <p>Scope section: Definition of non-credit bearing provision has been updated to align with the rest of the policy.</p> <p>Related policies section: Clarify that the policy should be read alongside the Curriculum Framework and Models for Degree Types, rather than simply refer to the AQS webpages.</p>
2. Programme and course design and development	<p>This new heading now brings together all the information regarding the design and development of programmes and courses, with separate sections for each. The tables on pp.6-7 and p.8 have been removed and relevant content added to sections 2.4-2.15. The information on evidence of expertise from outside the programme has been moved to 3. <i>Programme and course approval</i>, as this is where there is a check on external input.</p> <p>The amendments, although extensive, reflect a reorganisation / clarification of existing content of the policy, rather than changes to policy. The only two changes to policy are listed below in this table (2.2. Scope of non-credit bearing courses and 2.3-2.6 Two-stage process for development and approval of new programmes).</p> <p>Section 2.1 replaces the paragraph “Programme and course design is a creative activity...” which is descriptive, but retains the final sentence “Programme and course design and development is carried out at the School or subject area level”.</p> <p>Section 2.8 includes information for the development of collaborative programmes, previously only mentioned at the end of the policy.</p>

	Sections 2.11-2.13 list the key information required for new course proposals, previously included in tables.
2.2 Scope of non-credit bearing courses	<p>Consultation indicated that the scope of non-credit bearing which require Board of Studies approval needed to be defined.</p> <p>Section 2.2 clarifies that any “non-credit bearing courses which are available to learners outside of the University, and are available on the University’s Short Courses catalogue, must be approved by a relevant Board of Studies”</p>
2.3-2.6 Two-stage process for development and approval of new programmes	<p>Sections 2.3-2.6 outline the two-stage development and approvals process for new programmes, and a list of key information and documentation required. This is already a well-established practice across the three Colleges, so the policy is reflecting the current practice.</p> <p>2.6 now specifies that assessment methods and approaches in new programme proposals must include any competence standards, if there are any.</p>
2.9-2.10 Remote delivery and information on distance / flexible PhDs	<p>New section to cover UKVI requirements around remote delivery. The specific allowances for remote delivery are not included, as these are likely to change over the duration period of the policy.</p> <p>This also includes the existing reference to the guidance for developing distance / flexible PhDs, previously at the end of the policy.</p>
2.14 Equity and accessibility	Adds reference to the Equality Act 2010, as the underpinning legislative framework for equity and accessibility in this context.
3. Programme and course approval	<p>This new heading brings together all the information regarding the approval of new programmes and courses, and amendments to programmes and courses. As with section 2, the amendments mostly reflect a reorganisation of existing information in the policy, and policy changes are listed below in this table.</p> <p>3.1 and amendments throughout the policy reflect that the policy is now owned by SQAC rather than APRC.</p> <p>The table on page 7 has been removed as the content is now included in sections 2.4, 2.6, 2.11, 2.12, and the key issues are listed under ‘Key issues to consider when scrutinising proposals for courses and programmes’ 3.8-3.9. References to groups such as Student Recruitment and Fees Strategy Group have been removed, given that the names of the groups, and processes involved, may change in future and should be included in guidance rather than in the policy.</p>
3.2 Regular review of courses and programmes	Proposed amendment specifies that programmes and courses must be regularly reviewed, rather than stating that “all programmes and courses are approved indefinitely”.

3.6 Approval of credit-bearing programmes and courses	<p>3.6 now incorporates the section previously titled 'Introducing New Degree Qualifications and deleting Degree Qualifications' as this is part of the remit of APRC. The amendments clarify that APRC endorses new degree qualifications, which are approved by Court via a Court Resolution. This is not a policy change, and is a correction to reflect current governance.</p> <p>The table on page 12 has been retained as consultation has indicated that staff find it helpful. There are a number of amendments to the table to include missing information (i.e. these are not policy changes):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proposals for non-credit bearing courses must be approved by Board of Studies - APRC does not need to approve closure of courses/programmes that are not compliant with the Curriculum Framework; these are approved by College and reported to APRC as specified in 3.6 "Colleges report the closure of degree qualifications to APRC for approval and reporting to the University Court, for the annual degree regulations Resolution." - APRC endorses new degree qualifications, to be approved by Court <p>3.7 Consultation suggests there is mixed practice regarding the governance and approval of non-credit bearing provision, so the requirements for non-credit bearing courses have been incorporated to the policy throughout (2.2, 2.11, 3.17-3.21).</p>
Table 1	Text amended to reflect updates or corrections to the policy.
3.8-3.9 Key issues to consider when scrutinising proposals courses and programmes	<p>The heading has been amended to remove 'credit-bearing' as scrutiny should also apply to non-credit bearing courses. 3.8 and 3.9 separate key issues for credit-bearing and non-credit bearing proposals.</p> <p>3.8 has three additional bullet points (the first two are already included in course/programme proposal forms, the third is a new requirement):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether the proposals fit with the School / College portfolio and strategy • Whether the resource implications have been adequately addressed and are practicable • Whether the volume of remote delivery within the programme is within the requirements for UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) <p>3.9 lists relevant key issues for scrutiny for non-credit bearing courses.</p>
Skills for Success Framework	Replace references to Graduate Attributes with the Skills for Success Framework as needed

3.10 Evidence of expertise from outside the programme	Additional text to clarify that external engagement can be sought at the development stage of a new programme, or that an external member of staff may be part of the College Curriculum Approval Board.
Business case for new programmes	<p>Proposal to remove this section, as it includes a lot of detail which is likely to change frequently, and include relevant details in guidance for the development of new programmes rather than in the policy.</p> <p>Sections 2.4 and 2.6 still refer to the business case as part of the necessary documentation for new programmes, and 3.8 highlights the business case of one of the key issues for scrutiny when considering proposals.</p> <p>The final paragraph “Colleges may provide additional guidance...” has been retained, with some amendments, and moved to section 2.5.</p>
3.11 Major and minor changes to programmes	<p>Consultation suggests the criteria for major vs minor changes causes significant confusion for Schools, particularly the expression of % of credit volume, and clarifying whether this is the % credit volume only of compulsory courses, or whether this includes elective courses. The proposed amendments aim to address these issues by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - expressing the threshold for major changes as number of credits affected (e.g. 60 credits or more in a single year), or changes to volume of dissertation vs taught credits, rather than as % - defining that the calculation of credits affected applies to courses listed on the Degree Programme Table; this aims to capture elective courses that are reasonably considered to be part of the programme, but not include elective courses that are part of a very wide selection and would not ordinarily be considered as part of the programme <p>Addition of examples of changes to the “overall approach to assessment for the programme”, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the introduction, amendment or removal of competence standards - the introduction to the programme of in-person exams; consideration has been given to whether all changes related to in-person exams should require College approval, but this has not been included due to workload implications for College Committees - changes to programme learning outcomes

3.14-3.16 Timescales for approval of proposals	<p>This section simplifies the information on timescales by combining the key information for programme and course approvals, and removing the detailed table on pp.14-15, given that much of the detail refers to timescales required for print brochures which are now defunct. Detailed guidance on timescales is already provided by College Offices, e.g. via College SharePoint sites, which are easier to maintain up to date.</p> <p>The amendments in 3.14 are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rationale for the timescale for approvals, with a focus on implications for prospective and current students • requirement to publish information prior to the annual DRPS publication date, rather than print brochures; if not, further communications to current and prospective students are required in order to remain compliant with the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) <p>3.15 clarifies that accurate information must also be available on any websites and on the degree finder, prior to the start of the annual recruitment cycle. This replaces references to publishing information “in other corporate publications for recruitment purposes”.</p> <p>3.16 clarifies that Schools should consult further guidance on timescales from their Colleges.</p>
Arrangements for publishing information	<p>Propose to remove this section, as the relevant information on publication of information has now been included in 3.14-3.16 ‘Timescales for approvals of proposals’.</p> <p>Much of the detail in the table on pp.17-19 is out of date, and is likely to change more frequently than the policy is reviewed, and may therefore become out of date.</p>
3.17-3.21 Approval of non-credit bearing courses	<p>Consultation suggests there is mixed practice regarding the governance and approval of non-credit bearing provision, so the requirements non-credit bearing courses have been incorporated to the policy throughout (2.2, 2.11, 3.11).</p> <p>The Short Courses team within Educational Design and Engagement (EDE) have requested a number of amendments to information in sections 3.17-3.21 in order to reflect the governance framework and requirements of the University’s Learning Platform Strategy. Text which is no longer relevant, or is now out of date, has been removed.</p>
4. School Boards of Studies	<p>As agreed at the February 2026 meeting of SQAC, policy aspects of Boards of Studies will be incorporated into the Board of Studies Terms of Reference policy in order to avoid duplication or gaps (key amendments to Board of Studies Terms of Reference are provided in the table below in (10) and Appendix 2. The Terms of Reference, governed by Court, must remain high-level and not include operational detail.</p>

	<p>The proposed content for the Board of Studies Terms of Reference will remain part of this policy until the Court resolution has been approved, at which point the content will be moved into the Board of Studies Terms of Reference (as in Appendix 2).</p>
<p>5. Management and review of programmes and courses</p>	<p>New section which brings together all the information related to the management and review of programmes and courses, including responsibilities and communications to current and prospective students.</p> <p>New sub-heading: Programme and course management</p> <p>5.2 Includes clarification of responsibilities of Course Organiser which are relevant to this policy (i.e. monitoring and reviewing courses, proposing amendments), linking to Course Organiser Outline of Role for a full description of responsibilities.</p> <p>New sub-heading: Programme and course review</p> <p>5.3-5.4 additional text to clarify College responsibilities for the regular review of their teaching portfolios, in line with current practice.</p>
<p>5.5-5.10 Responsibilities to current and prospective students</p>	<p>This section brings together two previously separate sections on responsibilities to current students and responsibilities to prospective students, as much of the content applies to both. It includes amendments to existing text which is outdated and also clarifies responsibilities between Schools and Colleges as below.</p> <p>5.5 clarifies that Schools are responsible for updating published information.</p> <p>5.6 clarifies that Schools are responsible for communicating changes to current students, and Colleges are responsible for communicating changes to prospective students, in line with current guidance.</p> <p>5.7 defines a list of changes which must be communicated to students. The only addition to the current list is the introduction, amendment or removal of competence standards.</p> <p>5.8 has been amended to align with current practice in line with the need for regular portfolio reviews. The amendments clarify that the University must consider its obligations to current and prospective students. It also states that “The University will aim to minimise the disruption to the continuity of study for any affected students, and any changes will be communicated to current and prospective students as early as possible, with clear information and options.”</p> <p>5.9 clarifies that, in the event of programme changes as defined in 5.7, or programme closures, the University must be prepared to offer suitable replacement programmes within or outwith the University, if the student requests this, in line with the Student Terms and Conditions.</p>

	Current wording of the policy refers to “an appropriate refund of tuition fees” but does not define any criteria for what this would be. 5.10 has now been amended to signpost to the Tuition Fees policy, which is currently being updated (April 2026) to include criteria for refunds.
Staff Support and Development	Remove section as this is for guidance rather than policy.

11. The majority of the proposed amendments to the **Board of Studies Terms of Reference** are a result of incorporating information about Board of Studies previously contained in the Programme and Course Approval and Management policy into the Terms of Reference, rather than as a result of changes to policy. The table below includes the list of amendments, and indicates where the amendments are not proposed policy changes. The table below summarises the proposed key changes to the Board of Studies Terms of Reference policy:

Section of policy	Amendment
New headings corresponding to content that was previously in the Programme and Course Approval and Management policy	New headings for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Governance and remit - Composition
Section 2	Reworded to include credit and non-credit bearing provision, and additional sentence to clarify where Boards of Studies need to seek approvals from College Committees (to note that this is not a policy change and was previously part of the PCAM policy)
Section 3	Additional text to clarify Boards of Studies responsibilities (to note that these are not new responsibilities as they were previously part of the PCAM policy): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure that proposals are supported by the necessary documentation - Ensure that proposals comply with the University’s regulations and policies - Maintain oversight of programme and course handbooks
Throughout policy	Replacement of Curriculum and Student Progression Committee (CSPC, predecessor committee to the Academic Policy and Regulations Committee) with Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC), as the Committee now owning the Board of Studies Terms of Reference
Section 6	Requirement to meet at least once per academic year (to note that this is not a policy change and was previously included in the PCAM policy) <p>Consultation with Colleges has indicated that there is no fixed timescale for reporting, so the proposed amendment is to remove “but at least annually” for the frequency of reporting</p>

Sections 7 and 8	<p>Amendment to clarify that a Deputy Convener must also be appointed, and additional information about membership (to note that these are not policy changes as they were previously part of the PCAM policy information on Board of Studies composition)</p> <p>Remove statement “CSPC (or its successor Committee) will define further membership requirements and define the quorum for the operation of Boards”, given that this does not happen in practice.</p>
Section 10	<p>Bodies established at College or University level to fulfil the functions of Boards of Studies are unusual, and may review programmes or courses that are outwith Schools (e.g. programmes owned by Colleges, some non-credit bearing courses). The proposed amendment proposes that these recommendations should be made by the Head of College (for College level committees), and approved by Senate Quality Assurance Committee.</p>

Resource implications

12. The proposed policy amendments do not require additional resource for Schools and Colleges, with the exception of the inclusion of regular review of courses and programmes. However, this is already standard practice in most Schools and Colleges, and should not therefore result in additional resource. The points of clarification and improved document structure should result in a reduced number of enquiries, and more efficient use of staff time.
13. There is some minor additional resource required from Academic Quality and Standards and Court Services to proceed with a Court Resolution in order to make amendments to the Board of Studies Terms of Reference.
14. There may be some additional work for Boards of Studies and College Committees to consider and endorse/approve competence standards. However, the assessment of competence standards should be the exception, rather than the norm, so this increase in workload should be small.

Risk management

15. The consultation indicated that staff find the policy to be disjointed, long and difficult to navigate, which increases the risk of inconsistent implementation. The current policy is also significantly out of date, which increases the risk of our practices not aligning with our policies. The proposed amendments address these risks.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

16. The proposed amendments do not contribute to the response to the Climate Emergency or the Sustainable Development Goals.

Equality & diversity

17. The proposed amendments to make the policy shorter, more coherent and user-friendly are anticipated to provide benefits from an equality and diversity

perspective. An updated Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is presented alongside the proposed draft policy.

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

18. If approved, the amended policy would be introduced for the beginning of the 2026/27 academic year. Information about the amendments to the policy would be communicated to staff in the following ways:

- Board of Studies' Network briefing sessions
- Board of Studies' Convener and Administrator training
- New and Updated Policies email, sent from Academic Quality and Standards prior to the start of each academic year
- Briefing sessions to Colleges and Schools at the start of the academic year

19. If the policy is approved, the templates for new programme proposals, course descriptors and major changes to programmes must be amended to align with updates to the policy (for example, to include competence standards). As there are no standardised forms used across the University, Colleges must ensure that template forms used within their College are up to date.

Authors

Cristina Matthews

Senior Academic Quality and Standards Manager (Projects)

Academic Quality and Standards

Patrick Jack

Academic Quality and Standards Manager

Academic Quality and Standards

Presenter

Cristina Matthews

Freedom of Information Open



Programme and Course Approval and Management

Purpose of Policy

This Policy outlines for staff and students the University's approach to programme and course approval and management (including design, development, approval, changes, and closure) .

Scope: Mandatory Policy

Applies to staff and students who are involved in programme and course design, development, approval, changes and closure and to both taught and research programmes and all Boards of Studies and the staff and student members in every School. This Policy covers all credit-bearing provision, non-credit bearing courses available to learners outside of the University, and non-credit bearing continuing professional development courses, including postgraduate research as well as taught courses and programmes, and online learning as well as on-campus provision.

Contact

Academic Quality and
Standards

academic.quality@ed.ac.uk

Document control

Dates	Version Approved: XXXXXX	Effective Date: 01.08.2026	Equality impact assessment: 06.04.2026	Last Reviewed: 2025/26	Next Review: 2029/30
-------	--------------------------------	----------------------------------	---	---------------------------	-------------------------

Approving authority

Senatus Quality Assurance Committee and University Court for the associated resolution

Related policies, procedures, guidelines & regulations

[Framework for Curricula](#)
[Models for Degree Types](#)
[Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study](#)
[Board of Studies Terms of Reference](#)
Assessment and Feedback Policy [\[add link once approved\]](#)
[Learning Platform Strategy](#)
[Course Descriptor Guidance](#)

Alternative format

If you require this document in an alternative format please email Academic.Quality@ed.ac.uk.

Keywords

Programme, course, design, development, approval, changes, closure, review, Board of Studies, curriculum management.



Programme and Course Approval and Management

CONTENTS PAGE

Page

1. Overview

2. Programme and Course Design and Development

- Development of new programmes
- Collaborative programmes and partnerships
- Remote delivery
- Development of new courses
- Equity and accessibility
- Student involvement

3. Programme and Course Approval

- Key committees responsible for programme and course approval, changes and closure
- Approval of credit-bearing programmes and courses
- Key issues to consider when scrutinising proposals for credit-bearing courses and programmes
- Evidence of expertise from outside the programme
- Minor and major changes to existing programmes
- Minor and major changes to existing courses
- Timescales for approval of proposals (credit-bearing courses and programmes)
- Approval of non-credit bearing courses

4. School Boards of Studies

5. Management and Review of Programmes and Courses

- Programme and course management
- Programme and course review
- Responsibilities to current and prospective students



Programme and Course Approval and Management

1. Overview

1.1 The University is required to have strategic oversight of, and to consistently apply, effective processes for the design, development, approval, changes and closure of programmes and courses. Programmes and courses are defined in the University's [Glossary of Terms](#).

1.2 This Policy constitutes the University's approach to the approval and management of programmes and courses, along with the Framework for Curricula, the Models for Degree Types and the Degree Regulations.

1.3 Supplementary College-level guidance provides additional information to support effective implementation of this Policy, such as timescales, specific roles and responsibilities, and templates.

2. Programme and Course Design and Development

2.1 Programme and course design and development is carried out at the School or subject area level. Proposals for the development of new credit-bearing programmes (taught and research), must be endorsed by the relevant School Board of Studies prior to review and approval by the relevant College Curriculum Approval Board, or equivalent College committee.

2.2 Non-credit bearing courses which are available to learners outside of the University, and are available as part of the University's Short Courses catalogue, must be approved by a relevant Board of Studies, but do not need approval at the College level. Schools should consult the Online Course Production Service regarding course design and development.

[Short Courses](#)
[Online Course Production](#)

Development of new programmes

2.3 Proposals for new programmes are usually developed in two stages: a first stage in which the strategic aims, fit with the School and College portfolio, and business case are scrutinised; and a second stage in which the programme curriculum and the approach to learning and teaching are scrutinised.

2.4 For the first stage, new programme proposals must include the following information, along with any other requirements specified by the College:

- the rationale and purpose of the new programme, including how it fits with the School and College portfolio and strategy
- a business case, including evidence of market demand to support target student intakes, efficient portfolio management, and evidence that the resource requirements can be accommodated
- a supporting statement from the Head of School, School Management Committee or equivalent



Programme and Course Approval and Management

2.5 Colleges may provide additional guidance and advice regarding the development, timescales and academic approval processes for new programmes.

2.6 Only once a proposal has been endorsed by the School Board of Studies and approved by the College, should Schools proceed to the second stage of new programme development.

Documentation for the second stage of new programme proposals must include the following, along with any other requirements specified by the College:

- the academic rationale and features of the programme, including programme learning outcomes
- a detailed business case, including marketing and recruitment strategy
- the admissions criteria and minimum entry requirements
- the programme structure and Degree Programme Table, including completed a course descriptor for each new course
- the assessment and feedback methods and approaches, and any competence standards, where applicable
- evidence of how the Skills for Success Framework is embedded into the programme
- where other Schools are involved in the development or delivery of the programme, proposals must include evidence of consultation and support for the proposal from all collaborating Schools
- information regarding any non-standard elements of the programme, e.g. student placements, study abroad options

2.7 New programme and course proposals must be developed in alignment with the following frameworks and policies:

University (internal) frameworks and policies

- [Degree and Assessment Regulations](#)
- [Curriculum Framework](#) and Models for Degree Types
- [Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030](#)
- [Assessment and Feedback Policy \(add link once available\)](#)
- [Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy](#)
- [Skills for Success Framework](#) and the Edinburgh Student Vision
- [Work-based and Placement Learning Policy](#) (as appropriate)

External frameworks and requirements

- [QAA Subject Benchmark Statements](#)
- [Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework \(SCQF\)](#)
- Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements
- Employer and industry requirements

Collaborative programmes and partnerships

2.8 Additional information is required for new collaborative programmes with external institutions or partners, including jointly awarded taught and research degrees, and those involving supervision provided by an Associated Institution. Guidance for developing and approving programmes with collaborative agreements and arrangements is available:

[Academic Collaborative Agreements](#)



Programme and Course Approval and Management

Remote Delivery

2.9 New programme proposals must pay due regard to UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) requirements around remote delivery.

2.10 Guidance on what Schools can consider when developing proposals for Distance / Flexible PhDs is available at [Distance Learning and Flexible PhD Programmes - School Checklist](#)

Development of new courses

2.11 Proposals for the development of new courses, both credit-bearing and non-credit bearing, must be reviewed and approved by the Board of Studies of the School which owns the course. Non-credit bearing courses which are taught by staff outwith a School must agree which School Board of Studies will review and approve the course.

2.12 New course proposals must include the following information in the course descriptors:

- number of credits and credit level, aligned to SCQF credit levels
- course learning outcomes
- number and type of assessments, including which course learning outcome(s) each assessment is demonstrating
- the relationship of the course to the programme and, where applicable, how the course delivers and assesses the programme learning outcomes

2.13 Course descriptors must also include any further information specified by Student Records:

[Course creation, approval and maintenance information \(EUCLID\)](#)

Equity and accessibility

2.14 Programmes and courses must be designed to be equitable and accessible to all students, and to avoid any unnecessary barriers to students with disabilities, or other protected characteristics, under the Equality Act 2010.

Student involvement

2.15 Students must be proactively involved at the earliest practicable point in programme and course design, development, approval, changes and closure processes. Their involvement should be proportional to the activity taking place and could include student feedback from the routine quality assurance processes (e.g. course evaluations, student surveys, Staff Student Liaison Committee minutes). The opportunity to be involved must allow for representation of students with a range of backgrounds and characteristics. Consultation should involve students academically closest to the proposed changes.

3. Programme and course approval

3.1. The University programme and course approval, changes and closure processes ensure institutional oversight of standards and quality. Authority is delegated by the University, via the Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC), to Colleges and, where appropriate, to School Boards of Studies. Colleges may elect to wholly delegate the authority to approve all major changes to existing credit-bearing courses, proposals for new courses, and closure of courses to Schools but must retain a method of oversight, particularly to ensure that decisions are taken



Programme and Course Approval and Management

independently of the home subject area of the course. Colleges must retain authority to approve major changes to existing programmes and new programmes, and the closure of programmes.

3.2. The review and approval of programme and course proposals must ensure a transparent and auditable 'paper-trail' providing a rationale for decisions. All programmes and courses must be reviewed regularly by Colleges and Schools as part of the regular review of their portfolios. .

Key committees responsible for programme and course approval, changes and closure (credit-bearing courses)

School Boards of Studies

3.3. The Board of Studies Terms of Reference include information regarding the governance, remit and composition of Boards of Studies.

[Board of Studies Terms of Reference](#)

College Curriculum Approval Boards (or equivalent Committee)

3.4. Each College must produce a clear Terms of Reference setting out the remit, membership and operation of their Committee(s) responsible for programme and course approval and management.

Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC)

3.5. The membership, remit and operation of APRC are detailed in the Committee's Terms of Reference.

[APRC Terms of Reference](#)

Approval of credit-bearing programmes and courses

3.6. The levels of approval required for new credit-bearing programmes and courses, and changes and closures to existing programmes and courses, are (also illustrated in Table 1):

School Boards of Studies approve proposals (where they comply with the Curriculum Framework and the academic year structure and there are no implications beyond the School) relating to:

- minor changes to existing programmes (as defined in x.x)
- major changes to existing courses (as defined in x.x)
- new courses
- closure of courses

College Committees approve proposals (where they comply with the Curriculum Framework and the academic year structure and there are no implications beyond the College) relating to:

- major changes to existing programmes (as defined in x.x)
- new programmes
- closure of programmes

The Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC) approves proposals for new programmes or courses, or changes to existing programmes or courses which do not conform to the Curriculum Framework or the academic year structure. New degree qualifications, with degree titles not already used by the University, also need to be endorsed by APRC, and approved by Court, on the basis of a proposal from the relevant College committee. APRC asks the University



Programme and Course Approval and Management

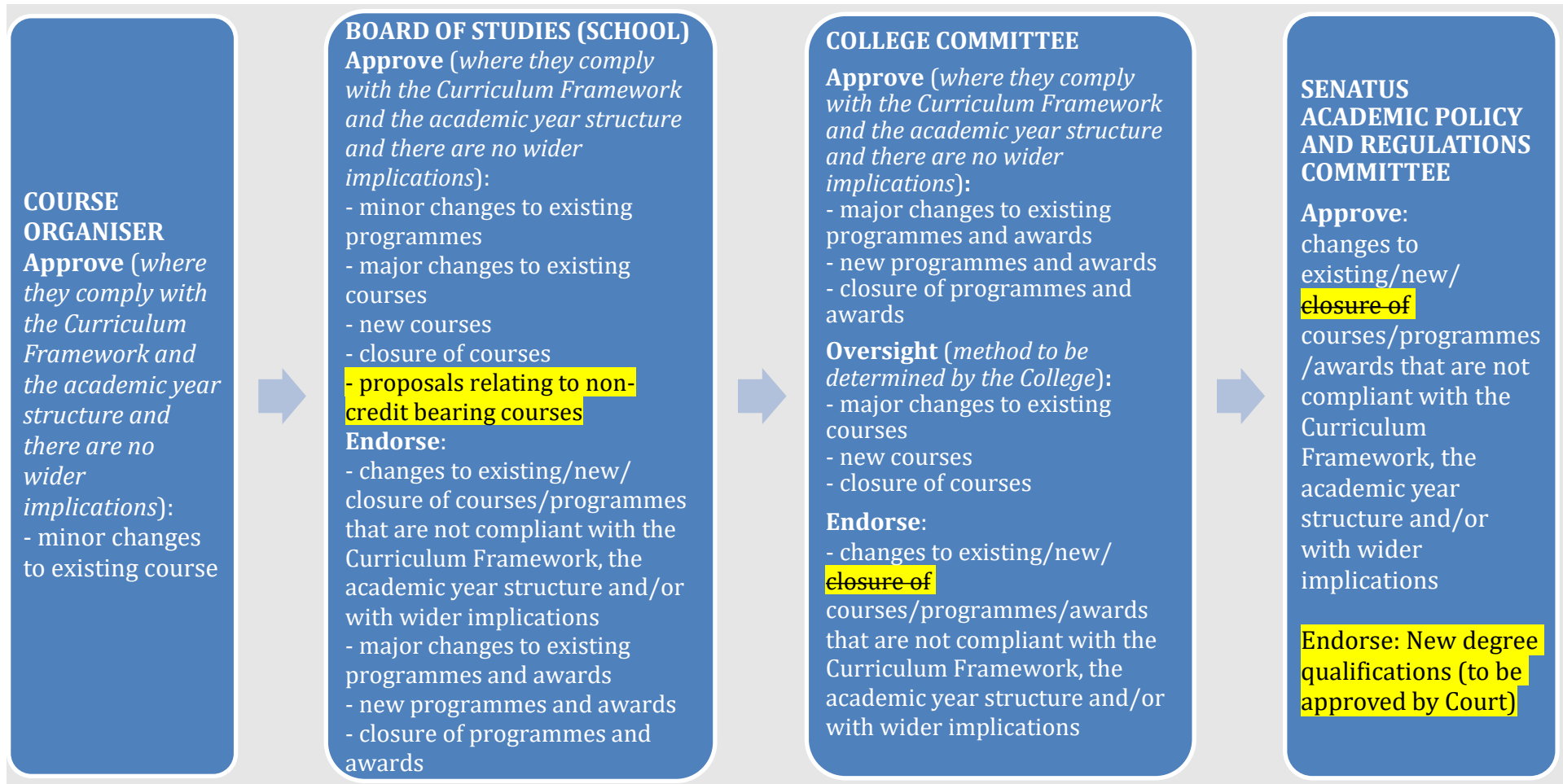
Court for any necessary degree Resolution and adds the degree qualification title to the list of degrees in the annual Court Resolution on undergraduate or postgraduate degree regulations. The Resolution to create the degree qualification needs to come into effect before the University opens the programme for applications. The Secretary to APRC can advise on whether a degree needs a Court Resolution. For example, an MA or BSc for a new discipline does not need a Resolution. Colleges report the closure of degree qualifications to APRC for approval and reporting to the University Court, for the annual degree regulations Resolution.

3.7. Proposals relating to non-credit bearing courses need to be approved by Boards of Studies, but do not need to be approved by College level or APRC. The approval process for non-credit bearing courses is detailed in 3.17-3.21.



Programme and Course Approval and Management

Table 1. Levels of Approval (all stages prior to where a decision is approved should be completed)



Key issues to consider when scrutinising proposals for courses and programmes

3.8. When reviewing proposals for credit-bearing courses and programmes, Boards of Studies and College Committees must consider whether:

- the proposals adequately address the key issues (set out in 2.4-2.13);
- the proposals are academically rigorous and would lead to a high-quality student experience;
- the proposals fit with the School / College portfolio and strategy;
- the business case is robust (note that in some cases Schools / Colleges will consider the business case via a separate route to the Board of Studies / Committee).
- the resource implications have been adequately addressed and are practicable;
- the volume of remote delivery within the programme is within the requirements for UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI);
- the documentation is complete;

3.9. When reviewing proposals for non-credit bearing courses and programmes, Boards of Studies must consider whether:

- the proposals have adequate learning outcomes and course aims
- the proposals fit with the School / College portfolio and strategy, and whether there are any reputational risks;
- the resource implications have been adequately addressed and are practicable;
- the documentation is complete

Evidence of expertise from outside the programme

3.10. In programme design and approval, the involvement of an individual(s) external to the University is required to offer independence and objectivity to the decisions taken. For example, this could be an individual with relevant disciplinary expertise from another institution who provides comments on a programme proposal during its development stage. Alternatively, this could be a member of a College Curriculum Approval Board (or equivalent) who is external to the University.

Minor and Major Changes to Existing Programmes

3.11 Changes to any of the following are **major changes to programmes** and require College approval:

- The name of the programme: any change made to the name of a programme, other than to correct spelling or syntax, is considered a major change and requires a new programme to be proposed and approved.
- The overall content of the programme: a major change to the content of a programme is defined as the addition or closure of courses, or major changes to a significant proportion of the existing courses listed on the Degree Programme Table (as defined below 'Minor and

Major Changes to Existing Courses') A significant proportion of courses, for this purpose, is defined as:

- For undergraduate programmes, 60 credits or more in any single year of the programme, or 120 or more of the total credits in the programme
 - For postgraduate taught programmes, 40 credits or more of the programme
- The structure of a programme: a major change to the structure of a programme is defined as a change in the types of credits between different components of the programme which affect 60 credits or more of the programme (e.g. changing compulsory courses to be core or elective courses, changing elective courses to compulsory courses) or changes to the volume of dissertation vs taught credits.
- The overall approach to assessment for the programme, including:
 - the introduction, amendment or removal of competence standards
 - the introduction to the programme of in-person exams
 - changes to the programme learning outcomes
 - approaches to assessment where the Board of Studies would like to seek College approval
 - The mode of study options, i.e. part-time, full-time or part-time intermittent
 - The place of study, e.g. a change from on-campus to hybrid or online distance learning, or a change from one campus to a different campus location
 - The prescribed period of study
 - Proposing a new collaboration agreement for a programme, or a change of partner for an existing collaborative programme
 - The home School or College

All other categories are regarded as **minor changes to programmes** and are therefore to be approved by the School Board of Studies.

Minor and Major Changes to Existing Courses

3.12 The categories outlined below are regarded as **major changes to courses** and require approval by the School Board of Studies:

- Name of the course*
- Level of the course*
- Credit value*
- Learning outcomes (including changes to learning outcomes and/or assessment as a result of the incorporation of the Skills for Success Framework)
- Balance of assessment types and their weightings (components of assessment)
- Home subject area*

* Will result in a new course being created

3.13 Changes to all other categories, which generally cover course content and administrative aspects, (e.g. course descriptions, , reading lists/learning resources, Course Organiser and Secretary, and delivery information) are regarded as **minor changes**. As a minimum, Course Organisers can approve these changes (with the exception of changes to the Course Organiser and Course Secretary) although Schools may choose to add an additional level of approval for these changes, for example, to ensure programme coherence. Decisions regarding changes of Course Organiser and Course Secretary are management decisions made by the School in line with normal practices.

Timescales for approval of proposals (credit-bearing courses and programmes)

3.14

3.15 Accurate information regarding programmes and courses must be available to prospective students throughout the admissions process. Accurate course information must also be available to current students in advance of the academic session, in order to enable students to make informed course choices and to prepare for their studies. Schools and Colleges should therefore normally approve proposals and publish new or amended information prior to the annual DRPS publication date. Schools / Colleges which do not meet the publication date must undertake additional communications with current and prospective students in order to remain compliant with the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA). In addition to the DRPS publication, Schools / Colleges are responsible for publishing accurate and up to date information on approved courses and programmes on their websites and on the University degree finder prior to the start of the annual recruitment cycle.

3.16 Schools should consult further guidance on the timescales for the development of new programmes and courses, or amendments to programmes and courses, from their Colleges.

Approval of non-credit bearing courses

3.17 Boards of Studies are responsible for approving all new or amended non-credit bearing courses which are available to learners outside of the University and are available as part of the University's Short Courses catalogue. Non-credit bearing courses do not align with the SCQF as they do not carry credits, but should align with the University's Skills for Success Framework. These courses can be for purposes, such as, but not exclusively, continuing professional development, lifelong learning and skills development. Approval processes are different to those for credit-bearing provision and are detailed below.

3.18 Course proposers must refer to the Learning Platform Strategy to ensure courses are hosted on the platform most suitable for the intended audience and to comply with licencing and compliance requirements. The Online Course Production Service should be consulted to discuss the overall process, including course approval, design and delivery.

[Learning Platform Strategy](#)

[Online Course Production Service](#)

3.19 Course proposers must complete documentation which includes the course description and learning outcomes, course aims, purpose and estimates of teaching and administrative support required for each course instance. Proposals should clearly link to the University Strategy 2030.

3.20 New course proposals and amendments must be approved by the relevant School Board of Studies. Courses hosted on a Massive Open Online Course (MOOCS) Platform also require a letter of support from the Head of School and approval by the Short Courses Strategy Group.

3.21 For all short courses, course approval documentation should demonstrate that adequate resources are in place for the creation and delivery of the course, that adequate risk analysis has been carried out and that the relevant statutory requirements are met.

4 School Boards of Studies

4.1 The constitution, composition, and number of Boards of Studies are defined in the Boards of Studies Terms of Reference.

[The text for the Boards of Studies Terms of Reference (ToRs) will be retained within this policy until the Court Resolution is approved to amend the existing ToRs; once the text is incorporated into the ToRs it will be removed from this policy in order to avoid duplication]

•

5 Management and review of programmes and courses

Programme and course management

5.1 The Head of College is formally responsible for degree programmes. Within this overall responsibility each programme, and course within it, is owned by a particular School which ensures its management. The Head of School or Director of Teaching delegates responsibility for the management of a degree programme to a Programme Co-ordinator or Director (or equivalent).

5.2

- Course Organisers are responsible for individual courses within a School. The Head of School or Director of Teaching appoints Course Organisers to take responsibility for individual courses. Course Organisers are responsible for monitoring and reviewing their courses, including monitoring student performance and responding to feedback from students, Boards of Examiners, Quality Committees, Internal Period Reviews or other relevant feedback mechanisms. Where appropriate, Course Organisers should propose minor or major changes to courses to the School Board of Studies for approval

[Course Organiser: Outline of Role](#)

Programme and course review

5.3 Colleges are responsible for ensuring that their teaching portfolio is aligned with their academic mission and University strategic plans. Colleges and Schools are responsible for regularly reviewing their portfolio of programmes and courses to ensure that they are adequately resourced and financially sustainable. Quality must be monitored and reviewed via School Annual Monitoring reports, Internal Periodic Reviews and the relevant School and College Committees responsible for quality assurance and enhancement.

5.4 Colleges must ensure that they have adequate governance and mechanisms in place at School and College level to regularly review their portfolio, and that updates are reported to the College Education Committee.

Responsibilities to current and prospective students

5.5 If, after starting to accept applications for a programme of study, a School or College approves any changes to the programme or to courses within it which lead to a divergence from that described in the published information regarding the programme or courses, the School owning the programme is responsible for amending the published information at the earliest possible opportunity. This applies irrespective of the School which owns the individual courses that are changing.

5.6 Current and prospective students must be informed about the changes at the earliest possible opportunity. Schools are responsible for communicating changes to current students, and Colleges are responsible for communicating changes to prospective students, liaising with the School as necessary-

5.7

Changes to a programme of study which must be communicated to students include:

- 'Major' changes to the programme (in the terms set out in section above)
- Any removal from the programme of courses that published information had indicated would definitely be available, and any introduction of new mandatory courses which reduces a student's choice
- Changes to competence standards for the programme, including the introduction, amendment or removal of competence standards
- Changes to the professional accreditation / recognition status of the programme changes
- Changes to the campus at which the programme is taught (for example, the location of the owning School changes from one campus to another)

5.8 . If any programme is identified for closure as part of a regular portfolio review, the University must first consider its obligations to current and prospective students to the programme. The University will aim to minimise the disruption to the continuity of study for any affected students, and any changes will be communicated to current and prospective students as early as possible, with clear information and options. In the event of closure of a programme, Schools must ensure appropriate management and resourcing of the final student cohorts, in line with the University's Student [Terms and Conditions](#). Collaborative partners and any other stakeholders (e.g. study abroad partners, accrediting bodies, etc) must also be informed in a timely manner.

5.9 Where current or prospective students request this, following the communication of changes or closure of a programme, the University must offer a suitable replacement programme within the University, or, if the University is unable to offer a suitable replacement programme, students and prospective students must be referred to a comparable Higher Education Institution offering a suitable replacement programme.

5.10 In the event that current or prospective students choose to withdraw as a result of significant changes to a programme, or in the event of the closure of a programme, the University will, where appropriate, consider a refund of tuition fees and deposits paid prior to notification of the change in line with the Tuition Fees policy. **ADD LINK to Tuition Fees policy (once updated).**



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Equality Impact Assessment Template

If you require this template in an alternative format, such as large print or a coloured background please contact HRHelpline@ed.ac.uk.

You'll find it useful, before filling in this assessment template, to complete the online course:

[Introducing Equality Impact Assessment](#)

This template is designed to be used alongside the:

EqIA [Guidance and Checklist](#)

EqIA [Policy Statement](#)

EqIA covers policies, functions, practices and activities, including decisions and the delivery of services, but will be referred to as 'policy/practice' hereinafter.

A. Key Information	
Policy/practice name:	Programme and Course Approval and Management Policy
General background/aims of policy/practice:	This Policy outlines for staff and students the University's approach to programme and course approval and management (including development, approval, changes, monitoring and closure). This Policy covers all credit bearing provision, non-credit bearing online courses for external release, and non-credit bearing continuing professional development courses, including postgraduate research as well as taught courses and programmes, and online learning as well as on-campus provision.
School/Dept:	Academic Quality and Standards
Assessed by: (name & job title)	Cristina Matthews, Senior Academic Quality and Standards Manager (Projects)
Sign off by: (name & job title)	Nichola Kett, Head of Academic Quality and Standards
Sign off date:	06/04/2026
Review date:	2029/30 with next policy review

B. Reason for EqIA	(check one)
New policy/ practice is proposed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Change to existing policy/practice is proposed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other (describe in Section D below)	<input type="checkbox"/>

C. Who will most impacted by this proposal?

Consider carefully how your proposal will impact both positively and negatively on people from different groups.

Consider the 9 protected characteristics as below in your proposal. There may be other identity characteristics that you wish to also include in your impact assessment. It is expected that you will consider all equality groups for impact. Please indicate below (with a tick) which groups you feel will be most affected by your proposal.

Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	Race (including ethnicity and nationality)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Marriage and civil partnership ¹	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Religion or belief (including no religion or belief)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pregnancy and maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other characteristics	<input type="checkbox"/>				

D. Consideration of Impact

Show your considerations of how all of the above protected characteristics may be impacted. The following prompts will help you to reflect:

- What information and evidence do I have about the needs of relevant equality groups – is this sufficient to fully assess impact?
- Could this policy/practice lead to discrimination (direct or indirect), harassment, victimisation, or create barriers or less favourable treatment for particular groups and how can you mitigate any negative impacts?

¹ Note: only the duty to eliminate discrimination applied to marriage and civil partnership. There is no need to have regard to advancing equality or opportunity or fostering good relations in this respect.

- Does this policy/practice contribute to advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations?
- How can communication of the policy/practice be made accessible to all relevant groups?

The majority of changes to the policy are changes to governance and operational aspects of the policy, such as:

- Removing content in relation to Boards of Studies
- Including a clearer definition of non-credit bearing courses
- Clearer definitions of major vs minor changes to programmes
- APRC approval no longer needed for closing programmes that are not compliant with the Curriculum Framework
- Removal of detail related to timescales

The policy changes mentioned above are not expected to have an impact on any protected characteristics of staff or students.

Changes to policy which may have an impact on staff and students with protected characteristics are:

- New section to cover UKVI requirements around remote delivery
- Reference to competence standards in various sections of the policy
- Improved clarity regarding communications of changes and closures of programmes and courses to current and prospective students

Age

The proposed policy changes are not expected to have different impact on staff or students according to their age.

Race (including ethnicity and nationality)

Students of non-UK nationality, and who need a study visa, should benefit from curriculum design incorporating any UKVI requirements on remote delivery, in order to ensure that all programmes are available to international, visa-holding students. This should improve equity for students by removing the need for international students, and staff supporting them, to need to check whether certain course choices would put them at risk of non-compliance with the terms of their visa.

Marriage and civil partnership

The proposed policy changes are not expected to have different impact on staff or students according to their marriage or civil partnership status.

Disability

The inclusion of competence standards in published information course and programme should benefit current and prospective students with disabilities by offering transparency regarding aspects of programme and courses assessments where it is not possible to make adjustments for students with disabilities. This allows prospective students with disabilities to make more informed choices regarding whether or not a programme is suitable to them.

The policy changes specify the governance routes for the introduction of, or changes to, competence standards, ensuring that these are only used where it is necessary and appropriate. This should offer prospective and current students with disabilities more

confidence that competence standards are being used appropriately, and that assessments where there are no competence standards will be subject to reasonable adjustments where needed.

Religion or belief (including no religion or belief)

The proposed policy changes are not expected to have different impact on staff or students according to their religion or belief.

Sex

The proposed policy changes are not expected to have different impact on staff or students according to their sex.

Gender reassignment

The proposed policy changes are not expected to have different impact on staff or students who have had gender reassignment.

Pregnancy and maternity

Students who are pregnant, or who are new mothers, may face additional difficulties with assessments. The inclusion of competence standards in published information course and programme should benefit current and prospective students who are pregnant, or are new mothers, by offering transparency regarding aspects of programme and courses assessments where it is not possible to make adjustments for students with this protected characteristic. This would allow students with this protected characteristic to plan accordingly, e.g. by requesting an authorised interruption of studies.

Sexual orientation

The proposed policy changes are not expected to have different impact on staff or students according to their sexual orientation.

Other characteristics

There are no other equality groups who would be significantly impacted by the proposed policy changes.

<p>E. Equality Impact Assessment Outcome Select one of the four options below to indicate how the development/review of the policy/practice will be progressed and state the rationale for the decision.</p>	<p>(check one)</p>
<p>Outcome 1: No change required – the assessment is that the policy/practice is/will be robust.</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Outcome 2: Adjust the policy or practice – this involves taking steps to remove any barriers, to better advance equality and/or to foster good relations.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>

Outcome 3: Continue the policy or practice despite the potential for adverse impact, and which can be justified.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outcome 4: Stop the policy or practice as there are adverse effects which cannot be prevented/mitigated/or justified.	<input type="checkbox"/>

F. Action and Monitoring

Describe any actions you will take to address the findings of this EqIA.

- How can I involve equality groups or communities in the ongoing monitoring, review and potential future development, of this policy/practice?

Describe how the policy/practice will be monitored going forward, to ensure that impact is frequently reviewed. Make sure you add a review date in Section A above.

This policy is due for periodic review every four years.

Colleges and Schools who put the policy into practice have the opportunity to provide feedback on the policy changes, including the option to request amendments if there was any unforeseen negative impact on particular groups. Students are able to provide feedback via student voice channels, including through representation on Boards of Studies, College committees, student representative and student surveys.

G. Publish

Send your completed EqIA to the HR EDI team (equalitydiversity@ed.ac.uk) to published, and keep a copy for your own records.



Board of Studies Terms of Reference

Summary

To outline how Boards of Studies are governed and operate in the University. These terms of reference set out the high-level Board of Studies matters as outlined in the 1966 Higher Education Act and delegate responsibility for the regulation of other more operational matters to the Senate Quality Assurance Committee (or any successor committee to whom Senate delegates its responsibility in relation to curriculum approval).

Scope: Mandatory Policy

The policy applies to all Boards of Studies in every School in the University, and the staff and student members of Boards of Studies.

Contact

Academic Quality and Standards

academicpolicy@ed.ac.uk

Document control

Dates	Version approved: XXXXXX	Effective date: XXXXXX	Equality impact assessment: 15.04.2026	Last Reviewed: 2025/26	Next Review: 2030/31
Approving authority	University Court for the associated resolution; Senate Quality Assurance Committee				
Related policies,	Programme and Course Approval and Management Policy Court resolution 05/2019 Models for Degree Types Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study Assessment and Feedback Policy [add link once approved] Course Descriptor Guidance				
Alternative format	If you require this document in an alternative format please email academicpolicy@ed.ac.uk				
Keywords	Board of Studies, course approval, programme approval, curriculum management				



Board of Studies Terms of Reference

Governance and remit

1. Each School (or equivalent) must have at least one Board of Studies or a body that fulfils the role of a Board of Studies.
2. Boards of Studies must review and approve new courses and programmes, and amendments to existing courses and programmes, including credit-bearing and non-credit bearing courses. New programmes and major changes to programmes (as defined in the Programme and Course Approval and Management Policy) must also be approved by the relevant College Committee.
3. Board of Studies are responsible for:
 - ensuring that proposals are academically appropriate, and are supported by the necessary documentation
 - ensuring that proposals comply with the University's regulations and policies
 - assessing whether the proposals will contribute to a good student experience
 - oversight of programme and course handbooks, although the approval can be delegated to members of staff within a School
4. Boards of Studies are also responsible for keeping the teaching, learning and assessment methodologies under review, and for offering advice on the School's portfolio of programmes.
5. Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) (or any successor committee to whom Senate delegates its responsibility in relation to curriculum approval) will determine further requirements for the criteria and reference points that Boards should take account of when considering proposals.
6. Boards of Studies must meet at least once per academic year, and must report direct to the relevant College committee(s) as necessary.

Composition

7. The Convener of a Board of Studies, and the Deputy Convener, are academic members of staff appointed by the Head of School.
8. The membership of each Board includes: the Head of School and the Director of Teaching (or equivalent); all staff involved in the teaching of a degree programme which the Board is responsible for; one student member from within the School; and one external member from another Board of Studies within the University.. The Head of College has the right to appoint an ex officio College member to every Board of Studies in the College. Boards of Studies can include members from other areas of the University, for example from other Schools or from relevant support services.
9. SQAC (or its successor committee) will determine the requirements for the operation of Boards of Studies, and may add additional requirements for Boards of Studies.



Board of Studies Terms of Reference

10. While normal practice is for Boards of Studies to operate within individual Schools, bodies may be established at College or University level to fulfil the functions of Boards of Studies, with the approval of SQAC (or its successor committee) on the recommendation of the Head of College.
11. On the date on which this Resolution comes into force Resolution 05/2019 shall be repealed.
12. This Resolution shall come into force with effect from [date to be confirmed].



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Equality Impact Assessment Template

If you require this template in an alternative format, such as large print or a coloured background please contact HRHelpline@ed.ac.uk.

You'll find it useful, before filling in this assessment template, to complete the online course:

[Introducing Equality Impact Assessment](#)

This template is designed to be used alongside the:

EqlA [Guidance and Checklist](#)

EqlA [Policy Statement](#)

EqlA covers policies, functions, practices and activities, including decisions and the delivery of services, but will be referred to as 'policy/practice' hereinafter.

A. Key Information	
Policy/practice name:	Board of Studies Terms of Reference

General background/aims of policy/practice:	This Policy outlines how Boards of Studies are governed and operate in the University. These terms of reference set out the high-level Board of Studies matters as outlined in the 1966 Higher Education Act and delegate responsibility for the regulation of other more operational matters to the Senate Quality Assurance Committee (or any successor committee to whom Senate delegates its responsibility in relation to curriculum approval).
School/Dept:	Academic Quality and Standards
Assessed by: (name & job title)	Cristina Matthews, Senior Academic Quality and Standards Manager (Projects)
Sign off by: (name & job title)	Nichola Kett, Head of Academic Quality and Standards
Sign off date:	15/04/2026
Review date:	2030/31 with next policy review

B. Reason for EqIA	(check one)
New policy/ practice is proposed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Change to existing policy/practice is proposed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other (describe in Section D below)	<input type="checkbox"/>

C. Who will most impacted by this proposal?

Consider carefully how your proposal will impact both positively and negatively on people from different groups.

Consider the 9 protected characteristics as below in your proposal. There may be other identity characteristics that you wish to also include in your impact assessment. It is expected that you will consider all equality groups for impact. Please indicate below (with a tick) which groups you feel will be most affected by your proposal.

Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	Race (including ethnicity and nationality)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Marriage and civil partnership¹	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	Religion or belief (including no religion or belief)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pregnancy and maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other characteristics	<input type="checkbox"/>				

D. Consideration of Impact

Show your considerations of how all of the above protected characteristics may be impacted. The following prompts will help you to reflect:

- What information and evidence do I have about the needs of relevant equality groups – is this sufficient to fully assess impact?
- Could this policy/practice lead to discrimination (direct or indirect), harassment, victimisation, or create barriers or less favourable treatment for particular groups and how can you mitigate any negative impacts?
- Does this policy/practice contribute to advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations?
- How can communication of the policy/practice be made accessible to all relevant groups?

The majority of changes to the policy are the result of moving text from another policy (Programme and Course Approval and Management policy) into this one.

There is a small number of amendments which are changes to governance and operational aspects of the policy:

- Adding the requirement to appoint a Deputy Convener
- Removing a statement regarding quorum for Boards of Studies, given that there is no requirement for quorum stipulated elsewhere

¹ Note: only the duty to eliminate discrimination applied to marriage and civil partnership. There is no need to have regard to advancing equality or opportunity or fostering good relations in this respect.

- The appointment of College-level or University-level Boards of Studies should be approved by Senate Quality Assurance Committee on the recommendation of the Head of College.

The policy changes mentioned above are not expected to have an impact on any protected characteristics of staff or students.

Age

The proposed policy changes are not expected to have different impact on staff or students according to their age.

Race (including ethnicity and nationality)

The proposed policy changes are not expected to have different impact on staff or students according to their race, ethnicity or nationality.

Marriage and civil partnership

The proposed policy changes are not expected to have different impact on staff or students according to their marriage or civil partnership status.

Disability

The proposed policy changes are not expected to have different impact on staff or students according to disability.

Religion or belief (including no religion or belief)

The proposed policy changes are not expected to have different impact on staff or students according to their religion or belief.

Sex

The proposed policy changes are not expected to have different impact on staff or students according to their sex.

Gender reassignment

The proposed policy changes are not expected to have different impact on staff or students who have had gender reassignment.

Pregnancy and maternity

The proposed policy changes are not expected to have different impact on staff or students who are pregnant or have children.

Sexual orientation

The proposed policy changes are not expected to have different impact on staff or students according to their sexual orientation.

Other characteristics

There are no other equality groups who would be significantly impacted by the proposed policy changes.

E. Equality Impact Assessment Outcome Select one of the four options below to indicate how the development/review of the policy/practice will be progressed and state the rationale for the decision.	(check one)
Outcome 1: No change required – the assessment is that the policy/practice is/will be robust.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Outcome 2: Adjust the policy or practice – this involves taking steps to remove any barriers, to better advance equality and/or to foster good relations.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outcome 3: Continue the policy or practice despite the potential for adverse impact, and which can be justified.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outcome 4: Stop the policy or practice as there are adverse effects which cannot be prevented/mitigated/or justified.	<input type="checkbox"/>

F. Action and Monitoring Describe any actions you will take to address the findings of this EqIA. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can I involve equality groups or communities in the ongoing monitoring, review and potential future development, of this policy/practice? Describe how the policy/practice will be monitored going forward, to ensure that impact is frequently reviewed. Make sure you add a review date in Section A above.
<p>This policy is due for periodic review every five years.</p> <p>Colleges and Schools who put the policy into practice have the opportunity to provide feedback on the policy changes, including the option to request amendments if there was any unforeseen negative impact on particular groups. Students are able to provide feedback via student voice channels, including through representation on Boards of Studies, College committees, student representative and student surveys.</p>

G. Publish
Send your completed EqIA to the HR EDI team (equalitydiversity@ed.ac.uk) to published, and keep a copy for your own records.

Senate Quality Assurance Committee

23 April 2026

External Examiners: Exceptional Appointments Report 2024/25

Description of paper

1. Report on College approvals of exceptional External Examiner appointments made during 2024/25.

Fit with remit:

Quality Assurance Committee	Y/N
Oversee the delivery and enhancement of the University's quality assurance framework, ensuring that it meets external requirements.	X
Promote the quality assurance framework as an important part of the University's activities and ensure that the outcomes inform relevant University business.	X

Action requested / recommendation

2. To formally note the report.

Background and context

3. The [External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy](#) Section 24 provides for Colleges to make exceptional appointments where a conflict of interest has been identified. The Policy states that, "Colleges will report annually to Senate Quality Assurance Committee on exceptional appointments of External Examiners with conflicts of interest categories stated in this policy". Section 26 provides for an External Examiners term of Office to be extended in exceptional circumstances. The Policy states that, 'The duration of an External Examiner's appointment will be for four years. An exceptional extension of one year may be permitted, if necessary.'
4. The report is compiled by Academic Quality and Standards from information provided by Colleges.

Discussion

College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences:

5. The College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences had twenty-three exceptional appointments. There were twenty-two exceptional appointments in the previous academic year.

New exceptional appointments

6. There was a single exceptional appointment in each of the following Schools; Law School, Health in Social Science (HiSS), Social and Political Science (SPS), and the Edinburgh Futures Institute (EFI).
7. The Law School approved an industry appointment, not from a Higher Education background, due to their expertise for a professional practice-based course; LAWS10273: Strategic Decision-Making: Game Theory and the Law. The appointee was a practicing barrister/solicitor with international experience, working in commercial litigation, cybersecurity litigation, franchise disputes, contract disputes, shareholder oppression claims which was key for the course. Whilst the appointee was the only examiner for this course, the nomination was accompanied by a comprehensive induction plan to ensure the examiner had the required HE understanding and mentorship prior to commencing the role.
8. EFI approved one concession for a nominee who has a colleague from the same subject area of the same institution already acting on the Board of Examiners. The overlap was to be for a single semester and the School was not able to identify an appropriate alternative.
9. SPS approved one exceptional appointment for an External who was within the period of five years since previously being employed by the University due to a short 6-month period of overlap within the five-year period, and the EE was not involved in teaching for any remaining students.
10. In HiSS, one appointment was made despite the nominee already having more than two other External Examiner appointments. The College granted the concession as one appointment was finishing in 2024.

Extensions to existing appointments

11. There were eight exceptional extensions and eleven non-standard term of office dates. There were fifteen exceptional extensions in the previous year.
12. Exceptional extensions were distributed as follows: two in HiSS, three in the School of Social and Political Science (SPS), and one each in Edinburgh College of Art (ECA), University of Edinburgh Business School (UEBS), and School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures (LLC). The majority of these extensions were granted to ensure continuity in Schools during programme changes and to retain significant expertise and knowledge during a period of on-boarding of several new EEs.

Non-Standard Appointments

13. Non-standard terms of office were distributed as follows:
 - HiSS – one to cover a new programme that began in January.
 - Edinburgh College of Art (ECA) – one appointee was nominated from Semester 2 to allow for the 5-year previous UoE employment limit to elapse.

- HCA – one previous External demitted their role during the term, and one three-year tenure as External could not commit to the standard four-year term.
- School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences (PPLS) - one appointee was due to a previous External demitting their role during the term.
- SPS - one appointee was due to a previous External demitting their role during the term.
- Murray House School of Education and Sport (MHSES) - one appointee was due to a previous External demitting their role during the term.
- UEBS – one selection was delayed due to the previous nominee being rejected, and three appointees were due to previous Externals demitting their roles during the term.

College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine:

14. The College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine had six exceptional appointments. There were four exceptional appointments in the previous year.

New exceptional appointments

15. There was one new exceptional appointment in the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies (Vet School). The appointee was not from a Higher Education background however, was paired with an External from an HEI. The BVM&S team are keen to appoint a practicing vet alongside an academic to ensure practical and academic components are appropriately covered.
16. There was one new exceptional appointment in the Deanery of Biomedical Sciences. The External Examiner held an appointment with CAHSS at the time of nomination. Due to the small pool of available appointees in the subject area sought after and the need for an Examiner with a background in subject matter, this was approved.

Extensions to existing appointments

17. Four one-year extensions were approved for the Deanery of Clinical Sciences to allow the External Examiners to see the run out of four programmes.

College of Science and Engineering

18. The College of Science and Engineering has had eight exceptional appointments. There were three exceptional appointments in the previous year.

New Exceptional appointments

19. There was one new exceptional appointment within the School of Biological Sciences, to allow one examiner to replace another from within the same department at the same institution. The original Examiner completed only one

year of their planned tenure before they resigned, with the new appointee felt to have more applicable experience to take over the role.

Extensions to existing appointment

20. There were seven exceptional one-year contract extensions. Four of these extensions were to increase the tenure of examiners from three to four years, one was within the School of Chemistry and the other three within the School of Biological Sciences. Historically some Schools have preferred for Examiners to hold their tenure for three, instead of the usual four years however, the College are in the process of transitioning to a standard four-year tenure where possible. It is anticipated that Schools using a non-standard three-year term is the reason for the increase in exceptional appointments compared to academic year 23/24.
21. The other three extensions were to increase from four to five-year tenures. Two of these extensions were within the School of Physics and Astronomy and one within the School of GeoSciences. All were on the basis of providing continuity to programmes whilst they were being reviewed in light of the wider Portfolio Review and the expertise of the Examiners being considered a crucial element of this work.

Resource implications

22. The paper reports on activity and no resource implications are associated with it.

Risk management

23. The management of exceptional appointments ensures that the risk of not having an appropriate External Examiner in place is minimised.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

24. This paper does not contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals as it is fulfilling external compliance within the quality framework.

Equality & diversity

25. The paper is a report on activity and an equality impact assessment is not required. Academic Quality and Standards has not identified any major equality impacts in relation to this report.

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

26. The Committee should consider implementation and communication of any agreed action. College representatives should ensure that the outcomes of the Committee's discussions are available for consideration by the relevant College committees.

Author

*Meg Batty, Academic Quality and
Standards Manager*

16 March 2026

Presenter

Brian Connolly

Head of Academic Quality

Freedom of Information

The paper is **open**.