

The University of Edinburgh
Senate Quality Assurance Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on
Thursday 4th December 2025, 13:30 – 16:30
Hybrid meeting: Charles Stewart House Cuillin Room
and Microsoft Teams

1. Attendance

Present:	Position:
Professor Tina Harrison	Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) (Convener)
Faten Adam	School Representative of CSE
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
Professor Ramon Grima	Director of Quality, School of Biological Sciences, CSE (co-opted)
Professor James Hopgood	Dean of Quality and Enhancement, CSE
Heather Innes	Academic Engagement and Policy Co-ordinator
Professor Nazira Karodia	Deputy Vice Chancellor and Vice Principal of Learning & Teaching, Edinburgh Napier University
Dr Jill Mackay	School Representative of CMVM
Dr Sari Pennings	Senate Representative
Professor Carol Richardson	Senate Representative
Dr Neneh Rowa-Dewar	Director of Students, EFI (co-opted)
Dr Emily Taylor	Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Validation, CAHSS
Sinéad Docherty	Committee Secretary, Academic Quality and Standards, Registry Services
In attendance:	
Meg Batty	Academic Quality and Standards Manager, Academic Quality and Standards, Registry Services
Olivia Hayes	Head of Committees and Governance, Academic Quality and Standards, Registry Services
Apologies:	
Katya Amott	Vice President (Education), Students' Association
Professor Matthew Bailey	Dean of Quality, CMVM
Professor Laura Bradley	Doctoral College Representative (CAHSS, PGR)
Dr Anne Desler	School Representative of CAHSS

2. Welcome and introductions

The Convener noted the apologies from those members unable to attend and welcomed new members to the Committee: Professor Ramon Grima, co-opted from the School of Biological Sciences within the College of Science and Engineering (CSE); Dr Jill Mackay as a School Representative (Vet School) within the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine (CMVM); and Professor Carol Richardson from the Edinburgh College of Art (ECA) within the College of Arts and Humanities (CAHSS) filling the remaining vacant elected Senate member position.

3. Minutes of previous minutes (SQAC 25/26 2A)

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.

In response to some queries that had been received in advance of the meeting, the Convener confirmed that the QAA Institutional Liaison Meeting (ILM) does consider the SEAP and is a holistic review of all of our quality activity. There is also an annual meeting with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), the body to which the SEAP is ultimately submitted. Therefore, the SEAP is considered by both the QAA and SFC.

Additional edits were agreed to sections 6.2, 8, 9 and 10.

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2025.

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

4. Matters Arising

Institute for Academic Development (IAD)

The IAD was discussed, after a member had raised a query about how actions previously referred to this area would be taken forward in light of the recent decision by the University to disband the unit.

Members were advised that although the IAD will not continue as a separate organisational unit, the functions of the IAD will continue, with different areas of IAD joining existing services and departments in the University to which they are closely aligned. It was noted that there is a perception that with the restructure of the IAD that the functions performed by IAD would cease to exist. The core functions and services that IAD provided, including staff development and student development functions, will continue to be provided, but from within other Departments and Service area of the University. Some IAD colleagues will be joining Academic Quality and Standards as an Academic Development Team, others will join the Careers Service, providing support to students, and others will join the Research Office, primarily including PGR support. A small number of colleagues opted for voluntary severance and a small number of roles have been made redundant as a result of the restructure.

The Committee noted the importance of clear communication regarding the changes to IAD and continued visibility of its functions, in order for staff to utilise and refer to the services provided. In the last two external reviews, the only commendations received were levelled at the IAD and it is important that this good work continues to be recognised. The Committee noted its thanks to all IAD colleagues for the valuable work they undertake.

QAA Institutional Liaison Meeting (ILM)

The Convener confirmed that the University had recently received its outcome letter from the QAA, following the ILM held in August 2025. This communication gave feedback on the ILM discussion and recognised the action that had been taken to address the QESR recommendations, noting that a number of these were considered by the QAA to be complete. The letter acknowledged the action that had been taken to address assessment & feedback and noted that the monitoring of this as well as work to address the awarding gap are still ongoing. QAA will hold the next ILM before the end of academic year 2025/26.

Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP)

The Committee were updated on the activities shared with other institutions and taking place within STEP with a focus on awarding gaps. The strands within this work include hearing student voice through interviews (with these to be arranged for February 2026 by EUSA), benchmarking how the sector manages student data and looking at interventions for awarding gaps which have already been successfully trialled or embedded in the sector. The objective is to create a good practice resource that will be made available on the QAA website.

It was confirmed that the next STEP event will take place at the end of January 2026 and will be hosted by the University of Edinburgh.

Learning & Teaching Workstream

Following a L&T workstream meeting earlier in the day, the Convener informed the Committee that an implementation timeline for the course selection and timetabling project was being considered, within the already approved 2027-29 timeframe. It was noted that this brings forward the initial timeframe by one year. It was acknowledged that simplification of programmes and courses will need to be part of this work for the project to be effective, alongside system enhancement.

Boards of Examiners Project

Members were informed that the January pilot of this project is going ahead, with participating Schools being confirmed and training and support being developed. A "Critical Friends" group and APRC members will be involved in feeding back to those involved in pilot activity. The intention is to scale up the activity in time for the June exam boards. The project team has expressed its commitment to evaluation and learning from the pilots as it moves forward. It was clarified that the pilot and evaluation activity is continuing with Schools who have already opted-in.

The Dean of Quality and Enhancement for CSE advised members that Schools within CSE had been strongly encouraged to opt-in to the pilot, with the concession that they could focus on elements that they wanted to test, i.e. decision trees or asynchronous boards. A concern that had previously been raised by members of Senate was the challenge of piloting all parts of the process at once. The project board have taken on that feedback and worked with College Deans and Schools to gain consensus on the best approach and allow for Schools to pilot certain elements of their choosing.

Action: Worked examples of pilot activity from a range of Schools will be made available to colleagues once the pilots are complete. The project team will be responsible for sharing these examples.

5. College Annual Quality Reports 2024/25 (SQAC 25/25 2B)

College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

The Dean of QA and Curriculum Validation for CAHSS highlighted that the College has made much progress against previously identified actions over the last year, particularly with the sustained focus on Assessment and Feedback within the College. The timeliness of feedback has improved, as evidenced by the data collected, and a set of assessment benchmarks has been developed, with the objective to create equity between courses and Schools. The College identified some cases of overassessment but none of underassessment.

Committee members were assured that the College is seeking to establish an efficient approach to assessment. The working group has done a great deal of benchmarking and is looking to establish College-wide tariffs that can guide Boards of Studies within Schools. Where significant changes are needed at programme-level to reduce assessment the College will endeavour to apply a light-touch approval process to avoid unnecessary burden on Schools.

The College had reflected on the quality of the student experience in their report, highlighting that Schools had reported concerns about the impact of budget freezes and their efforts to prioritise the student experience and particularly students' concerns. The College highlighted the importance of transparency around financial decisions and clear communications to better reassure students of any changes.

It was reported that CAHSS had been unable to progress with planned work on HR and payroll issues raised during the previous reporting cycle due to the overarching priority of University finances.

During discussion it was noted that CAHSS had identified within their report some elements of the Curriculum Transformation Programme (CTP) that they would like to take forward now that the overall programme had been discontinued, whereas the other two Colleges did not reflect on CTP in the same way.

On behalf of Senate elected members, it was shared with the Committee that members found this report to be informative and useful and felt that it would be beneficial for it to be shared more widely amongst colleagues.

As a final point, there was consideration of the actions that CAHSS had set out for the year ahead and those which had been requested of the University. The A&F actions are all in development and the Generative AI work is being taken forward by the University. Actions and feedback around managing change and operational enhancement can be fed back to the relevant University workstream and UIPB which is reviewing how University-wide projects are managed and phased.

College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine (CMVM)

On behalf of CMVM, the School Director of Quality for the Veterinary School spoke to the College QA report. It was highlighted that a key area for CMVM is the new modernisation structure that took effect at the beginning of 2025/26. All taught programmes now sit within either the Medical School or Veterinary School, although some staff from other Schools within CMVM will continue to teach on Medical/Vet School programmes. Research students and staff are located across all Schools throughout the whole College. Within the new structure, where teaching is consolidated into two Schools, it is expected that there will be greater efficiency and oversight of teaching.

As a result of the modernisation, the QA structure within the College is changing, particularly so within the Medical School, and portfolio management work is ongoing. Some colleagues in QA roles voiced concern that the QA functions within the new structures had not been fully considered. While new Director of Quality post(s) are to be advertised, clarity is needed on where these will sit within the new structure.

It was highlighted that a large number of clinical, non-University staff form a key part of the teaching team and there can be challenges with involving these clinical members of staff with University initiatives such as Assessment & Feedback turnaround times.

In relation to CTP, it was reported that CMVM always faced unique challenges with how to align the project with professionally accredited programmes and how it would be applied to taught programmes within the College. There is one known example of a challenge course from within the CMVM portfolio that will be taken forward. The Veterinary School has had considerable involvement in curriculum innovations and in providing opportunities for students out with the College.

It was also highlighted through the report and discussion that there are staffing concerns within the College and this has been the case for a number of years. Low staffing numbers has affected the capacity to engage with some wider initiatives and there is concern that things will become more stretched and difficult going forward. In addition to this, it was reported that industrial action is having a greater effect now within CMVM than in previous years and this may affect teaching provision.

The Committee were supportive of the actions and priorities set out by the College for the year ahead. The Convener did note to members that there were no identified actions around Assessment & Feedback and the role of clinical staff. It was recognised there are challenges but felt that if feedback turnaround times are dependent on external (NHS) colleagues it would be beneficial for the College and Schools to explore how to capture that.

College of Science and Engineering (CSE)

The Dean noted that the CSE QA report largely aligned with themes already identified in other QA reports and in the Self-Evaluation Action Plan (SEAP) (item 25/26 2E). Efforts to establish consistent availability and use of rubrics within the College has shown success with evidence of rubrics visible through IPR and external accreditation processes. The Assessment & Feedback monitoring has been largely effective, although some areas report greater variation in the turnaround time. It was noted that there may be evidence in some areas of a more casual approach to PGT turnaround times.

An issue particular to CSE Schools is the student and staff experience at the Kings Buildings campus. The College highlighted recurring issues with physical space and environment, facilities, transport and the sense of connectivity with main campus. These issues often come up through student voice mechanisms, although it was felt by Committee members that it would be helpful to understand the impact of this and whether it leaves students feeling isolated or whether it is seen as a barrier to coming to KB campus.

CSE drew particular attention to the use of Generative AI and potential effects on language proficiency for some international students. There will be continuing work in this space, alongside work on Board of Examiners, Student Support and responding to the financial context of the University. It was recognised that these themes align with existing University groups who are already taking forward these areas of work.

6. Student Data Monitoring (Awarding Gaps) Task Group (SQAC 25/26 2C)

The Committee were asked to review the terms of reference for its Student Data Monitoring Task Group. The Group was established at the end of 2023/24 but there is a need to move beyond assessing data and analysing the gaps in data, and therefore new terms for the Group were proposed. It was stated by the Committee Convener, who is also a Co-Convener of the task group, that the awarding gaps are clear and there is enough data to move forward and take action. The Committee were asked to approve the Group being refreshed and refocussed with actions and interventions in mind.

It was confirmed that the EUSA VP Education will co-convene the group and that exact membership is still to be agreed. It was suggested that the Academic Registrar be approached to identify the most suitable colleague from Registry Services to join the Group and the Committee were supportive of the Group liaising with the University EDI Lead and colleagues working in Widening Participation teams. It was agreed that it is key for the Group to have the appropriate level of expertise and experience represented within the membership, as well as being informed through consultation with different areas of the University. It was confirmed that School level representatives could be in Professional Services roles and highlighted that colleagues within Schools can support the College Deans in taking forward action, to ensure effectiveness and activity beyond only those directly involved within the Groups.

Action: Committee Secretary to update membership to reflect the EUSA VP Education's role as Vice-Convener.

Action: Committee Secretary to approach colleagues with membership invites.

Action: Committee Secretary to communicate with members of the existing Student Data Monitoring Task Group as to whether they will continue as members.

The Head of Quality from AQS emphasised to Committee members that this Group aligns well with the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) and the Group remit should make clear reference to this. Members were also reminded that the Group's work would complement QAA Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP) work, in which the University is looking to take a leading role within the sector in addressing awarding gaps.

The Committee noted that rigorous piloting and opportunities to learn is needed for this Group to be most effective. It is understood that well intentioned interventions in other institutions have had negative or neutral outcomes. The objective of this group will be to test and evaluate different approaches and interventions in order to assured of the effectiveness of any mechanisms adopted.

The Committee endorsed and approved the new TOR and the revised membership of the task group. An update on timeframe and plans for the Group will be shared at the next meeting of the Committee.

7. Responses from University Level Actions (SQAC 25/2 2D)

The Committee discussed the various responses to the University level actions provided by colleagues and key services.

With regard to the Student Support Model (SSM), the Head of Academic Planning that the Cohort Lead role is a key priority for the SSM project board. Attention will be focussed on gathering and analysing feedback from staff and students, addressing challenges with the Cohort Lead role and the academic advice aspect within the model. The EUSA VP Education is leading focus groups with students to gather their feedback. This will inform an SSM meeting to be held at the end of semester two, which will seek to establish the support needed for Cohort Lead roles in the short term and also explore how the role should operate in the longer term to make it most useful for students. Clearer identification of what the role should be is the objective, and it is expected that progress will be made ahead of the next external review.

In relation to the update from colleagues working in the Careers Service, the Committee confirmed they were happy with the information provided in what was considered to be a thorough and comprehensive response.

On the topic of PGR Student Experience, the Committee had some further questions following the update from the University PGR Lead. Members expressed their concerns about the reduced availability of Tutor and Demonstrator roles in the current financially constrained context and the implications for offering career development for PGR students who may experience fewer teaching opportunities.

The Committee noted that the PGR response referred to data collection around rates of training across T&D staff. The Committee requested an update including that data to ensure a robust report in this area, which will also be required by the External Review Oversight Group.

Action: Committee Secretary to feedback to University PGR Lead and request further response including data report on training undertaken by T&Ds and clarification on responsibilities.

On the topic of student English language skills, Senate elected members raised concerns in the context of increasing use of live translation software and AI tools. Staff highlighted impacts on workload, group work, peer learning, academic misconduct investigations, alongside concerns that PGT progression data may not capture the issue effectively. This was not a question of entry standards not being met, but an impact on language development. The Committee called for clearer University-wide expectations of English language development as part of academic progression, alongside stronger evidence, clearer accountability, and coordinated action involving relevant academic and student leadership.

Action: Convener to remit this item to Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary, Students for further exploration and response back to the Committee.

The Committee discussed the response to matters raised under Staff and Student Experience. Members noted that the update provided was considered to be a holding statement rather than a specific response and sought a more detailed response.

The Convener reflected that the request may not have been sufficiently specific and invited members to clarify the aspects on which a response was sought, in order to refine the request. In response, members identified: the evidence that QA processes have identified inconsistency in the way School are applying budget cuts in relation to the student experience; disconnect between centrally defined timelines for change and assigned workstreams leading on change projects; impact on PGR experience; risk of more staff departing and leaving gaps in teaching, research and support; student support teams carrying very high caseloads; impact on peer assisted learning activities, which are in increased demand and valued by students (especially WP students); and feedback previously received from students concerning unpredictability of courses due to staff availability changing at short notice.

Action: Committee Secretary and Convener to send further communication to Assistant Principal and Deputy Secretary, Students to continue dialogue on the theme of Staff and Student Experience.

The final response related to the Learning and Teaching Infrastructure theme that had arisen through the School Quality Reports. The Convener of the L&T workstream had provided a response outlining the range of activities and projects within this area. During discussion, members were reminded that the School reports were retrospective and not taking into account the breadth of current activity led by the workstream.

There was discussion of the comment included in the update, which referred to a “values system shift where both research and teaching are valued to support an improved student experience.” The Committee Convener reminded members that this is in line with Strategy 2030 and the commitment to ensuring student experience is equal to research excellence within the University. This is in response to the perception that research has historically outweighed teaching within the institution. The role of QA is to ensure that

teaching is supported as well as research, and that both are valued equally by the University.

8. Self-Evaluation Action Plan (SEAP) (SQAC 25/26 2E)

The Committee discussed the Self-Evaluation Action Plan (SEAP) which is the annual report submitted to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). It is a summary report which includes self-reflection and action plans from across the University. It was submitted to the SFC in November 2025 following approval from the Principal, although it is designed to be a live document and continuously updated throughout the year.

The Committee discussed the best way to share this document with colleagues more widely and how best to raise awareness of ongoing QA activities. It was confirmed that the SEAP will be shared within College Quality Assurance (QA) committees and it was proposed that Directors of Quality could share it with School Education Committees. Colleagues in EUSA are leading on initiatives to involve students through dedicated events. It was agreed by members that it is vital for colleagues to understand and feel part of the actions committed to, even if they are not directly involved. This awareness can enhance the sense of involvement across the University.

On behalf of Senate elected members, it was reported that the SEAP does not feel like a live document and it was proposed that colleagues should be involved in evaluating and discussing the document more widely, rather than noting it. The SEAP includes input from all university areas through various committees and processes, yet some in the College and Senate feel their roles and perspectives are not adequately represented. It was suggested that effective engagement relies on involving these groups sooner, as activities and processes unfold, rather than at the final stages of reporting.

In response to this, the Convener emphasised that the SEAP is a report which is responding to priorities and concerns set by the SFC. Therefore, colleagues may not see all their concerns or experiences captured in the report if they do not address the key principles and questions set by the SFC. There is a balance to be found between reporting on what colleagues would like to highlight and meeting the requirements of a report to be submitted to an external funder and regulator. Furthermore, the SEAP is designed to be an overview of a variety of activities across the University; granular details concerning day-to-day actions and challenges are not included in a high-level document.

Recognising that it is difficult for colleagues who are unfamiliar with QA activities and frameworks to understand the relevance of the SEAP, discussion returned to how best to communicate the report. Channelling through College QA Committee was proposed as the best approach, and highlighting actions may help to establish the relevance of the document. It was emphasised that there are no new actions in the SEAP; all will have been communicated through other groups and mechanisms. It may be useful to position the SEAP as an institutional map which reassures colleagues of the breadth of actions being taken across the University in different areas of responsibility.

Action: College Deans to include SEAP on upcoming College QA Committee agendas.

9. Internal Periodic Review: Reports and Responses (SQAC 25/26 2F)

The College Deans of Quality were invited to comment on the IPR reports and responses within their College. The Dean for CSE noted that Schools within the College had provided comprehensive responses and updates. Earth Sciences, within the School of GeoSciences, were commended for their strong approach to dealing with recruitment in their area. No areas of further action were identified by the College.

The Dean for CAHSS highlighted that the School of Social and Political Sciences (SPS) had drawn attention to employability concerns for PGR students as they complete their programme of study, as well as the need for post-programme support in this area. This is felt to be a pervasive concern for PGR students and there may be a need for collective review of PGR within the University ecosystem to better articulate the responsibilities towards this cohort. It was also noted that there is ongoing WP data work within SPS and agreed that this should be brought to the attention of the Data Task Group.

Action: Committee Secretary to communicate SPS WP data work to the Data Task Group.

As the Dean of Quality for CMVM had sent apologies ahead of the meeting, it was agreed that the Committee Secretary would follow up with MVM to identify any areas for further attention of action.

Action: Committee Secretary to liaise with CMVM College Dean of Quality to address any outstanding IPR business relevant to Schools within the College.

10. A.O.B.

A member had requested that the Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study (DPRS) system be discussed in the context of information management. It was requested that clearer instructions for DPRS information, if it were to be retained, be issued in revised University guidance, and that the DPRS be considered within the review of the Programme and Course Approval and Maintenance Policy.

Action: Convener to raise DPRS updates in relevant workstream and feed into the upcoming review of the PCAM policy.

On behalf of CSE, the Dean of Quality and Enhancement reported that some External Examiners had experienced challenges with accessing the reporting system (EERS) and getting through the University's Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) process. As a result, CSE had experienced an increase in offline submissions in 2024/25 and wish to understand how widespread an issue this is. It may be that a communication to EEs about using MFA would help.

Action: AQS to follow up with College QA colleagues to understand scale of issue and set guidance for communicating with EEs.

11. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 26th February 2026, 2-5pm.