



# THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

## Senatus Academicus Special Meeting

Monday 25 May, 12:30-1:00pm

Microsoft Teams

Voting will be undertaken using Wooclap.

### Agenda

<b>1. Welcome and Apologies 12:30-12:35, 5 minutes</b>	
<b>2. Industrial Action: Variations to Academic Regulations and Policies – 6A - 12:35-1:00pm, 25 minutes</b> For approval	S 25/26 6A

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**Senate****25 May 2026****Industrial Action: Variations to Academic Regulations and Policies****Description of paper**

1. This paper seeks Senate approval for the temporary variations to academic regulations and policies in response to disruption caused by industrial action. These have been considered by the Senate Academic Policy and Regulation Committee (APRC) and the Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) who are recommending for approval by Senate.

**Action requested / recommendation**

2. Senate is invited to approve the temporary variations to academic regulations and policies.

**Discussion**

3. At its [1 October 2025 meeting](#), Senate approved two motions relating to the operation of Boards of Examiners in academic year 2025-26:
  1. *Any regulation change relating to the operation of Boards of Examiners in the academic year 2025/26 must come to full Senate for approval.*
  2. *Any change to the operation of Boards of Examiners in academic year 2025/26 that does not require changes to the regulations also requires approval by full Senate. Proposals for potential mechanisms for delegation of approval of minor changes are welcomed; such mechanisms would also require explicit approval by full Senate.*
4. APRC and SQAC have been asked to consider and make a recommendation to Senate for approval of temporary variations to academic regulation and policy.
5. Therefore, Senate is invited to approve the temporary variations based on the recommendation of APRC and SQAC.
6. The extract of the APRC minutes of the meeting held 21 May 2026 are provided in Appendix 1.
7. The paper presented to the APRC meeting held 21 May 2026, and which outlines the detail of the temporary variations is provided in Appendix 2. Senate were informed via email when the 21 May APRC agenda and papers were available to access.
8. The SQAC electronic business minutes of the meeting held 20-22 May 2026 are provided in Appendix 3.
9. The paper provided to the electronic business meeting of SQAC held 20-22 May 2026, is provided in Appendix 4. Senate were informed via email when the SQAC electronic business agenda and papers were available to access.

**Resource implications**

10. See papers provided in Appendix 2 and 4 for detail on the resource implications.

**Risk management**

11. See papers provided in Appendix 2 and 4 for detail on risk management.

**Equality & diversity**

12. See papers provided in Appendix 2 and 4 for detail on equality and diversity

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

13. Detail on the communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any agreed action is provided in the papers in Appendix 2 and 4.

14. Papers and minutes related to meetings of Senate Standing Committees have been circulated via email to Senate members.

**Author**

Senate Support  
May 2026

**Freedom of Information**

Open paper

# Appendix 1

## Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee

Thursday 19 March 2026 at 2:00pm

Microsoft Teams

### AGENDA

<p><b>Present:</b>          Katya Amott          Dr Adam Bunni          Dr Lawrence Dritsas          Lisa Dawson          Dr Valentina Ferlito          Lindsey Fox          Myles Blaney          Professor Dave Laurenson          Isabel Lavers          Dr Chris Mowat          Dr Kirsten Phimister          Dr Emily Taylor (Convener)          Kirsty Woomble          Professor Gill Aitken          Victoria Buchanan</p> <p>Lucy Evans</p> <p>Catriona Morley          Professor James Hopgood          Robin Gay</p>	<p>Vice President Education, Students' Association          Head of Academic Policy, Academic Quality and Standards          Dean of Students (CAHSS)          Academic Registrar, Registry Services          Senate representative (CMVM)          Head of Postgraduate Research Student Administration (CSE)          Acting Head of Digital Learning Applications and Media          Senate representative (CSE)          Academic Administration Manager (CMVM)          Dean of Students (CSE)          Head of Taught Student Administration (CSE)          Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Validation (CAHSS)          Head of Postgraduate Research Student Office (CAHSS)          Dean of Education (CMVM)          Director, Disability and Learning Support Service (Co-opted member)          Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary, Students (Co-opted member)          Head of Taught Student Administration &amp; Support (CAHSS)          Dean of Quality and Enhancement (CSE)          Student Voice Manager (EUSA)</p>
<p><b>In attendance:</b>          Meg Batty          Professor Tina Harrison</p>	<p>Academic Quality and Standards Manager (AQS)          Deputy Vice Principal Students (Engagement)</p>
<p><b>Apologies:</b>          Heather Innes</p> <p>Professor Linda Kirstein (Vice-Convener)          Professor Ruth Andrew          Charlotte Macdonald</p>	<p>Academic Engagement Coordinator, Students' Association (Co-opted member)          Dean of Education (CSE)</p> <p>Dean of Postgraduate Research (CMVM)          Advice Place Manager, Students' Association</p>

# Appendix 1

4.	SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS
4.1	<p data-bbox="280 353 1214 387"><b>Industrial Action: Variations to Academic Regulations and Policies</b></p> <p data-bbox="280 421 1453 757">The Convener gave context to the paper; The University is in a period of industrial action and continue to meet with UCU. However, the university has a responsibility to minimise the impact to our students' education. University regulations include the ability to apply temporary variations in order to mitigate any disruption to students receiving their awards or progression decisions. APRCs task was to recommend variation for approval to Senate who will hold an extraordinary meeting on Monday. Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) were conducting electronic business concurrently to seek their approval for the External Examiners variations to recommend for approval to Senate. The Convener emphasised the importance of the paper, the work that went into it and the proposed actions which reflect our commitment to our students.</p> <p data-bbox="280 790 1430 857">The paper was presented by Lucy Evans and Tina Harrison. The detail of the paper had been consulted on widely and took account of previous experience.</p> <p data-bbox="280 891 1471 1025">The University's regulations allow us to make variations to mitigate the disruption to students. The role of APRC is to ensure that we are maintaining academic standards and working in best interest of students, so that they can progress and receive their awards in a timely fashion</p> <p data-bbox="280 1059 1461 1193">Academic standards are those set by the University as an awarding body. We have applied the variations proposed previously. These have been reviewed by the QAA previously, following a concern raised with them by a member of staff. The QAA found that they pose no risk to academic standards.</p> <p data-bbox="280 1227 1441 1294">The proposed variations are in line with those put in place previously, but some are more tightly constrained, e.g. credit on aggregate reduced from 60 to 40 credits.</p> <p data-bbox="280 1328 1453 1395">Based on the QAA's judgement of our approach, APRC need not have any concern about academic standards, but focus on working in the best interest of our students.</p> <p data-bbox="280 1429 1453 1563">The Scottish Funding Council has launched a National Review of Awarding Arrangements and we expect to be included in the process, and therefore be subject to scrutiny of our assessment and awarding processes within this calendar year therefore this sets us up appropriately.</p> <p data-bbox="280 1597 1390 1664">It was highlighted that the main risk is not the variations themselves, but applying the variations consistently across Schools and Colleges.</p> <p data-bbox="280 1664 1453 1765">*Senate Support note – a motion passed on Tuesday 19 May will ensure Boards of Examiners document use of variations which will be reported to Senate at its first Ordinary meeting of the 2026/27 academic year.</p> <p data-bbox="280 1798 1461 1865"><b>APRC agreed to recommend that Senate approve the temporary activation of Taught Assessment Regulation 70.</b></p> <p data-bbox="323 1899 1217 1933">This was based on the rationale presented in paper APRC 25/26 4B.</p> <p data-bbox="280 1966 1461 2033"><b>APRC agreed to recommend that Senate approve the temporary activation of Taught Assessment Regulation 71.</b></p>

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This was based on the rationale presented in paper APRC 25/26 4B.

**APRC agreed to recommend that Senate Quality Assurance Committee and Senate approve the temporary amendment to remove the requirement to consult External Examiners when setting examination papers (Annex A, Point 1). This was subject to the instructions for Boards of Examiners clearly stating point 37a (robust internal scrutiny of papers) is a condition of using the variation.**

The Convenor noted that this variation is under the delegated authority of SQAC but APRC are asked for a view.

The committee discussed the impact of removing the requirement to consult with External Examiners when setting examination papers. Members highlighted that this regulation is approaching obsolescence but is currently in place therefore must be considered. One member raised that many assessments have moved to in class tests to address the impact of AI, and that these are not subject to approval by external examiners. This indicates the proposed variation is standard practice in other assessments and does not pose a significant risk to academic standards. Experience from one member as an external examiner for another university is that they do not see papers at all.

One member raised that Annex A, point 1 does not state that the variation can only be applied on the condition of point 37a, i.e. robust internal scrutiny of papers. The committee agree to recommend the variation on the condition that the instruction provided to Board of Examiners clearly highlights point 37a is a condition of using this variation.

The committee noted this regulation should be highlighted for removal or reviewed in due course to be expanded to cover all assessments. Accreditation bodies should be consulted through this review as they may ask for samples of external examiner input on both coursework and exams.

**APRC agreed to recommend that Senate Quality Assurance Committee and Senate approve the temporary amendment to External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy as presented in Annex A, Point 1. This was subject to clarification that the variation should only be enacted where the EE resignation was as a result of industrial action.**

The Convenor noted that this variation is under the delegated authority of SQAC but APRC are asked for a view. One member raised that the instruction advises this variation may be used where an External Examiner resigns, but felt that this should only apply where an External Examiner resigns as a result of industrial action. The existing process in place for an External Examiner resignation for reasons outside of industrial action should be followed in other cases. The committee discussed that the standard process relies upon concessions from Colleges and APRC, and is therefore not agile enough for the current situation.

One member raised that staff may already have additional responsibilities as a result of MAB, therefore asking Schools to do additional 'internal-external' work outside of their domain is an additional resource requirement. Paper authors clarified that a staff member from another School taking on the 'internal-external' role is subject to agreed resourcing, and does not mandate someone to make themselves available.

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**APRC agreed to recommend that Senate Quality Assurance Committee and Senate approve the temporary amendment to External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy as presented in Annex A, Point 2.**

The Convenor noted that this variation is under the delegated authority of SQAC but APRC are asked for a view. Following member questions, the paper authors confirmed that the expectation that Boards should operate with the adjusted quorum was a requirement, where the MAB affected normal participation of members. It was the Convenor's responsibility to determine and explain where the adjusted quorum would not allow the Board sufficient expertise to make decisions. The committee requested that these two points are clearly reflected in the instructions to Boards.

**APRC agreed to recommend that Senate approve the temporary amendment to the Handbook for Boards of Examiners for Taught Courses as presented in Annex A, Point 3, and approved the role of Internal-External examiners defined above.**

This was based on the rationale presented in paper APRC 25/26 4B and based on the discussed on the previous variations.

**APRC agreed to recommend that Senate Quality Assurance Committee and Senate approve the temporary amendment to External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy as presented in Annex A, Point 3.**

The Convenor noted that this variation is under the delegated authority of SQAC but APRC are asked for a view. This was approved for recommendation to Senate based on the rationale presented in paper APRC 25/26 4B.

**APRC agreed to recommend that Senate approve the temporary amendment to Taught Assessment Regulation 13 as presented in Annex A, Point 4.**

The committee discussed that Boards already have the powers to amend weightings of a course and this change was specifically in the removal for the requirement to consult with students and External Examiners, and receive approval from College.

The committee agreed to recommend the variation on the understanding that this will only apply where an assessment has not taken place and that there is therefore no prospect of marks becoming available. The variation will not apply where assessment has happened but marks are not yet available. The instructions to Boards will clarify this point.

Use of the variation must take account of any external or accrediting requirements.

A member noted the impact upon students who may be disadvantaged, e.g. where an assessment component which they were hoping would improve their course result is removed.

Members noted concerns about situations where learning outcomes are not explicitly mapped to components of assessment, and this information is only known to Course Organisers. One member noted a concern about removing the involvement of External Examiners in this process.

EUSA members requested that information about variations be reflected in the FAQs for students, with the paper authors noting that this can be discussed at Academic Contingency Group.

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**APRC agreed to recommend that Senate approve the temporary amendment to Taught Assessment Regulation 35 as presented in Annex A, Point 5.**

The committee discussed the variation where normally courses are marked from 0-100 but there is not enough evidence available to provide a robust mark, but there is enough evidence to confirm that the student has passed. In this scenario, the Board may award a PASS/FAIL.

One member raised concerns regarding operationalising the variation in terms of the level of modelling that may be required of teaching offices. This may involve the use of offline spreadsheets and the higher possibility of human error. It was agreed that the Academic Contingency Group will investigate providing teaching offices with additional reporting tools to ensure consistent modelling scenarios.

One member raised that in the previous MAB, Boards had questioned what was considered a robust boundary for a Pass/Fail course. The committee agreed where the reliable results available are above the standard pass mark of 40% for UG, then a PASS could be awarded and this would be included in the instructions for Boards.

The committee noted that Boards and Teaching Offices may need additional time to consider student cases and considered the key dates regarding awarding and graduation. The Academic Registrar confirmed there is some flexibility in confirming awards after the award deadline, where necessary. Where an award is confirmed late ahead of graduation, there may be situations where students can still graduate but would not receive a certificate.

**APRC agreed to recommend that Senate approve the temporary amendment to Taught Assessment Regulation 51 as presented in Annex A, Point 6. This is subject to an amendment to 51b agreed that in addition to core and compulsory courses, courses which were pre-requisites to future compulsory courses are also exempt from the award of credit on aggregate.**

The paper authors noted that in the previous MAB the threshold was set at 60 credits and this has been reduced to 40 credits following feedback from Schools.

The committee noted that some courses which are pre-requisites for courses in subsequent years are not noted as core or compulsory on the relevant Degree Programme Table. The committee agreed that in addition to core and compulsory courses, courses which were pre-requisites for future compulsory courses must also be exempt from the award of credit on aggregate.

**APRC agreed to recommend that Senate approve the temporary amendment to Taught Assessment Regulation 52 as presented in Annex A, Point 7. This was subject to information being included in the instruction document regarding conditional progression.**

The committee discussed cases where progression Boards may have information missing on core course or courses that are pre-requisites to future learning. It is the Board's responsibility to identify how critical the course is and to allow conditional progression where necessary. The Committee agreed to recommend the variation dependent on information being added to the guidance regarding conditional progression.

**APRC agreed to recommend that Senate approve the temporary amendment to Taught Assessment Regulation 56 as presented in Annex A, Point 8.**

## Appendix 1

This was based on the rationale presented in paper APRC 25/26 4B.

**APRC agree to recommend that Senate approve the temporary amendment to Taught Assessment Regulation 53 as presented in Annex A, Point 9.**

The committee considered the fairness of applying credit on aggregate to students in differing scenarios:

- Student is re-sitting but has not been effectively engaging therefore is it fair to award credit on aggregate;
- It is the student's last opportunity to resit but they have not previously passed the resits;
- Student does not engage in the final assessment;
- Student may be offered credit on aggregate and not a further resit opportunity;
- Student may fail the MAB-affected assessments but have 40% average for credits we have marks for therefore would still be awarded credit on aggregate.

The committee noted that credit on aggregate can be offered to other cohorts where the assessment is affected by MAB, and agreed that to ensure fairness it should be applied to General and Ordinary Degrees. The committee agreed that in circumstances where the student has an average of 40% for courses with numerical marks, it would be appropriate to apply credit on aggregate.

The paper authors clarified that credit on aggregate would only be applied for a MAB-affected result and not for fails due to non-engagement with assessment. The paper authors clarified that should information become available indicating the Board would have made a less favourable decision for the student, then the Board would not change this so as not to disadvantage the student.

The committee recommended that the regulations relating to the award of General and Ordinary Degrees should be reviewed, with consideration given as to whether to allow the award of credit on aggregate as standard.

**APRC agreed to recommend that Senate approve the temporary amendment to Taught Assessment Regulation 54 as presented in Annex A, Point 10**

This was based on the rationale presented in paper APRC 25/26 4B.

**APRC agreed to recommend that Senate approve the temporary amendment to Taught Assessment Regulation 57 as presented in Annex A, Point 11.**

This was based on the rationale presented in paper APRC 25/26 4B.

Overall APRC members reached a unanimous decision on all items and collectively recommend the variations for approval to Senate.

## Appendix 2

### Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee

21 May 2026

#### Industrial Action: Variations to Academic Regulations and Policies

##### Description of paper

1. This paper asks the Committee to approve temporary variations to academic policies and regulations in response to disruption caused by industrial action.
2. Specifically, it proposes that the Committee activates Taught Assessment Regulations 70 (Significant Disruption: concessions and standards) and 71 (Significant Disruption: where only partial results are available to Boards) and considers a suite of variations proportionate to the disruption.
3. As detailed by Taught Assessment Regulations 70 and 71, the paper then asks the committee to approve specific regulation variations which are intended to minimise the impact of the current disruption on students while maintaining academic standards. Many of the variations proposed are more tightly constrained than have been implemented in previous periods of disruption, this reflects lessons learned through previous periods of disruption including how previous mitigations have impacted subsequent student experience.

##### Fit with remit

<b>Academic Policy and Regulations Committee</b>	<b>Y/N</b>
Oversee the development, maintenance and implementation of an academic regulatory framework which effectively supports and underpins the University's educational activities.	<b>Y</b>
Ensure that the academic regulatory framework continues to evolve in order to meet organisational needs and is responsive to changes in University strategy, and in the internal and external environments.	<b>Y</b>
Scrutinise and approve proposals for new or revised academic policy or regulation, ensuring that policy and regulation is only introduced where it is necessary, and that all policy and regulation is suitably accessible to its intended audience.	<b>Y</b>
Act with delegated authority from the Senate on matters of student conduct and discipline.	
In taking forward its remit, the Committee will seek consistency and common approaches while supporting and encouraging variation where this is beneficial, particularly if it is in the best interests of students.	<b>Y</b>
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.	<b>Y</b>

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### Action requested / recommendation

4. The paper asks the Committee to:
  - a. Note the update on the industrial action (see paragraphs 5 to 10);
  - b. Confirm that it agrees to activate Taught Assessment Regulation 70 (Significant Disruption: concessions and standards) (see paragraph 32)
  - c. Confirm that it agrees to activate Taught Assessment Regulation 71 (Significant Disruption: where only partial results are available to Boards) (see paragraph 33)
  - d. Decide whether to approve a suite of variations to academic regulations and policies (see paras 34 to 108 and Annex A). These exceptional measures would take effect immediately, and remain in place until no later than the end of session 2025-26 (including the 2026 summer assessment period).
  - e. Note the action requested of [Senate](#) in Paper H (to be discussed and approved on 19 May 2026):
    - i. Any exceptional variations to regulations put in place by APRC under delegated authority must be accompanied by an explicit rationale for how those variations maintain academic standards. A summary of the variations and the accompanying rationale should be presented to the next ordinary meeting of Senate.
    - ii. To support data-informed governance, Boards of Examiners should be required to log each use of any exceptional variations, in a consistent format that will enable University-wide analysis. A report on the data should be presented to the next ordinary meeting of Senate.

### Background and context

#### *Industrial Action*

5. Industrial action, called by the University and College Union Edinburgh (UCUE), has, is and will, cause disruption to the assessment of students and will impact the running of upcoming Boards of Examiners. The aim of any steps taken by the Committee would be to mitigate the academic impact on students of the industrial action, and ensure the consistent treatment of students, while maintaining academic standards and the value of the University's awards. The use of any temporary variations by Boards of Examiners is only to be considered when Boards have exhausted all other available options.
6. During previous periods of industrial action and other forms of significant disruption (e.g. COVID-19 pandemic), the Committee has approved temporary variations to academic policies and regulations in order to provide Schools and Colleges with additional options for mitigating the disruption, where it judged that doing so would be compatible with maintaining academic standards. As in previous rounds of disruption, the use of any temporary variations by Boards of Examiners is considered an exceptional measure and is only to be considered when Boards have exhausted all available options.

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7. The proposed variations have been developed in consultation with Colleges and Schools via the University's Academic Contingency Group (ACG), which also includes representation from Edinburgh University Students' Association. Feedback as part of planning for a potential Marking and Assessment Boycott (MAB), including reflections on the experience of previous industrial action at the University of Edinburgh, was also provided by each School via Heads of Schools and Directors of Professional Services. A group of Heads of Schools also provided detailed further comment on plans.
8. The University of Edinburgh branch of the University and Colleges Union (UCUE) took strike action from:
  - Monday 8 to Friday 12 September 2025
  - Monday 17 to Wednesday 19 November 2025
  - Monday 30 March to Friday 3 April 2026
9. Members of UCUE also undertook Action Short of a Strike (ASOS) from 20 June to 11 December 2025 and are currently undertaking continuous ASOS which commenced on 30 March 2026.
10. UCUE announced a Marking and Assessment Boycott (MAB) from 1 May 2026. The MAB will continue until the disputes are settled, UCUE calls off the boycott, or at the end of the industrial action ballot mandate. The MAB will be continuous throughout the mandate period and there is no known end date for the action. The MAB covers all marking and assessment processes that contribute to summative assessment decisions for students, whether final (i.e. graduation) or interim (i.e. progression decisions).

### ***Action to date to mitigate the impact of the industrial action on students***

11. The University's Academic Contingency Group (ACG), which includes representatives of Colleges, the Students' Association, and relevant professional services, has monitored the impact on students of the current industrial action, and has reminded Schools and Colleges of options for mitigating the impact on students within normal academic policies and regulations.

### ***Academic Standards and Academic Judgement***

12. As a University we are required to seek to minimise disruption to our students' studies while maintaining academic standards. Academic Standards are "Standards that institutions set and/or maintain for the award of academic credit or qualifications."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaas/reviewing-he-in-scotland/tqer-guide-for-institutions.pdf?sfvrsn=ea49bc81\\_7](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaas/reviewing-he-in-scotland/tqer-guide-for-institutions.pdf?sfvrsn=ea49bc81_7)

## Appendix 2

13. The Quality Assurance Agency's UCU Marking and Assessment Boycott: Advice for QAA Members – June 2023 Update<sup>2</sup> "...outlines approaches that QAA Members may choose to adopt during this period of industrial action to support the maintenance of academic standards and ensure that students can progress in their studies, including graduating with the award they have earned." The Advice recognises that during such action "...institutions need to make clear their approach to progression/classification and decide what level of adjustments or alternative arrangements they need to make for marking in order to generate a minimum set of marks on which they can make reliable decisions regarding student performance and award." It lists a number of potential measures to support student progression and award.
14. In response to a submission to the Scottish Quality Concerns Scheme about potential impact on standards and the management of quality arising from the use of adjustments to regulations in response to 2022/23 MAB at the University of Edinburgh the Quality Assurance Agency undertook a Concern Scheme Assessment in June and July 2023. The outcome was that there was no case to answer. The QAA found "...no evidence of risk to academic standards arising from the activation of mitigations to respond to MAB..." and [considering the number and proportion of students impacted] was "...of the view the University is using adjustments only where there is sufficient evidence to support awarding."
15. In the context of the report of the Tertiary Peer Review of the University of Glasgow, which has resulted in the Scottish Funding Council commissioning a National Review of Awarding Arrangements, the following are relevant:
  - a. The importance of consistent application of University-level academic regulations and policies and the availability of evidence to demonstrate this; and
  - b. The demonstration of learning outcomes for decision-making, rather than a percentage of assessment being completed.
16. **In summary, the University can apply variations to its academic regulations and policies in times of disruption in order to mitigate impact on students. The variations proposed in this paper have been developed in the context of QAA Advice, previous variations applied during the COVID-19 pandemic and the marking and assessment boycott in 2022/23, sector practice and external requirements. Decisions on student outcomes should be made through the consistent application of variations approved by the Committee in line with its terms of remit. The risk to academic standards does not arise from the adjustments themselves (as these have been previously considered appropriate by QAA), but from a failure to apply our taught assessment regulations and agreed adjustments to them consistently and transparently.**

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/news/ucu-marking-and-assessment-boycott-advice-for-qaa-members.pdf?sfvrsn=17ae81\\_10](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/news/ucu-marking-and-assessment-boycott-advice-for-qaa-members.pdf?sfvrsn=17ae81_10)

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17. During normal operation, Boards of Examiners regularly exercise their academic judgement when making decisions about outcomes for specific students. Such Board judgements will remain paramount should a Board be required to apply any of the variations proposed in this paper.
18. In the context of a Board of Examiners, academic judgement is bounded by the approved regulations, policies, and programme requirements, and must be exercised consistently and transparently within these. Academic judgement is considered the informed, expert evaluation made by qualified academics about a student's performance, the standard of work, and the interpretation of academic criteria. This is critical in the assessment and marking of work. Academic judgement does not permit departure from approved assessment regulations and policies.
19. Consistent with the principles included in the Handbook for Boards of Examiners for Taught Courses and Programmes, is the expectation that academic judgement is exercised consistently across students and within the agreed policies and regulations of the University. Agreed variations should therefore be applied in a manner consistent with how students would be treated under normal circumstances (for example those with valid exceptional circumstances). For example, where a component of assessment could ordinarily be excluded from the calculation of course grade due to valid exceptional circumstances, this provides a relevant precedent for how to treat that component if it has been disrupted by industrial action.
20. Taught Assessment Regulation 71.10 states that where Boards of Examiners receive new information (for example numeric grades for a course where such information was not originally available) they must review the status of previous decisions. During previous periods of disruption, the University has operated a policy of non-detriment, meaning that if assessment decisions, reached using agreed policy variations, were revisited considering new information, any change of decision could not lead to a worse outcome for a student than had been previously awarded. Not adopting a position of non-detriment could have a substantial impact on student experience, should students act in good faith based on an initial decision, and then find that decision is negatively revised later. Set against this, feedback from previous periods of disruption is that the operation of non-detriment has led to some students progressing when their performance did not merit this and that has resulted in a poor student experience. ACG notes that the extent of variations proposed this time is less extensive than during the MAB of 2022/23 and it is therefore appropriate to expect that the impact of any non-detriment clauses will be less than in previous periods of disruption. The discussion below explicitly addresses situations where non-detriment should apply (in contrast to previous periods of disruption which were accompanied by a blanket expectation of non-detriment).
21. Given the objective of maintaining academic standards, and the need for Boards of Examiners to have robust evidence to support any decisions they make, it may not be possible to mitigate the impact of missing marks through the application of

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the variations where there are insufficient marks available to support reliable progression and award decisions. To minimise the likelihood of this occurring, all reasonable steps should be taken to mitigate the impact on students through the reallocation of marking responsibilities, with priority given to courses, including core and compulsory courses, where the application of the variations would be insufficient to enable progression and award decisions to be made securely.

22. In support of this approach, the University reserves the right to reallocate marking duties where necessary to maintain academic standards and protect the student experience. TAR 70.3 states that: "All forms of assessment, such as examination scripts and course assignments, are the property and responsibility of the University, not of individual examiners or markers. They therefore must be accessible to the University when required." In addition, under TAR 3, the Head of School is responsible for the appointment of markers and may therefore make alternative arrangements for marking where necessary to ensure the completion of assessment processes.
23. For the avoidance of doubt, the variations described in this paper are only to be used where a lack of assessed work means that the standard regulations cannot be applied. Wider efforts to minimise the amount of work impacted by the Marking and Assessment Boycott would therefore be expected to reduce the need for these variations to be applied.
24. Reflecting transparency of decision making, the need for an audit trail relating to the use of any approved variations, and the Senate paper mentioned in paragraph 4, Boards of Examiners will need to record when any variations are applied, or any occasions where a variation might have been applied but they chose not to; in the latter case an explanation should be recorded.

### Discussion

25. The impact of action held to date has led to significant amounts of disruption to teaching and assessment in some specific areas, but more limited or no impact in other areas. This has included the loss of scheduled teaching activities, and, in a relatively small number of cases, the cancellation of assessment activities (for example, presentations) that were scheduled for strike days.
26. Based on feedback from Colleges and Schools, it is anticipated that the overall impact of industrial action, including the MAB, on the assessment of Semester Two courses is likely to be considerable. It is expected that there will also be significant impact on the consideration of progression and award decisions. It is unlikely that Boards of Examiners will be able to take adequate steps to mitigate this impact on students without additional options.
27. The ACG advises that there is a strong case for activating additional variations under Taught Assessment Regulation 70: Significant Disruption: concessions and standards, and putting in place temporary variations to academic policies and

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regulations, which would assist Schools to conduct Boards of Examiners over the coming period, whilst maintaining academic standards.

28. The ACG advises that there is a strong case for activating Taught Assessment Regulation 71: Significant Disruption: where only partial results are available to Boards and putting in place temporary variations to academic policies and regulations, which would assist Schools to make progression and award decisions over the coming period, whilst maintaining academic standards.
29. Paragraphs 34-108 outline specific variations to regulations that would support the operation of Taught Assessment Regulations 70 and 71.
30. In the case of activation of both Taught Assessment Regulations 70 and 71 ACG suggests that any approved variations run until the end of the 2025/26 Academic Year, including consideration of the summer resit diet.
31. ACG reaffirms that any variation from normal practice, which a Board of Examiners takes as a result of the activation of Taught Assessment Regulations 70 or 71, should only occur when all options, normally available to a Board, have been considered. The academic judgement of Boards of Examiners will remain central, and the maintenance of academic standards (as can be argued to be maintained through the specific variations proposed below) remains a key principle of decision making.
32. **The ACG requests the Committee formally activate Taught Assessment Regulation 70. Is the Committee content to do so?**
33. **The ACG requests the Committee formally activate Taught Assessment Regulation 71. Is the Committee content to do so?**

### ***Specific Variations to Academic Policy and Regulations Associated with the Activation of Taught Assessment Regulations 70 and 71***

34. The ACG recommends the following specific policy and regulation variations be activated to mitigate against the escalated impact of industrial action which includes a MAB.
35. The following variations will only be applied where their use does not interfere with the award of professional accreditation. Where variations cannot be applied due to professional accreditation reasons, Boards of Examiners will be required to minute the details of why this is the case, with supporting evidence as appropriate.

### ***Remove the requirement to consult External Examiners when setting examination papers (Annex A, Point 1)***

36. The ACG recommends this variation for the following reasons:

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- a. While there has been limited evidence of disruption to External Examiner arrangements to date, it is possible that it becomes a more substantive issue with the confirmation of a MAB.
- b. It is expected that papers for the May diet have been set, however there may be some resit papers needed in August which will normally require review by External Examiners.
- c. While it is important to ensure that Schools set appropriate and accurate examination papers, there is no reason to think that temporarily removing the requirement to involve External Examiners in setting one particular type of assessment creates any risk to academic standards, as long as Schools are utilising robust internal peer review processes for examination papers.

37. The ACG recommends that this variation apply on the following basis:

- a. In the absence of normal arrangements, the Convener of the relevant Board of Examiners must ensure that there has been robust internal (auditable) scrutiny of examination papers, involving at least one member of academic staff with expertise in the relevant discipline (in addition to the member of staff that has prepared the examination paper). In the event that the Convener is not available to approve these arrangements for internal scrutiny, the Head of School has the power to appoint an alternate member of staff to this internal moderation role.

**38. The ACG requests the Committee recommend to Senate Quality Assurance Committee to temporarily amend External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy as presented in Annex A, Point 1. Is the Committee content to do so?**

### ***Changes to Moderation of Marking (Annex A, Point 2)***

39. ACG considered the possibility of using unmoderated marks to support the award of course credit (a proposal requested by some Schools). Internal moderation is part of the University's QA processes and the waiving of this requirement poses a threat to our maintenance of academic standards. No variations to the regulations around moderation are therefore requested. Colleagues in Academic Quality and Standards will work with College Offices to ensure Schools are aware of what existing regulations require in terms of internal moderation, and that required expectations are maintained throughout any disruption.

40. ACG recommends a variation to the requirement that a sample of work from courses be reviewed by an External Examiner prior to marks been confirmed by a Board of Examiners.

41. In past periods of industrial action, review by External Examiners has been replaced by the appointment of "internal-externals" (academics from a different discipline within the University) who have fulfilled the role of oversight of quality of work.

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42. ACG notes that experience of internal-external arrangements, during past periods of industrial action, has been mixed; notably in terms of the ability to identify colleagues with suitable expertise to review work. Furthermore, most of our teaching will have been reviewed by External Examiners on previous occasions, and that feedback is typically consistent over time. Therefore, ACG deems that the use of internal-externals for most courses on this occasion is not necessary.
43. APRC has previously considered, and approved, concessions for specific Boards of Examiners to allow course marks to be approved without External Examiner review, notably in January and May of 2023.
44. ACG recommends that the variation to allow Boards of Examiners to confirm course marks, not reviewed by an External Examiner be subject to all the following conditions (consistent with previous concessions approved by APRC). This variation will only be used where it is clear that all of the following apply:
  - a. There is no External Examiner available to review the course (for instance because they have resigned).
  - b. The course was reviewed by an External Examiner last time it ran (and that occurred within the last two academic years), and no issues were raised.
  - c. The structure of the assessment remains consistent with how the course was assessed when it was last reviewed by an External Examiner.
  - d. There has been robust internal (auditable) moderation.
45. Where a course does not meet the above criteria, marks must only be confirmed where the work has been reviewed by an internal-External Examiner.
46. The Convenor of the Board of Examiners is responsible for appointing Internal-External Examiners. Where the Convenor is unable to undertake this role, the Head of School will make appropriate arrangements.
47. Internal-External Examiners are expected to be based in a different School from the course they are reviewing. Where an appointment, not consistent with this criteria, is required approval from the relevant College Office must be sought.
48. Internal-External Examiners should be provided with a sample of work, and other course materials, consistent with what would normally be provided to an External Examiner,
49. **The ACG requests the Committee recommend to Senate Quality Assurance Committee to temporarily amend External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy as presented in Annex A, Point 2. Is the Committee content to do so?**

***Changes to the operation of Boards of Examiners for Taught Courses and Programmes – relaxation of quorum requirement and External Examiner involvement (Annex A, Point 3)***

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50. The ACG recommends variation to these regulations for the following reasons:

- a. The MAB will be continuous over the summer examination period and will cause significant disruption to the operation of Boards of Examiners. It is highly likely that Boards will need to modify their operation during this time to mitigate against the impact of the MAB.
- b. The Handbook for Boards of Examiners for Taught Courses and Programmes outlines the membership requirements for Boards of Examiners. It is likely that in many cases Boards will not be able to operate in line with the regulations, and the ACG recommend a variation to specific regulations to allow Boards to take place during this time. In many cases, Schools would need to move rapidly to make these changes once they are clear about the impact of the MAB on the operation of Boards scheduled to take place during this time.
- c. In all cases, where Boards of Examiners can take place as normal and in line with existing regulations, then Boards will take place in the usual way.

### **The ACG recommends a variation to the following regulations:**

- d. Handbook for Board of Examiners for Taught Programmes 4.18 and 4.19 outlines the quorum requirement for Boards of Examiners and Undergraduate Progression Boards. Boards to be permitted to take place with a minimum of two internal examiners participating alongside a Board Convener. Board of Examiner Conveners will only allow Board meetings to go ahead where not only will the Board be quorate under the adjusted requirements, but it will have sufficient expertise and participation of those with key roles in order to make robust decisions.
- e. External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy 37,38 and 45 to allow Boards to take place without the participation of an External Examiner. Where the External Examiner is available, their involvement in the Board should be sought. While there has been limited evidence of disruption to External Examiner arrangements to date, it is possible that it becomes a more substantive issue if the industrial action continues. Therefore, a requirement for External Examiners participation could impede Schools from taking appropriate action to mitigate the impact on students.

### **The ACG recommends the variation apply on the following basis:**

- f. Schools can only use this temporary arrangement to address disruption to Boards of Examiners associated with the industrial action. They can only do so if they are satisfied that all students on a cohort, or a particular part of the cohort, would be disadvantaged unless the variations were applied.
- g. In the absence of normal decision-making arrangements, Schools must secure approval from the Convener of the relevant Board of Examiners. In the event that the Convener is not available, the Head of School will appoint an alternative member of staff to this role.

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- h. Academic Quality and Standards will provide Schools with instructions on how to manage decision-making and communications where required.
- i. In previous periods of disruption, a regulatory variation was sought to allow substitute internal examiners to be appointed to a board without formal approval from the relevant College Office. The need for College-level approval of such appointments no longer exists (paragraph 4.20 of the Handbook for Boards of Examiners for Taught Courses and Programmes now states that approval should be given by the relevant Head of School). As such, no concession is required.

51. **The ACG requests the Committee temporarily amend the Handbook for Boards of Examiners for Taught Courses as presented in Annex A, Point 3, and approves the role of Internal-External examiners defined above. Is the Committee content to do so?**
52. **In addition, The ACG requests the Committee recommend to Senate Quality Assurance Committee to temporarily amend External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy as presented in Annex A, Point 3. Is the Committee content to do so?**

***Changes to the weighting of components of assessment of courses – allow Schools to make changes after the start of a course without the approval of College or consultation with students and External Examiners (Annex A, Point 4)***

53. The ACG recommends this variation for the following reasons:
- a. Where industrial action to date in 2025-26 has caused disruption to teaching and assessment activities, and it is likely that Schools will need to modify assessment arrangements to ensure that students are not assessed on content that has not been adequately covered due to industrial action, or to mitigate impact on an assessment which was subsequently found to have been affected. Where it is not possible to mitigate the impact through changing the design of individual assessment tasks, the appropriate approach to mitigating these impacts would be for Schools to change the weight of or discount components of assessment. In many cases, Schools would need to move rapidly to make these changes once they are clear about the impact of the industrial action.
  - b. The proposed variation is consistent with existing powers of Boards of Examiners (who can reweight components due to issues with assessment processes or for individual students with valid exceptional circumstances). The purpose of the variation is to expedite that process, with a presumption that consultation will occur if possible.
  - c. While Taught Assessment Regulation 13 allows Schools to change weightings of components of assessment, it requires them to consult both students and External Examiners, and secure College-level approval, before doing so. These arrangements would not be compatible with agile decision-making. While the Committee could consider variations to these

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normal consultation and decision-making processes on a case- by case-basis, that would in itself prevent Schools from taking rapid decisions where required, and would be unmanageable were decisions required on a large number of individual cases.

- d. Consulting students about changes would not be necessary where teaching and assessment has been disrupted for all students in a cohort or sub-cohort, and none would be disadvantaged (in terms of course results) as a result of the changes. This is on the basis that the change is being made in the interests of the students and it would therefore be reasonable not to have to consult with them.
- e. While there has been limited evidence of disruption to External Examiner arrangements to date, it is possible that it becomes a more substantive issue if the industrial action continues. Therefore, a requirement to consult External Examiners could impede Schools from taking appropriate action to mitigate the impact on students.

54. The ACG recommends that the variation apply on the following basis:

- a. Schools can only use this temporary arrangement to address disruption to teaching and assessment associated with the industrial action. They can only do so if they are satisfied that all students on a cohort, or a particular part of the cohort, would be disadvantaged unless the weighting of the relevant component is reduced or removed.
- b. When assessing the need to change the weighting of components of assessments in the event of disruption to relevant teaching and assessment, Schools must consider whether doing so would allow the students to demonstrate attainment in relation to all learning outcomes (including professional and accreditation body requirements, if relevant).
- c. Taught Assessment Regulation 71 provides Boards of Examiners with guidance that where less than four-fifths (80%) of the weighted assessment is available it is unlikely that the Board will be able to determine a mark. However, consistent with existing practice with regards to handling exceptional circumstances cases, QAA guidance issued during the Marking and Assessment Boycott of 2023, and the findings of the recent QAA Review of Assessment Practices at University of Glasgow, there is no expectation that Boards will award a numeric grade simply because x percent of the assessment associated with a course has been completed. The demonstration of learning outcomes remains the paramount consideration.
- d. Schools can change the weightings of components of assessments (including removing a component altogether) for the entire cohort (in the event that all students' preparations for the assessment will have been disrupted) or for a particular part of the cohort (in the event that part of the cohort has been disrupted but another part has not).
- e. In the absence of normal decision-making arrangements, when making changes during the delivery of the course, Schools must secure approval from the Convener of the relevant Board of Examiners. In the event that

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the Convener is not available, the Head of School has the power to appoint an alternative member of staff to this role.

- f. While they would not be required to consult students and External Examiners, Schools must nonetheless inform both students and External Examiners of any changes to the weightings of components.
- g. Academic Quality and Standards will provide Schools with instructions on how to manage decision-making and communications.
- h. Existing EUCLID functionality does not easily allow Schools to edit the weightings of components of assessment for courses (including disregarding components altogether) after marks have been entered into the system for a course instance. Student Systems will provide instructions to Schools on how to manage relevant arrangements within EUCLID, and on a suggested process to ensure consistency of approach intended to prevent operational errors which could lead to the processing of incorrect marks.

**55. The ACG requests the Committee temporarily amend Taught Assessment Regulation 13 as presented in Annex A, Point 4. Is the Committee content to do so?**

### ***Changes to the Award of Pass/Fail Grades (Annex A, Point 5)***

56. The ACG recommends a variation to Taught Assessment Regulation 35: Common Marking Scheme, to temporarily relax the requirement for Boards of Studies to have approved the operation of assessment on a Pass/Fail basis, and to permit the award of Pass/Fail at Honours level.

57. The ACG recommends variation to these regulations for the following reasons:

- a. The MAB will be continuous over the examination period and will cause significant disruption to the operation of Boards of Examiners. It is highly likely that Boards will need to modify their operation during this time to mitigate against the impact of the MAB.
- b. It is possible that a Board may not have the complete information required to determine a reliable numerical mark, even after making changes to the weighting of components of assessment. In this situation, the Board may be content that a student has demonstrated sufficient achievement for credit to be awarded for a course on a pass/fail basis.
- c. Boards will only award credit on a pass/fail basis where they believe they have sufficient information for such judgements to be robust, particularly at the pass/fail boundary. Where a Board does not believe it can be confident in its judgement in this regard it can opt to defer its decision on that course until further information becomes available.
- d. Should an exam Board decide to award credit on a pass/fail basis, and subsequently further assessment information becomes available, the Board will revisit its original decision and will award a numeric grade if it is confident it now has robust evidence to do so.

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- e. Should a student have received a pass grade at an earlier exam Board, and the subsequent calculation of a numeric grade would otherwise indicate a fail outcome, the original award of course credit will be maintained. This represents a specific, and limited, operation of the non-detriment principle. Since a Board of Examiners should only be awarding pass/fail credit where they are confident they have robust evidence to do so, the extent to which such an outcome is likely to occur in practice should be very limited.

### **58. The ACG requests the Committee temporarily amend Taught Assessment Regulation 35 as presented in Annex A, Point 5. Is the Committee content to do so?**

#### ***Variation of the progression requirements for Undergraduate students.***

59. The ACG recommends variations to Undergraduate progression requirements for the following reasons:

- a. Due to the Marking and Assessment Boycott there is the possibility of a significant impact on the availability of course results required by Progression Boards to enable them to reach a decision in line with normal regulations.
- b. In all cases, where a Progression Board has a full profile of marks available to reach a decision in line with the Taught Assessment Regulations, then the Board will consider a student's progression under normal regulations.

#### ***Pre-Honours (Annex A, Point 6)***

60. The ACG recommends a variation to allow the award of up to 40 credits worth of Credit on Aggregate for non-core or non-compulsory courses at pre-honours (amending Taught Assessment Regulation 51). This proposal represents a more restricted variation than has been requested in previous periods of disruption (where Credit on Aggregate was potentially available for core and compulsory courses). This reflects experience from periods of disruption where progression of students, who have not demonstrated the required achievement in core/ compulsory courses, has led to poor student experience (and academic outcomes) in future years.

61. ACG recommends this variation for the following reasons:

- a. The reduction of credits that a student is required to achieve for progression is intended to mitigate the volume of disruption experienced by students, and which has the potential to lead to a high level of course results being unavailable for Boards to reach decisions in line with the existing regulations.
- b. At pre-honours level, University regulations mean that students who have not passed a course can only gain the associated credit through completing resit assessments (or taking an additional course). Allowing pre-honours students to be awarded credit where an optional course is missing a grade due to industrial action should help minimise the impact of action on

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student progression, while ensuring that knowledge and skills core to the degree being studied are still demonstrated.

62. ACG recommend that the award of Credit on Aggregate at pre-honours would occur subject to all the following conditions.
- a. The student has passed at least 80 credits (out of 120).
  - b. The student has achieved an average of at least 40% across all courses for which a numeric grade is available
  - c. The course, being considered for Credit on Aggregate, does not have a grade (either numeric or pass/fail) due to industrial action.
  - d. The student has attempted the course.
  - e. The affected course is **not** noted in the relevant DPT as core or compulsory for the student's current degree programme (i.e. courses which must be taken and passed).
  - f. The course is **not** required for meeting professional or statutory body requirements
  - g. Credit on Aggregate must also be awarded in cases where the above are met, but the student has been awarded "null sit" due to exceptional circumstances (in order to prevent students with valid exceptional circumstances receiving a less favourable outcome than students who completed the course but whose performance when/if graded would result in a fail).
63. Where a course does not meet the criteria specified above, Credit on Aggregate should not be awarded, and the student will be handled through normal processes, for instance through the offering of a resit opportunity.
64. Where, even after the application of the above, a Board does not have a complete profile of marks then the progression decision will be deferred.
65. Where, after a progression decision is made, course grades are revised (including becoming available where Credit on Aggregate was previously awarded), the Progression Board will meet and revise its decisions as appropriate.
66. If Credit on Aggregate has been awarded at a previous Board, and subsequent information indicates the student should not have received credit for that course, the previous award of credit will be maintained. This represents a specific, and limited, operation of the principle of non-detriment. The scope of this variation is less than the equivalent in 2022/23 (which was accepted as part of the QAA concern consideration), with focus on optional courses limiting the relevance to core knowledge and skills for a student's degree programme. Therefore, the impact of non-detriment with regards to this variation is expected to be highly limited.
67. **The ACG requests the Committee temporarily amend Taught Assessment Regulation 51 as presented in Annex A, Point 6. Is the Committee content to do so?**

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### ***Variations to the eligibility for Credit on Aggregate at Honours and PGT level.***

68. In these cases, the overall level of Credit on Aggregate remains unchanged (40 credits per 120 attempted credits). The proposed variations clarify that Credit on Aggregate can be awarded where a course outcome is unavailable due to industrial action, and that calculations of eligibility for Credit on Aggregate should be based on courses for which a numeric grade is available.
69. None of the proposed variations remove the requirements for students to meet programme specific requirements (where these exist, and are documented in DPTs or Programme Handbooks). This marks a change from previous periods of disruption where regulations were updated to remove these requirements except in cases related to professional accreditation. ACG considers that cases where industrial action has impacted the ability of students to meet programme specific progression/awarding requirements are best handled on a case by case basis (allowing the desire to support positive student outcomes to be balanced against the maintenance of academic standards). Where industrial action has impacted the ability of students to meet programme specific requirements, Boards of Examiners must notify the relevant College Office to consider what mitigation may be appropriate.

### ***Honours (Annex A, Point 7)***

70. The ACG recommends a variation to Taught Assessment Regulation 52 to allow the award of Credit on Aggregate where industrial action means no course outcome is available.
71. In contrast to the equivalent variation approved in 2022/23, this variation does not change the overall level of Credit on Aggregate a student can receive under the normal regulations (which remains at 40 credits per year, compared to 60 in 2022/23).
72. While the award of up to 60 credits worth of Credit on Aggregate was accepted during the QAA concern, ACG reflected that the increase in use of Credit on Aggregate caused some students to struggle in future years, and is potentially less justifiable given the renewed sector-wide focus on the robustness of assessment and award.
73. Maintaining the existing maximum level of Credit on Aggregate, also helps limit the potential for the use of non-detriment to undermine our academic standards (since the amount of credits which can benefit from any non-detriment is lower than 2022/23)
74. ACG recommends this variation for the following reasons:
- a. Explicitly extending the criteria of courses that can be awarded Credit on Aggregate to include courses where industrial action means no course grade

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is available should help provide certainty for students on their progression status.

- b. Maintaining 40 credits as the maximum amount of Credit on Aggregate that can be awarded in a given academic year, helps ensure academic standards are maintained and minimises the risk of students progressing without the knowledge required for successful future study.
- c. University regulations do not allow final year students to take additional credits and this variation is intended to minimise the circumstance where students are carrying credits into their final year of study.

75. ACG recommends that the variation be applied subject to the following constraints:

- a. In all cases, where a Progression Board has a full profile of marks available to reach a decision in line with the Taught Assessment Regulations, then the Board must consider a student's progression under normal regulations. The variation is an exceptional measure which Boards should only consider when they have exhausted all other options.

76. ACG recommend that the award of Credit on Aggregate for honours courses, where industrial action means no course outcome is available, would occur subject to the following conditions:

- a. The relevant Board of Examiners has established that a pass/fail grade cannot be awarded.
- b. The absence of a course grade is due to industrial action. The affected course is eligible for Credit on Aggregate in normal circumstances; where any exclusion is defined in relevant programme documentation.
- c. The student has achieved an overall average of 40% across courses for which a numeric grade is available.
- d. Credit on Aggregate must also be awarded in cases where the above are met, but the student has been awarded "null sit" due to exceptional circumstances (in order to prevent students with valid exceptional circumstances receiving a less favourable outcome than students who completed the course but whose performance when/if graded would result in a fail).

77. Where, after a progression decision is made, course grades are revised (including becoming available where Credit on Aggregate was previously awarded), the Progression Board will meet and revise its decisions as appropriate.

78. If Credit on Aggregate has been awarded at a previous Board, and subsequent information indicates the student should not have received credit for that course, the previous award of credit will be maintained. This represents a specific, and limited, operation of the principle of non-detriment. The scope of this variation is less than the equivalent in 2022/23 (which was accepted as part of the QAA

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concern consideration). Therefore, the impact of non-detriment with regards to this variation is expected to be highly limited.

**79. The ACG requests the Committee temporarily amend Taught Assessment Regulation 52 as presented in Annex A, Point 7. Is the Committee content to do so?**

### ***Changes to the progression requirements for Postgraduate Taught students (Annex A, Point 8).***

80. The ACG recommends variation to the Postgraduate progression requirements to allow progression where some expected numeric grades may be unavailable.

81. ACG recommends this variation for the following reasons:

- a. As a result of the Marking and Assessment Boycott there is the possibility of significant impact on the availability of course results required by Progression Boards to reach a decision in line with normal regulations.

82. ACG recommends that the variation be applied subject to the following constraints:

- a. In all cases, where a Progression Board has a full profile of marks available to reach a decision in line with the Taught Assessment Regulations, then the Board must consider a student's progression under normal regulations.
- b. Students have passed at least 80 credits with a mark of at least 50 in each of those courses
- c. Any course receiving Credit on Aggregate as a result of this variation must be eligible for Credit on Aggregate in normal circumstances.

83. Where the above criteria is not met, the Exam Board should defer the progression decision, with the student conditionally progressing to their dissertation.

84. ACG recommends:

- a. Where Credit on Aggregate is awarded for a course which has no outcome due to industrial action, the progression decision will be revisited should relevant marks become available at a later date, and student outcomes updated as required
- b. In instances where the variation to the progression requirements has been applied, the classification of the Masters award will be undertaken using a minimum of 80 taught credits, alongside any dissertation related requirements.
- c. If Credit on Aggregate has been awarded at a previous Board, and subsequent information indicates the student should not have received credit for that course, the previous award of credit will be maintained. In such cases, where the variation to the progression requirements has been applied, the

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same calculation applied for progression must be applied when calculating a student's eligibility for the final award to ensure consistency of outcome for the student

85. Point c above represents a specific, and limited, operation of the principle of non-detriment. The scope of this variation is equivalent to 2022/23 (which was accepted as part of the QAA concern consideration), and consistent with the normal requirement for students to achieve a minimum of 80 taught credits with a grade of 50%. Therefore, the impact of non-detriment with regards to this variation is expected to be highly limited.

**86. The ACG requests the Committee temporarily amend Taught Assessment Regulation 56 as presented in Annex A, Point 8. Is the Committee content to do so?**

### ***Changes to the requirements for making Undergraduate award and classification decisions.***

87. The ACG recommends variations to Undergraduate award requirements for the following reasons:

- a. There may be instances where Course Boards of Examiners have awarded a pass/fail grade for a course where a numeric mark would normally be returned.
- b. To mitigate against the impact of a student having received a pass/fail grade in a course where a Board would normally have a numeric grade on which to base its award decision.

88. ACG recommends this variation operates subject to the following constraint:

- a. Where an Award Board has a full profile of marks available to reach a decision in line with the existing Regulations, then the Board must consider a student's award as normal.

### **Award of Undergraduate Ordinary and General degrees (Annex A, Point 9)**

89. The ACG recommends a temporary variation to allow students being assessed for the award of a General or Ordinary degree to be eligible for up to 40 credits of credits on aggregate, where the availability of course credits is impacted by industrial action (amending Taught assessment Regulation 53).

90. ACG recommends this variation in order to ensure consistency between this cohort of students and the wider University population. In normal circumstances, students on General or Ordinary degrees are entitled to resit opportunities akin to those offered to pre-honours students. This variation therefore ensures consistency of treatment with student considered in paragraphs 59-67 above.

91. ACG recommends that the operation of this variation be subject to the following constraints:

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- a. Where a full profile of marks is available, the Board of Examiners must consider the student's award as normal.
- b. Consistent with the proposed variation for the award of credit at pre-honours level, Credit on Aggregate is not to be offered for courses which are defined as core/compulsory for the degree being awarded.
- c. Credit on Aggregate will only be awarded where the course outcome is unknown, due to industrial action, at the time of the awarding Board of Examiners.

92. ACG recommends:

- a. Credit on Aggregate must also be awarded in cases where the above are met, but the student has been awarded "null sit" due to exceptional circumstances (in order to prevent students with valid exceptional circumstances receiving a less favourable outcome than students who completed the course but whose performance when/if graded would result in a fail).
- b. Where Credit on Aggregate is awarded for a course which has no outcome due to industrial action, the award decision will be revisited should relevant marks become available at a later date, and student outcomes updated as required
- c. If Credit on Aggregate has been awarded at a previous Board, and subsequent information indicates the student should not have received credit for that course, the previous award of credit will be maintained. This is a specific, and limited, operation of the non-detriment principle. It is consistent with the position in 2022/23 (which was subject to a QAA Concern consideration and deemed appropriate).

**93. The ACG requests the Committee temporarily amend Taught Assessment Regulation 53 as presented in Annex A, Point 9. Is the Committee content to do so?**

### ***Award of Undergraduate Honours (Annex A, Point 10)***

94. The ACG recommends a variation to Taught Assessment Regulation 54 to allow the award of Credit on Aggregate where industrial action means no course outcome is available.

95. In contrast to the equivalent variation approved in 2022/23, this variation does not change the overall level of credit on aggregate a student can receive (which remains at 40 credits per year, compared to 60 in 2022/23).

96. While the award of up to 60 credits worth of Credit on Aggregate was accepted during the QAA concern, ACG reflected that the increase in use of Credit on Aggregate is potentially less justifiable given the renewed sector-wide focus on the robustness of assessment and award.

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97. Maintaining the existing maximum level of Credit on Aggregate, helps limit the potential for the use of non-detriment to undermine our academic standards (since the amount of credits which can benefit from any non-detriment is lower than 2022/23)

98. The ACG recommends this variation for the following reasons:

- a. The variation to these regulations is intended to support Boards to make robust decisions to allow students to graduate from their programme in line with expected timelines
- b. Explicitly extending the criteria of courses that can be awarded Credit on Aggregate to include courses where industrial action means no course grade is available should help provide certainty for students on their progression status.
- c. Maintaining 40 credits as the maximum amount of Credit on Aggregate that can be awarded in a given academic year, ensures academic standards are maintained and minimises the risk of students progressing without the knowledge required for successful future study.
- d. The altered requirement for credits on aggregate is intended to mitigate against the impact of receiving a pass/fail grade in a course which the Board would normally expect to return a numerical mark. In these cases, the requirement to achieve an overall average of 40% across 120 credits has been relaxed, however a student must achieve an average of 40% across the courses which return a numeric mark
- e. The classification calculation for these awards is to be undertaken using courses which return a numeric grade.

99. ACG recommend that the award of additional Credit on Aggregate at honours would occur subject to the following conditions.

- a. The relevant Board of Examiners has established that a pass/fail grade cannot be awarded.
- b. The absence of a course grade is due to industrial action. The affected course is eligible for Credit on Aggregate in normal circumstances; where any exclusion is defined in relevant programme documentation.
- c. The student has achieved an overall average of 40% across courses for which a numeric grade is available.
- d. Credit on Aggregate must also be awarded in cases where the above are met, but the student has been awarded "null sit" due to exceptional circumstances (in order to prevent students with valid exceptional circumstances receiving a less favourable outcome than students who completed the course but whose performance when/if graded would result in a fail).

100. Where the Board has sufficient credits to award a degree, but an incomplete mark profile, the Board may consider whether it has sufficient information available to classify an award on the information available and, where the Board believes it is reasonable and robust to do so. There is no minimum credit requirement on which to base a classification decision, however Boards must be

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satisfied that there is sufficient evidence of performance at the required level to justify a particular classification. This is an existing requirement which aligns with normal regulations.

101. Where Boards have exhausted all available options, it may consider awarding a degree without a classification, in line with Undergraduate Degree Regulation 59. The Board would be required to revisit the classification decision when it determines that sufficient credits are available to classify the award in line with Taught Assessment Regulation 64.
102. Where a Board has determined that an award cannot be made either under existing regulations or by utilising the exceptional measures in place, then the Board may establish that no award can be made. The Board would be required to revisit the decision when it determines that sufficient information is available to revisit the decision in line with Taught Assessment Regulation 64.
103. Where, after an award decision is made, course grades are revised (including becoming available where Credit on Aggregate was previously awarded), the Board of Examiners will meet and revise its decisions as appropriate.
104. If Credit on Aggregate has been awarded at a previous Board, and subsequent information indicates the student should not have received credit for that course, the previous award of credit will be maintained. This represents a specific, and limited, operation of the principle of non-detriment. The scope of this variation is less than the equivalent in 2022/23 (which was accepted as part of the QAA concern consideration). Therefore, the impact of non-detriment with regards to this variation is expected to be highly limited.
105. **The ACG requests the Committee temporarily amend Taught Assessment Regulation 54 as presented in Annex A, Point 10. Is the Committee content to do so?**

### ***Award of PG Certificate and Diplomas (Annex A, Point 11)***

106. ACG recommends a variation to Taught Assessment Regulation 57 to bring the requirements for award of PG Certificates and PG Diplomas in line with the variation (above) with regards to progression on MSc programmes; specifically excluding courses for which no numeric grade is available from Credit on Aggregate calculations.
107. ACG recommends this variation for the following reasons:
  - a. This will mitigate the possibility of inequality of treatment between PGT students with identical profiles as a result of the exit award for which they are registered.
  - b. It addresses a concern identified during the industrial action of summer 2023, that student exiting with Certificates or Diplomas were disadvantaged relative to those gaining an MSc; which raised equality concerns.

## Appendix 2

- c. It is consistent with the APRC decision detailed in APRC22/23 11B.
- d. ACG recommends that this variation operate subject to any constraints applied to the variation for PGT progression.

### 108. **The ACG requests the Committee temporarily amend Taught Assessment Regulation 57 as presented in Annex A, Point 11. Is the Committee content to do so?**

#### **Resource implications**

109. The application of variations, where they are needed, will have significant workload implications for staff in Schools and Colleges, for Academic Quality and Standards staff, and for staff involved in making the decisions. These activities would be temporary and this paper does not attempt to quantify them given the uncertainty regarding the extent to which it would be necessary for Schools to operate them. Although the activities are temporary, there are knock on effects even after a period of industrial action has concluded, with potential impacts on processes such as course pre-enrolment and other start of semester activities. There are also resource implications for students should variations not be applied in relation to re-assessment, additional travel and further study. Although these proposals aim to mitigate the impact of industrial action on student progression and awards, it is anticipated that the University will see an increase in student appeals related to academic outcomes; resourcing to ensure these are addressed in a timely manner will be required.

#### **Risk management**

110. The paper aims to support the Committee in managing the dual risks arising from industrial action: ensuring that students are able to progress and receive awards, while maintaining academic standards in line with institutional requirements and external expectations. A key risk to academic standards is not in making variations to our Taught Assessment Regulations (as this has been tested and confirmed by QAA previously), but in failing to apply any agreed variations consistently. This paper supports the Committee in managing this risk appropriately. There is risk that some students (especially graduating students) may be negatively impacted in terms of graduate employment should the variations not be applied, placing our students at a disadvantage relative to other graduating students that are not affected by a MAB. There is also risk associated with the additional administrative processes required to implement the variations in a short lead time which require resource and expertise.

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

111. Not applicable.

#### **Equality & diversity**

112. Were the University not to provide Schools with the appropriate range of options for mitigating the impact of industrial action on students, it is likely that there would be an adverse impact on particular cohorts or sub-cohorts of students on courses. It is possible that this could have a disproportionate impact on specific categories of students who may be more likely to experience other

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forms of disruption to their assessments or who may require particular forms of adjustments in relation to those assessments, for example students with disabilities.

113. An Equality Impact Assessment for variations to academic regulations and policies due to industrial action has been completed and will be published on the [University's website](#)

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

114. Academic Quality and Standards will communicate to Schools and Colleges regarding any variations to normal policies and regulations and develop supporting instructions for implementation.
115. Subject to recommendation by the Committee, Academic Quality and Standards will coordinate an electronic meeting of Senate Quality Assurance Committee to seek approval of the variations to the External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy.

### **Author**

Academic Quality and Standards

14 May 2026

### **Presenter**

Lucy Evans (Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary, Students) and Tina Harrison (Deputy Vice-Principal Students (Enhancement))

### **Freedom of Information Open**

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

## Appendix 2

### Annex: - Proposals for Temporary Variations to Academic Policies and Regulations

Deletions are shown with ~~striketrough~~. New text is highlighted in **Underlined Bold**

#### ***1 Setting Examination Papers – Remove the Requirement to Consult External Examiners***

Taught Assessment Regulations:

NB Taught Assessment Regulations no longer detail the responsibilities of the External Examiner. Taught Assessment Regulations refer to the External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy. Therefore, no variations to Taught assessment Regulations are required.

External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy:

10. The College appoints a Course External Examiner to each course. The Course External Examiner is expected to:

c) review and approve, if appropriate, ~~all assessment materials and~~ assessment criteria for the courses examined

~~40. External Examiner(s) must review and approve draft examination papers. Draft examination papers should be accompanied by model answers, where applicable and appropriate, or solutions and the marking schemes to be applied.~~

#### ***2 Changes to Moderation of Marking – Remove the Requirement for External Examiners to Review All Assessments***

External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy:

10. The College appoints a Course External Examiner to each course. The Course External Examiner is expected to:

d) ~~scrutinise a representative sample of all assessed work across each of the courses examined in order to judge whether marks are fairly and consistently applied to students across the courses, and whether~~

## Appendix 2

~~markers are applying the marking scheme consistently and using the full range of marks where justified;~~

### **3. Changes to the Operation of Boards of Examiners for Taught Courses and Programmes – Relaxation of Quorum Requirement and External Examiner Involvement**

Taught Assessment Regulations:

NB Taught Assessment Regulation 39 now just directs to the Handbook for Boards of Examiners for Taught Course and Programmes. Therefore, no variation is requested to the Taught Assessment Regulations.

Handbook for Boards of Examiners for Taught Course and Programmes:

~~4.18 A Board of Examiners meeting is quorate if at least half the Internal Examiners participate and at least one External Examiner participates in and approves the decisions of the Board. No Board may have fewer than two Internal Examiners participating, in addition to the Convener~~

~~4.19 For Undergraduate Progression Boards, quorum is met if at least two Internal Examiners and the Convener of the Board participate. At least one External Examiner has oversight of the decision process of the Progression Board, but is not required to participate in the meeting of the Board. The purpose of the External Examiner is to confirm that the process has been carried out appropriately; the External Examiner does not need to approve individual progression decisions. Appendix C provides more information about Undergraduate Progression Boards.~~

External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy:

~~37. In order to be quorate, at least one External Examiner must participate in and approve the decisions of the Board of Examiners.~~

~~38. External Examiners must participate in all Board of Examiners meetings relevant to their appointment.~~

~~45. The Programme External Examiner approves jointly, as a member of the Board, the decisions of the Board of Examiners regarding students'~~

## Appendix 2

~~programme outcomes, including award and classification. The Programme External Examiner confirms that these decisions are taken in line with University regulations and published criteria.~~

### **4. Changes to the Weighting of Components of Assessment of Courses – Allow Schools to Make Changes After the Start of a Course Without the Approval of College or Consultation with Students and External Examiners**

Taught Assessment Regulations:

13. Passing a course or degree programme requires attainment of the learning outcomes and may require a specified level of performance or attendance in some or all components.

13.3 Boards of Studies and the relevant College Committee approve the assessment and satisfactory performance requirements for courses and degree programmes before their delivery. Individual course elements and options available to students can change and there are annual changes to degree programme tables and course availability. However, the approval of the relevant College Committee must be obtained if it is exceptionally necessary to ~~change the weighting of assessment of a course after students have entered it; or to change progression, classification or award requirements for a programme after students have entered their honours years or a postgraduate programme.~~

~~(a) Before approval can be given, written evidence of the results of consultation with the students must be submitted. Every student affected needs to be informed of the changes and given the opportunity to comment. The expectation is that the College will not approve changes in the face of significant student objections, unless changes are compelled by external factors.~~

~~(b) The relevant external examiners must also be informed. and consulted.~~

~~(c) Students may be given alternative course options, where this is possible. The expectation is that course assessment requirements will not change after students are registered on it.~~

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### **5. Changes to the Award of Pass Fail – Enabling the Award of a Course Level Pass Where a Numeric Grade was Expected**

Taught Assessment Regulation 35:

The final mark, grade, result and award and classification decision must be expressed using the relevant Common Marking Scheme: [www.ed.ac.uk/timetabling-examinations/exams/regulations/common-marking-scheme](http://www.ed.ac.uk/timetabling-examinations/exams/regulations/common-marking-scheme)

~~35.3 Where the relevant Board of Studies has approved the operation of assessment for a course on a Pass/Fail basis, Boards of Examiners may award credit for the course without awarding a mark or grade under the Common Marking Scheme. Courses whose assessment operates on a Pass/Fail basis are permitted during the pre-Honours stage of undergraduate Honours programmes, or on non-Honours undergraduate programmes and postgraduate taught programmes. Courses with Pass/Fail assessment may not be offered during the Honours years of a programme unless Academic Policy and Regulations Committee has approved an exemption.~~

### **6. Changes to Progression Requirements for Undergraduate Students – Pre-honours – Providing Exam Boards with Greater Flexibility Where course marks are unavailable due to industrial action**

Taught Assessment Regulations:

51. To progress to the next year of study and into honours, students must meet the requirements for progression which are specified in the Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study and degree programme tables. [www.drps.ed.ac.uk/](http://www.drps.ed.ac.uk/)

**If a profile of marks is incomplete due to industrial action, and if the student has achieved PASS marks in at least 80 credits and has an overall average of 40% or more in the available credits with a numeric grade, then they will be awarded Credits on Aggregate for the courses affected by industrial action providing those courses are not:-**

b) **designated core or compulsory for their programme; or**

b) **required for meeting professional or statutory body requirements.**

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### **7. Changes to the Progression Requirements for Undergraduate Students – Honours - Providing Exam Boards with Greater Flexibility Where Course Marks are Unavailable due to Industrial Action**

Taught Assessment Regulation 52:

The Undergraduate Progression Board has the responsibility to decide which students can progress to the next year of honours study.

- a) pass at least 80 credits at SCQF level 9 or above in junior honours and level 10 or above in senior honours for undergraduate Masters degrees; and
- b) have an overall average of 40% or more ~~for the 120 credits~~ **across credits, taken in the relevant honours year, for which a numeric grade is available;**
- c) must satisfy any other specific requirements for the degree programme, as published in the programme handbook.

Where an incomplete profile of marks is available, if the student has achieved PASS marks in at least 80 credits and has an overall average of 40% or more ~~over the full 120 credits~~ **over credits with an available numeric grade,** then they will be awarded credits on aggregate for **courses that are either failed, or the failed courses where industrial action means no course outcome is available, providing the award Credit on Aggregate would normally be available for the course concerned.**

### **8. Changes to the progression requirements for Postgraduate Taught students - providing Exam Boards with greater flexibility where course marks are unavailable due to industrial action**

Taught Assessment Regulation 56:

For programmes where there is an identifiable taught component followed by a project or dissertation component, students must pass the assessment requirements of the taught stage at an appropriate level at the first attempt before progression to the dissertation. In order to progress to the masters dissertation students must:

## Appendix 2

- a) pass at least 80 credits with a mark of at least 50% in each of the courses which make up these credits; and
- b) attain an average of at least 50% **for courses with an available numeric grade** ~~for the 120 credits of study examined~~ at the point of decision for progression; and
- c) satisfy any other specific requirements for the masters degree programme, that are clearly stated in respective programme handbooks.

When all the marks for the taught components of the programme (120 credits) are available, if the student has achieved PASS marks in at least 80 credits and has an overall average of 40% or more ~~over the full 120 credits~~ **over credits with an available numeric grade**, then they will be awarded credits on aggregate for **courses that are either failed, or the failed courses where industrial action means no course outcome is available, providing the award Credit on Aggregate would normally be available for the course concerned.**

For programmes where the taught and project or dissertation components are taken in parallel, or where there are not identifiable taught and research project or dissertation components, the requirements for progression are determined at programme level, stated in the Programme Handbook.

### ***9. Changes to the Requirements for Making Undergraduate Award and Classification Decisions - Ordinary and General Degrees - Providing Exam Boards with Greater Flexibility Where Course Marks are Unavailable due to Industrial Action***

Taught Assessment Regulations:

53. Students registered for an Ordinary or General (non-Honours) degree may be awarded the degree if they satisfy the requirements in the Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study.

**When all the marks for the taught components of the final year of the programme (120 credits) are available, if the student has achieved PASS marks in at least 80 credits and has an overall average of 40% or more over the available credits with a numeric grade then they will be awarded up to 40**

## Appendix 2

### **credits on aggregate for any courses missing a outcome due to industrial action.**

#### **10. Changes to the requirements for making Undergraduate award and classification decisions - Undergraduate Honours - providing Exam Boards with greater flexibility where course marks are unavailable due to industrial action**

Taught Assessment Regulations:

54. The Board of Examiners has the responsibility to decide which students can be awarded a classified honours degree. To graduate students must:

- a) pass at least 80 credits at SCQF level 10 or above in their final honours year; and
- b) have an overall average of 40% or more ~~for 120 credits of final honours~~ **across credits, taken in the final honours year, for which a numeric grade is available**; and
- c) must satisfy any other specific requirements for the degree programme.

Where an incomplete profile of marks is available, if the student has achieved PASS marks in at least 80 credits and has an overall average of 40% or more ~~over the full 120 credits~~ **over credits with an available numeric grade**, then they will be awarded credits on aggregate for **courses that are either failed, or the failed courses where industrial action means no course outcome is available, providing the award Credit on Aggregate would normally be available for the course concerned.**

#### **11. Changes to Award of PG Certificate and Diplomas - providing Exam Boards with greater flexibility where course marks are unavailable due to industrial action**

Taught Assessment Regulations:

## Appendix 2

57. In order to be awarded the certificate students must:

- a) pass at least 40 credits with a mark of at least 40%; and
- b) **attain an average of at least 40% over credits with an available numeric grade** for the ~~60 credits of study examined for the certificate~~; and
- c) satisfy any other specific requirements for the named certificate that are clearly stated in respective programme handbooks.

In order to be awarded the diploma students must:

- a) pass at least 80 credits with a mark of at least 40%; and
- b) **attain an average of at least 40% over credits with an available numeric grade** for the ~~120 credits of study examined for the diploma~~; and
- c) satisfy any other specific requirements for the named diploma that are clearly stated in respective programme handbooks.

When all the marks for the taught components of the programme or diploma are available, if the student has achieved a mark of at least 40% in at least 80 credits and has an overall average of 40% or more ~~over the full 120 credits~~ **over credits with an available numeric grade**, then they will be awarded credits on aggregate for the failed courses, up to a maximum of 40 credits. For a certificate, a maximum of 20 credits may be awarded on aggregate

# Appendix 3

## The University of Edinburgh Senate Quality Assurance Committee

### Minutes of the electronic meeting held between Thursday 20 May 2026 and Friday 22 May 2026

#### 1. Attendance

The following members were invited to participate in the electronic meeting:

<b>Member:</b>	<b>Position:</b>
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 Academic Development, Academic Quality and Standards
Professor Laura Bradley	Doctoral College Representative (CAHSS, PGR)
Marianne Brown	Head of Academic Planning, Registry Services (co-opted)
Brian Connolly	Head of Academic Quality, Academic Quality and Standards, Registry Services
Dr Anne Desler	School Representative of CAHSS
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

#### 2. Context

During previous periods of industrial action and other forms of significant disruption (e.g. COVID-19 pandemic), Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC) approved temporary variations to academic policies and regulations in order to provide Schools and Colleges with additional options for mitigating the disruption, where it judged that doing so would be compatible with maintaining academic standards. In October 2025, Senate approved a motion requiring any regulation change relating to the operation of Boards of Examiners, to be approved by Senate.

The current industrial action called by the University and College Union Edinburgh (UCUE) is taking place at a point in the academic year that will cause disruption to the assessment of students and will impact the running of upcoming Boards of Examiners. Therefore, APRC has been asked to consider a proposal to approve temporary variations to academic

## Appendix 3

policies and regulations in response to disruption caused by industrial action. SQAC is responsible for the External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy and therefore has been asked to approve variations to that Policy, in line with the proposals considered by APRC. To ensure that APRC and SQAC can make timely recommendations to Senate, the consideration of these variations by the committees has been run in parallel.

### 3. Meeting

SQAC held an electronic meeting via email correspondence between Wednesday 20 May 2026 and Friday 22 May 2026 to consider the paper proposing variations to the External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy. **All nineteen members of SQAC** were invited to respond with their explicit agreement or disagreement by stating '**Approve**' or '**Not approve**', to each of the following three proposals (along with any additional comments they wanted to raise):

- a) Remove the requirement to consult External Examiners when setting examination papers (paragraphs 36-38 of the APRC paper and the appendix of the SQAC paper).
- b) Changes to Moderation of Marking (paragraphs 39-49 of the APRC paper and the appendix of the SQAC paper).
- c) Changes to the operation of Boards of Examiners for Taught Courses and Programmes – relaxation of quorum requirement and External Examiner involvement (paragraphs 50-52 of the APRC paper and the appendix of the SQAC paper).

The following is a summary of the responses received for each of the proposals from the members of the Committee:

#### 3.1 Remove the requirement to consult External Examiners when setting examination papers

**Seventeen** members responded with **fifteen 'Approve'** and **two 'Not Approve'**. Therefore, a majority of the Committee **approved the proposal** to remove the requirement to consult External Examiners when setting examination papers.

#### 3.2 Changes to Moderation of Marking

**Seventeen** members responded with **fifteen 'Approve'** and **two 'Not Approve'**. Therefore, a majority of the Committee **approved the proposal** to make changes to Moderation of Marking.

#### 3.3 Changes to the operation of Boards of Examiners for Taught Courses and Programmes – relaxation of quorum requirement and External Examiner involvement

**Seventeen** members responded with **fifteen 'Approve'** and **two 'Not Approve'**. Therefore, a majority of the Committee **approved the proposal** to make changes to the operation of Boards of Examiners for Taught Courses and Programmes (relaxation of quorum requirement and External Examiner involvement).

## Appendix 3

This was majority view of the Committee and therefore the variations to the External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy were **recommended for approval to Senate**.

### 3.4 Comments

The majority of comments from SQAC members were of view that these additional measures provide appropriate mitigation for the current disruptions while maintaining the integrity of the University's approach to academic standards. It was noted that the proposals have been through consultations via the Colleges and the Edinburgh University Students' Association. Members were also appreciative of the significant amount of work that has gone into developing the proposals and the efforts being made to ensure that student outcomes are being prioritised.

A member noted concerns regarding the removal of external examiner and moderation requirements and changes to exam board processes during a period of increased strain on internal processes due to staff absence related to industrial action. A member also noted concerns regarding the approval process for the variations proposals, citing a lack of evidence for the impact of industrial action to date and a lack of clarity in the proposal paper as to what SQAC was being asked to approve. There was also a request for further evidence and more time to consider the ramifications before a decision can be made.

Brian Connolly  
Head of Academic Quality  
Academic Quality and Standards  
Registry Services

22 May 2026

## Appendix 4

The University of Edinburgh  
Senate Quality Assurance Committee

**Electronic meeting 20-22 May 2026**

### **Industrial Action: Variations to the External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy**

#### **Description of paper**

1. This paper asks the Committee to recommend to Senate for approval temporary variations to the External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy in response to disruption caused by industrial action.
2. Fit with remit:

<b>Quality Assurance Committee</b>	<b>Y/N</b>
Oversee the delivery and enhancement of the University's quality assurance framework, ensuring that it meets external requirements.	<b>Y</b>
In partnership with Edinburgh University Students' Association, ensure effective student engagement and representation of student voices in the University's quality framework.	<b>Y</b>
Maintain oversight of the outcomes of the quality assurance framework, ensuring that actions are addressed, and support the sharing of good practice.	<b>Y</b>
Promote the quality assurance framework as an important part of the University's activities and ensure that the outcomes inform relevant University business.	<b>Y</b>
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.	<b>Y</b>
Identify areas for innovation and enhancement of the student experience and ensure that these inform Senate Education Committee's policy development.	<b>Y</b>

#### **Action requested / recommendation**

3. To recommend to Senate for approval: Variations to the External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy.

#### **Background and context**

4. Industrial action, called by the University and College Union Edinburgh (UCUE), has, is and will, cause disruption to the assessment of students and will impact the running of upcoming Boards of Examiners. During previous periods of industrial action and other forms of significant disruption (e.g. COVID-19 pandemic), Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC) approved temporary variations to academic policies and regulations in order to provide Schools and Colleges with additional options for mitigating the disruption, where it judged that doing so would be compatible with maintaining academic standards. As in previous rounds of disruption, the use of any temporary

## Appendix 4

variations by Boards of Examiners is considered an exceptional measure and is only to be considered when Boards have exhausted all available options.

5. The proposed variations for consideration by APRC are presented in Appendix 1.

### Discussion

6. As outlined in the APRC paper (Appendix), the Committee are asked to consider all proposed variations at its meeting on 21 May 2026, approve those within their delegated authority, and make a recommendation to Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) for approval of the variations to the External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy which is owned by SQAC. However, Senate approved a motion in October 2025 for any regulation change relating to the operation of Boards of Examiners, to be approved by Senate. To ensure that both Committees are able to provide a recommendation to Senate, the consideration of the variations will now run in parallel.
7. The Committee is asked to consider variations to the Policy and the corresponding paragraphs are:
  - a) Remove the requirement to consult External Examiners when setting examination papers, paragraphs 36-38
  - b) Changes to Moderation of Marking, paragraphs 39-49
  - c) Changes to the operation of Boards of Examiners for Taught Courses and Programmes – relaxation of quorum requirement and External Examiner involvement – paragraphs 50-52 (the elements that refer to the Policy)

### Resource implications

8. The application of variations, where they are needed, will have workload implications for staff in Schools and Colleges, for Academic Quality and Standards, and for those staff involved in making decisions. These activities would be temporary, and this paper does not attempt to quantify implications given the uncertainty regarding the extent to which it would be necessary for Schools to operate them. Although the activities are temporary, there are knock on effects even after a period of industrial action has concluded, with potential impacts on processes such as course pre-enrolment and other start of semester activities. There are also resource implications for students should variations not be applied in relation to re-assessment, additional travel and further study. Although these proposals aim to mitigate the impact of industrial action on student progression and awards, it is anticipated that the University will see an increase in student appeals related to academic outcomes; resourcing to ensure these are addressed in a timely manner will be required.

### Risk management

## Appendix 4

9. The APRC paper aims to support the Committee in managing the dual risks arising from industrial action: ensuring that students are able to progress and receive awards, while maintaining academic standards in line with institutional requirements and external expectations. A key risk to academic standards is not in making variations to our Taught Assessment Regulations (as this has been tested and confirmed by QAA previously), but in failing to apply any agreed variations consistently. This paper supports the Committee in managing this risk appropriately. There is risk that some students (especially graduating students) may be negatively impacted in terms of graduate employment should the variations not be applied, placing our students at a disadvantage relative to other graduating students that are not affected by a MAB. There is also risk associated with the additional administrative processes required to implement the variations in a short lead time which require resource and expertise.

### **Equality & diversity**

10. Were the University not to provide Schools and Colleges with the appropriate range of options for mitigating the impact of industrial action on students, it is likely that there would be an adverse impact on particular cohorts or sub-cohorts of students on courses. It is possible that this could have a disproportionate impact on specific categories of students who may be more likely to experience other forms of disruption to their assessments or who may require particular forms of adjustments in relation to those assessments, for example students with disabilities.
11. An Equality Impact Assessment for variations to academic regulations and policies due to industrial action has been completed and published on the [University's website](#)

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

12. The outcomes of the electronic meeting will be communicated to Senate.

### **Authors**

Academic Quality and Standards

**20 May 2026**

### **Freedom of Information**

Open