

## SQAC 25/26 Electronic Meeting 20-22 May 2026

### 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

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).

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