

The University of Edinburgh
Senate Quality Assurance Committee

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

1. Attendance

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

2. Welcome

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

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

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

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

4. Matters Arising

Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP)

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

Self-Evaluation Action Plan (SEAP)

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

Annual Monitoring Themes – University Response

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

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

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

QAA Report on Glasgow University

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

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

5. Annual Reports 2024/25

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

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

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

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

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

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

The paper was presented by the Appeals and Complaints Team Lead (Acting Up) from within OSCCA. The Committee was informed that the number of appeals has been increasing both at the University of Edinburgh and across the sector. 539 cases were received by the University in 2024/25, and of these 7.2% (39 cases) were upheld. The

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Action: SSCIG to send communication to Schools and collect information on ratios of Student Advisors to students and the rate of turnover in the Student Advisor roles.

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

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

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

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

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

Proposed changes include shifting from using credit percentages to focusing on total number of credits affected when defining major changes to programmes, adding a section to cover UKVI requirements around remote delivery and clarifying publishing requirements in line with Competition and Markets Authority standards. The threshold for major changes within a programme and the obligation to inform students of significant change within the programme should be clearly outlined in the revised policy.

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

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

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

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

Members agreed that it would be beneficial to create institution-wide standardised forms at institutional level to streamline processes and clarify responsibilities, and have these replace School-specific versions which can lead to variation in process and interpretation of policy. Standardised forms are already utilised in CMVM and members from that College reported that this was helpful for establishing accountability and setting

expectations. The presenter of this paper noted that standardised forms will be considered alongside development of the guidance to accompany the policy.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It was noted that the report demonstrates improved insight into tracking students into the University, as requested following the previous years' report. The Committee encouraged

more data on the impact of short courses, including data at the point of completion as well as entry. However, the Learning Technology Team Manager advised that this is difficult to track on Coursera because the platform owns that data. The team within the University report on the impact that they can evidence with the data available to them.

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

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

11. A.O.B.

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

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

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

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

12. Date of next meeting

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