

The University of Edinburgh

Senate Quality Assurance Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on
Thursday 23rd April 2026, 14:00-17:00
 Hybrid meeting: Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House
 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
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 James Hopgood	Dean of Quality and Enhancement, CSE
Heather Innes	Academic Engagement and Policy Co-ordinator
Professor Nazira Karodia	Deputy Vice Chancellor and Vice Principal of Learning & Teaching, Edinburgh Napier University
Dr Jill Mackay	School Representative of CMVM
Dr Sari Pennings	Senate Representative
Professor Carol Richardson	Senate Representative
Dr Neneh Rowa-Dewar	Director of Students, EFI (co-opted)
Dr Emily Taylor	Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Validation, CAHSS
Sinéad Docherty	Committee Secretary, Academic Quality and Standards, Registry Services
In attendance:	
Cristina Matthews	Senior Academic Quality and Standards Manager (Projects), Academic Quality and Standards, Registry Services
Apologies:	
Professor Cathy Bovill	Head of Academic Development, Academic Quality and Standards
Professor Laura Bradley	Doctoral College Representative (CAHSS, PGR)
Professor Ramon Grima	Director of Quality, School of Biological Sciences, CSE (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 4A)

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.

The Committee approved the revised draft of minutes.

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

4. Matters Arising

English Language Skills Short Life Working Group

Following the previous meeting and the agreement to create this working group, there had been some queries around the proposed membership. Committee members suggested that a colleagues from the following areas/roles should be included: Recruitment and Admissions; the Centre for Open Learning; Academic Development; Director(s) of Teaching; Director(s) of Students; Student Advisor(s). It was agreed that there should be student representation on the group.

Action: Academic Quality and Standards and Convener to create communication to invite members to the group and approach the identified areas/roles.

Annual Monitoring Templates for Academic Year 2025/26

Annual Monitoring templates were finalised through e-business after the February meeting and the final drafts were agreed by Convener and College Deans of Quality. These were shared with the School Directors of Quality last week at the network meeting and Academic Quality & Standards will shortly send communication to all Schools to begin the annual monitoring process for 2025/26.

Reporting of misuse of Generative AI in the College of Science and Engineering

The Student Conduct Annual Report (closed paper) was discussed in the February meeting of SQAC, and that report highlighted that the College of Science and Engineering (CSE) had recorded zero cases of misuse of Generative AI (GenAI) within their overall number of academic misconduct cases. This was since discussed among elected Senate members and a colleague in CSE reported to this group that the College were instructed not to report these cases as a separate category.

In response, the College Quality Office advised that the potential misuse of GenAI is not a category in and of itself in the Academic Misconduct procedures and there is a risk of double counting cases if this category is used. The College use the best fit overall category as listed within the procedures, and keep a note of where potential misuse of GenAI has been flagged separately. The data is available and can be shared upon request.

The CSE preference would be for there to be a separate category which encompasses the misuse of Generative AI to be able to accurately report on cases where GenAI use has been flagged as potentially inappropriate. The College will continue to engage with appropriate colleagues about how to flag and report cases of Academic Misconduct and raise with the College QA Committee.

QAA National Review of Awarding Arrangements

The Convener advised members that the plan for the QAA review is yet to be communicated in full. The QAA have issued a call for reviewers to participate in up to 10 targeted reviews across the Scottish sector.

5. Degrees Awarded Analysis 2024/25 (SQAC 25/26 4B)

The degree outcomes analysis was presented by the Head of Academic Planning. Key points highlighted to the Committee included widening awarding gaps for some cohorts of students and a decrease in the overall number of high-class degrees awarded across the institution in 2024/25. The analysis compares against a five-year period and it was emphasised that the impact of Covid-19 and the marking and assessment boycott in 2022/23 had an effect in that time.

The Committee recognised the importance of contextualising factors such as the pandemic and industrial action in the data reports. This context can help to indicate which students are most affected by emergency regulations. It was highlighted that this can also be evidenced through concessions which are approved by APRC.

The Committee discussed key demographics and the related data in the report. It was noted that there are significant awarding gaps when ethnicity markers are applied although the gap is less pronounced for UK-domiciled BAME students. It was questioned whether the ethnicity gap is more often experienced by international students and/or non-native-English speakers than UK-domiciled BAME students. Concerns were also raised for Scottish students who experience an awarding gap compared to English students and it was questioned whether the University curriculum is more aligned with the English school-level curriculum rather than the Scottish system. There is a known gap with level 7 courses not being provided by the University, despite the Scottish Highers system only teaching up to level 6.

Members noted the importance of intersectional analysis and how this should best inform which actions and interventions to make and where these should be targeted. It was recognised that, between the Student Analytics team and academic staff specialising in data and statistics, there is a wealth of expertise to engage with intersectional data analysis and dive into more specific areas. There was caution, however, around ongoing data gathering and analysis and also around the potential small numbers and identifiable individuals at School or subject-level. The Data

Monitoring Task Group, which has now evolved into the Student Success Task Group (a subgroup of the Committee), considered many of the same questions, possibilities and limitations with the data. There must be focus on addressing the known awarding gaps and piloting targeted actions in the short-term, as well as long-term objectives around data collection and University systems to support this.

The Convener informed members that the Student Success Task Group is to hold two meetings in May 2026 and will consider this data analysis. The Task Group may identify Schools to take action in relation to their gaps and will monitor the impact of any interventions taken.

Action: Convener and AQS to add the degree outcomes analysis to the agenda for the Student Success Task Group meeting.

Committee members suggested some additional areas of focus for future data reports; analysis of students who have withdrawn and what awards they are leaving with, which may indicate some demographic trends, comparison of student offers against outcomes to understand if lower tariffs are a factor in awarding gaps and analysis of postgraduate taught data to illustrate the progression rates to PGT level.

Action: Academic Planning colleagues to include additional areas of focus in future annual reports.

6. Programme and Course Approval and Management Policy and Boards of Studies Terms of Reference (SQAC 25/26 4C)

A colleague from Academic Quality and Standards (AQS) was in attendance to present this paper. It had been considered at the February meeting of the Committee and feedback has been incorporated. The paper was brought back to the Committee for further comment and approval. Members were informed that the major changes threshold has been clarified and information on Competence Standards and related reasonable adjustments has been included in the policy after the author discussed this with the Bristol Case Working Group.

As agreed at the previous meeting, the Boards of Studies related guidance will be removed from the Programme and Course Approval and Management Policy (PCAM) and included in the Boards of Studies Terms of Reference (ToR). The paper author explained the process of approving the BoS changes through Court resolution, as Court is the owner of the piece. The BoS guidance will remain in the PCAM policy in the interim, to ensure it remains available to colleagues. It is expected that the changes to the BoS ToR will conclude in semester 1 2026/27.

Members discussed the reference to student involvement in the policy and suggested that clearer definition be given around this aspect in order to communicate to Schools the expected level of, and opportunities for, student engagement. On the matter of quorum within Boards of Studies, members highlighted the importance of maintaining sufficient academic expertise within decision-making boards and requested that language which specifies expertise on boards be retained. Further comments were received on the threshold to major changes applied to a programme, the information shared and stored on the Degree Regulations and Programmes of

Study site (DPRS) and the level of detail required in either course outlines or descriptors. It was recognised that courses within programmes may change throughout four years, particularly in fast-moving subject areas, but agreed that any changes must be communicated with students and that information must be made available in a timely manner.

The Committee noted the range of programme types available within the University including distance and online programmes and Transnational Education (TNE) and considered the extent to which the policy covered these types of provision. Discussion also addressed the need for clearer definition around non-credit bearing courses, particularly within the context of the Centre for Open Learning which provides pre-sessional teaching and in-sessional teaching to students, and PhD programmes with non-credit bearing integrated studies.

Action: Senior Academic Quality and Standards Manager (Projects) to liaise with colleagues in the Centre for Open Learning to establish a helpful definition of non-credit bearing courses.

It was agreed that the paper author would make the agreed changes as identified during discussion. The paper will be returned to the Committee for final approval once the changes have been incorporated.

Action: Senior Academic Quality and Standards Manager (Projects) to update paper with agreed changes and submit to the Committee for final approval ahead of academic year 2026/27.

7. External Examiners: Exceptional Appointments Report 2024/25 (SQAC 25/26 4D)

This paper was presented by the Head of Academic Quality. The report detailed the exceptional External Examiner (EE) appointments made during 2023/24.

On behalf of CAHSS, the Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Validation shared that the College has received queries about two EEs from the same institution sitting on the same exam board within the University of Edinburgh. These individuals are not reviewing the same programmes and are not contradicting the EE policy, but it was flagged that this may become a more common occurrence as exam boards are condensed and as fewer EEs are available in the sector due to recruitment challenges. It was noted that the Office for Students, the regulator in England, has a different view of the EE role and therefore the University of Edinburgh must be mindful of drawing EEs from outside Scotland who may have a different understanding of this role.

The Dean of Quality and Enhancement for CSE informed the Committee that his College had issued some guidance and the experience and role of External Examiners to help address common queries within the College. There was a concern that there are discrepancies in the rates paid to EEs across the Colleges and that this has not been addressed at institutional level.

Action: CSE College Quality Office to share College-issued EE guidance with QA colleagues in CAHSS and CMVM for their information.

8. Any Other Business

The Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Validation for CAHSS informed members that her term was ending in the role and she will be stepping down in the summer.

The Convener extended thanks to the EUSA VP Education for her contributions to the Committee throughout 2026/27 and her work across many other areas.

9. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 14th May 2026 2-5pm in the Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House and via Microsoft Teams.