The University of Edinburgh
Senate Quality Assurance Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on
Thursday 14th May 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
Professor Matthew Bailey	Dean of Quality, CMVM
Dr Michael Barany	Senate Representative
Marianne Brown	Head of Academic Planning, Registry Services (co-opted)
Professor Laura Bradley	Doctoral College Representative (CAHSS, PGR)
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
Sinéad Docherty	Committee Secretary, Academic Quality and Standards, Registry Services
In attendance:	
Callum Paterson	Design Lead, Student Voice, Registry Services
Apologies:	
Professor Cathy Bovill	Head of Academic Development, Academic Quality and Standards
Katya Amott	Vice President (Education), Students' Association

2. Welcome

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

3. Minutes of previous meeting (SQAC 25/26 5A)

The Convener informed members that no comments were received in advance of the meeting.

One member noted that the term Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) had been included in the minutes when referring to the discussion around degree outcomes. This term is considered to be outdated, although it was confirmed to the Committee that the external reporting requirements and systems still use this term and this is why it was included in the Degree Awards Analysis paper.

The Committee approved the minutes of the April 2026 Meeting.

4. Matters Arising

External Examiners Policy

Variations to the External Examiners (EE) Policy, which is owned by SQAC, are being considered by the Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC) in the context of mitigating the impact of the Marking and Assessment Boycott (MAB). APRC will make a recommendation to SQAC for approval of the variations. SQAC will then consider the business electronically after the APRC meeting.

The Committee were informed that the three variations which require a change to the EE Policy are:

- Removal of the requirement to consult EEs when setting examination papers
- Changes to moderation of marking; removal of the requirement for EEs to review all assessments
- Changes to the operation of Boards of Examiners for taught courses and programmes, relating to the quorum requirement and EE involvement.

A member raised a process question relating to the role of Senate in the decision-making and scrutiny of the business. It was clarified by the Convener of APRC that the Senate motion related to significant policy and process changes within the Boards of Examiners project and these policy mitigations are not within that workstream.

Committee Priorities

Committee members were advised that Committee Priorities have not been included as an agenda item for this meeting because a paper is being to taken Senate to propose disbanding the priorities. If the item is not approved, colleagues in Academic Quality and Standards (AQS) who support Senate and its Committees will draft proposals and present those to the first

meeting of academic year 2026/27. The annual report for Senate and the results of the internal effectiveness review is expected to inform the proposed priorities, if required.

The Convener highlighted the relationship between the Committee's standing agenda items and priorities, both of which often correlate to University strategy and external requirements, such as the upcoming National Review of Awarding Agreements.

A Senate elected representative noted their concern that the outcome of the proposed motion to disband priorities is being implemented without Senate agreement.

National Review of Awarding Arrangements

The Convener informed the Committee that the National Review is looking across the sector and the University of Edinburgh expects to be informed whether it will be included in the sample pool within the next week. The review will consider the scale and size of institutions, devolved activities and areas of variability.

The University of Edinburgh has already established a task group that is considering the recommendations made to the University of Glasgow following their targeted review. The task group is working through identifying any actions that the University of Edinburgh should take.

The Convener advised members that the reviewers are coming from the pool who have already undertaken QAA training. It was highlighted that more colleagues, in general, are needed to make themselves available for activities such as reviews and accreditation panels.

QAA Institution Liaison Meeting

Members were informed that the next Institution Liaison Meeting (ILM) will take place next week with QAA. At this meeting the University will present on and account for progress against the QESR 2023 recommendations.

5. Student Voice Framework

Student Voice Policy (SQAC 25/26 5C)

The Design Lead for Student Voice was in attendance to speak to this paper. Members were advised that the policy update is an interim revision in order to reflect the new quality code and framework. There is ongoing activity to understand Student Voice practices across the institution and this will be reflected in the next update of the Student Voice policy review, as will aspects such as course evaluation.

Members agreed that the updated policy improved upon the previous version. There was discussion of the best approach to course evaluation as this can be inconsistent and variable across Schools. Members were advised that centralisation will be considered but reverting back to this approach may not be welcomed by those Schools who wanted a locally-managed approach in the first instance. It was suggested that a central system could be offered on an opt-in basis to Schools who want to do so. However, there are workload implications of that

approach and a risk to the good practice and tools developed in Schools in recent years if the process reverted back to University-level activity.

The Design Lead informed the Committee that a full consultation and revision of the Student Voice policy will be undertaken in 2026/27. An interim update will be brought to the Committee to allow members to discuss and inform the full review. It was requested that a tracked changes version of the 2026/27 policy review be brought to the Committee to better clarify the proposed amendments. There was also a comment that some colleagues in CMVM felt that the revised policy undermined some of the recent Student-Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) work.

The Committee approved the interim revision to the Student Voice policy.

Action: Design Lead, Student Voice to continue with policy review in 2026/27 and bring a tracked changes version for further approval within the next academic year.

Student-Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) Policy (SQAC 25/26 5B)

The Committee considered the revised SSLC Policy, noting that significant changes had been made throughout the document. It was reported that further work would be undertaken with Schools over the summer to support implementation and to better understand local approaches. The introduction of the action log was highlighted as a key element of the revised policy.

During discussion it was emphasised that not every programme needs its own SSLC; these can be clustered in a way that is appropriate to Schools and works at a level which is reflective of the student experience. Members were aware that some Schools have local practices leading to variation in approaches and the need for greater consistency and oversight, which is why central policy and guidance is required. Members noted that some programmes and degree structures have unique characteristics which may require different or flexible approaches. It was emphasised that the policy should not prohibit existing good practice and that clear communication and supporting guidance would be important to help colleagues understand how the policy should operate in practice.

The action log mechanism generated discussion within the meeting. A member noted that it has been interpreted differently across Schools and, in some cases, viewed as an administrative requirement rather than a useful tool. The intended purpose of the action log, namely to capture key themes, support closure of the feedback loop, identify shared issues, and provide a broader institutional picture, was not always clearly understood. Members noted that many entries currently recorded are local issues or consist of individual comments rather than substantive actions and suggested that further clarity should be provided regarding the types and level of actions that should be recorded.

It was noted that while action logs have been presented as a mechanism for closing the feedback loop, students may be unlikely to refer back to them and actions can often take considerable time to progress and resolve. There was also a query raised about the timeline of actions and meeting notes being available within two weeks, with a concern that this timeline may prove challenging. The Design Lead for the Student Voice work confirmed that the relevant task group is considering the guidance on which roles should support this work.

It was acknowledged that the action log would provide useful evidence from a quality assurance perspective, including for QAA review activity and Internal Periodic Reviews. It was also confirmed that students, EUSA representatives and student representatives had contributed to the development of the policy, and that engagement with students would continue as implementation progressed.

It was questioned whether the SSLC policy should be a standalone policy or whether it should sit within the Student Voice policy. Whilst some members suggested that a single, consolidated policy might be preferable, it was agreed that such a policy would be too long to be practical and maintaining that policy would be challenging. It was agreed that separate policies which refer to each other is the most effective way to manage and present the information.

The Committee approved the revised SSLC policy and the supplementary guidance that is to be provided to Schools.

6. Internal Periodic Review Schedule

Internal Periodic Review (IPR) Forward Schedule 2026-32 (SQAC 25/26 5D)

The Head of Academic Quality highlighted the key changes detailed in the forward schedule. These include the Bayes Centre moving to a Centre-based review rather than a programme-based review due to developments in their provision. The School of Law has requested to bring forward their IPR to align with ongoing activities within the School. Finally, the new Schools within the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine restructure have been included in the revised schedule.

There was some discussion of the supports and structures that must be embedded within the Bayes Centre to ensure that it works within the QA framework. The CAHSS Dean of Quality highlighted that the Centre for Open Learning and the Edinburgh Futures Institute are two areas within CAHSS that are not Schools but have embedded roles, committees and structures to ensure that the appropriate governance is in place.

Action: CSE and AQS colleagues to consider the Bayes Centre structure and ensure the correct processes are in place.

Postponement of Internal Periodic Review for the Clinical Education PGT programme (SQAC 25/26 5E)

The Dean of Quality for CMVM outlined the reasons for requesting the postponement of the Clinical Education IPR. The programme now sits within the Edinburgh Medical School which is next due its IPR in 2029/30. The School and College propose that the Clinical Education programme be considered within that review, and detailed how the QA oversight would be managed in the meantime through existing and enhanced review and reporting. It was reported to the Committee that Clinical Education have addressed all recommendations from their

previous IPR apart from the resource to delivery ratios. It is expected that the move into the Edinburgh Medical School will help with this.

It was explained to the Committee that bringing the Edinburgh Medical School IPR forward into 2026/27 is not feasible due to current workload capacity and the need to allow the new structure and strategy to settle before the next internal review. Therefore, the College is seeking support from the Committee for a postponement. This must be formally requested from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) as the review of the Clinical Education programme would fall outside of the mandated six-year review cycle.

The Committee were supportive of the postponement and approved the next step of requesting approval from the SFC. The Committee were also supportive of the amended forward schedule for all reviews and approved the revisions. The Dean of Quality for CAHSS did highlight that there are issues with multiple CAHSS Schools being clustered in certain years and noted the associated workload concerns.

Action: Convener and AQS to submit formal postponement request of the Clinical Education IPR to the Scottish Funding Council.

7. Taught External Examiner Reports: UG and PGT Thematic Analysis 2024/25 (SQAC 25/26 5F)

The Committee considered the annual thematic analysis of UG and PGT External Examiner (EE) reports. The report is presented annually and provides an overview of themes emerging from EE feedback. While the analysis was recognised as a valuable quality assurance mechanism, it was acknowledged that snapshot nature of the analysis can present challenges and the focus on the College perspective should be enhanced to better capture the institutional perspective. It was agreed that this change in perspective will make future reports more valuable.

The Committee agreed that the individual College reports, which informed this thematic report, are useful and beneficial at College level. The College focus lends itself to action at that level and has a clear place within the QA reporting process in College structures. Members supported the development of a standard reporting template to enable more consistent analysis across Colleges. It was suggested that future templates should include explicit sections outlining actions arising from external examiner feedback and demonstrating how those actions align with institutional priorities and strategic objectives. It was also noted that EE reporting system duplicates entries and this must be resolved to improve future reports.

Action: AQS and College colleagues to work together to develop a standard template for the College EE reports.

The Convener highlighted that the institutional report must draw out focus on cross-University themes, priorities and areas requiring strategic attention. It was noted that inconsistent practices in Generative AI and moderation were raised through the analysis and the EE commentary should inform the ongoing institutional work in these areas. The Committee were in agreement that more timely responses to EE reports are needed within the University to more effectively address issues that have been identified.

Action: Committee Secretary to include discussion of External Examiners Report on the December meeting agenda and the Committee to set objectives for institutional level report at that time.

8. Professional Services Review and Student Support Thematic Review Update (SQAC 25/26 5G)

In relation to the required review of Professional Services, which was previously managed through the Student Support Services Annual Review process, the Committee was informed that benchmarking activity is being undertaken to understand the different approaches within the sector. Two key approaches are targeted reviews by area or theme, or integrating professional services into existing Internal Periodic Review processes. AQS will bring a paper to SQAC in 2026/27 detailing the benchmarking activity and proposed way forward.

In relation to the Student Support Thematic Review, members were informed that the University's EDI Lead will co-chair this review with a student convener. EUSA have undertaken initial student consultations and a review panel will be assembled in due course. It was recognised that the Student Support Thematic Review will be the process which provide QA oversight of services in the next two academic years whilst the approach for the Professional Services Review is developed. This is in line with the requirement that reviews are periodic rather than annual reviews.

9. Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP) Update (SQAC 25/26 5H)

The Head of Quality, AQS informed the Committee that the STEP working group have compiled focus group videos to create a short film detailing the experience and gaps in support for students with disabilities. This will be hosted on the QAA website and shared with Committee members once available. The Committee noted that STEP's work is valuable to the Student Success Task Group and their remit for addressing the awarding gap.

Action: AQS to share STEP film with Committee members once it is published on the QAA website.

10. Scotland's Rural College (SRUC): Accreditation Committee (SQAC 25/26 5I)

The Committee was reminded that this report is an annual item provided for their information. The Accreditation Committee meets annually with SRUC to reconfirm their arrangements and the two programmes which SRUC delivers as University of Edinburgh awards. One is a taught BSc programme and the other is a PhD programme. The Accreditation Committee confirmed their satisfaction with the QA arrangements and delivery of the programmes by SRUC.

A member queried where this provision sits within the National Review of Awarding Arrangements. The Convener confirmed that the provision sits with SRUC although the University of Edinburgh will have to account for how it manages awards that are delivered by external partners.

It was recognised that SRUC now has its own taught degree awarding powers and will teach out the BSc programme, and it seeks to obtain research degree awarding powers. The representative from The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies advised the Committee that their Memorandum of Understanding with SRUC was dissolved at the beginning of 2025/26 for RDS(V)S provision and highlighted that the CSE and SRUC provision is covered under a CSE-owned agreement. The Accreditation Committee will continue to have oversight of QA and standards whilst programmes continue. A significant number of PhD students remain on the programme and their experience must be assured.

11. Committee Membership 2026/27 (SQAC 25/26 5J)

The Convener noted the membership changes occurring at the end of this academic year and extended thanks to outgoing members for their contributions. Members were informed that the Senate election process is ongoing and new, or returning, Senate elected representatives will sit on the Committee in 2026/27.

The Convener noted particular thanks to the external member of the Committee, Professor Nazira Karodia, Deputy Principal, Edinburgh Napier University, whose term has come to an end.

The Convener advised members that the new external member who will join the Committee from 2026-2029 is Professor Steve Tucker who holds the role of Dean for Quality Assurance & Enhancement at the University of Aberdeen.

12. Senate and Standing Committees Annual Internal Effectiveness Review (SQAC 25/26 5K)

The Committee noted the paper which had been presented for information. It was acknowledged that the paper had been submitted to all three Senate Standing Committees to provide the same update on the approach to evaluation. Members will be emailed with a survey in which they can contribute to the internal effectiveness review for 2025/26.

13. Date of Next Meeting

Committee meeting dates for 2026/27 are to be confirmed. The Committee Secretary will send the meeting details and invites as soon as possible.