

The University of Edinburgh
Senate Quality Assurance Committee

**Minutes of the meeting held on
 Tuesday 12th September 2023, 2pm – 4pm
 Hybrid meeting: Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House
 and Microsoft Teams**

1. Attendance

Present:	Position:
Professor Tina Harrison	Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) (Convener)
Professor Matthew Bailey	Dean of Quality, CMVM
Dr Michael Barany	Senate Representative
Professor Laura Bradley	Doctoral College Representative of CAHSS (PGR)
Marianne Brown	Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling
Brian Connolly	Acting Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement, Academic Services
Dr Anne Desler	School Representative of CAHSS
Dr Gail Duursma	School Representative of CSE
Olivia Eadie	Co-Director, Institute for Academic Development
Dr Pia Helbing	Senate Representative
Carl Harper	Vice President (Education), Students' Association
Professor Nazira Karodia	Deputy Vice Chancellor and Vice Principal of Learning & Teaching, Edinburgh Napier University
Professor Linda Kirstein	Dean of Education Quality Assurance and Culture, CSE
Callum Paterson	Academic Engagement and Policy Coordinator
Dr Neneh Rowa-Dewar	School Representative of CMVM
Dr Emily Taylor	Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Approval, CAHSS
Sinéad Docherty	Committee Secretary, Academic Services

In attendance:	
Adam Bunni	Head of Regulations and Governance Team, Academic Services
Apologies:	
Professor Jose Vazquez-Boland	Elected member of Senate

2. Minutes of meeting held on 9 March 2023

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 18th May 2023, pending minor amendments.

3. Matters Arising

- **Thematic Review**

The Convener noted that the Thematic Review: 2018-19 Review Progress update, postponed from the May 2023 meeting, will be on the agenda for the February 2024 meeting.

- **Internal Periodic Review (IPR) Reports and Responses (Conducted by Electronic Business)**

The Convener acknowledged that recent meeting conducted via email correspondence had included an exceptionally large volume of IPR business due to the clustering of reviews delayed by the pandemic. The Committee discussed suggestions for making the IPR response and report reading process more efficient, particularly in relation to workload constraints of members and the need to ensure that each response/report is given sufficient scrutiny. It was suggested that the IPR process adopt an approach similar to that used for the Student Support Services Annual Review reports, with assigned readers for each response/report (for example, the relevant Dean of Quality of the College the response/report was submitted and another Committee member).

Action: Academic Services to explore options for enhancing the IPR response and report reading process and report back to the Committee.

The Convener noted that in regard to the IPR reports and responses the role of Committee members is to: verify that review teams have adhered to the required quality procedures in relation to the final reports; and determine if Schools/Deaneries have made sufficient progress in relation to their 14 week and year-on responses. If the Committee is not satisfied with progress in a specific response, it can request a further update from the School/Deanery (either for consideration at a subsequent meeting or in the next annual monitoring report).

There was discussion of the IPR reports and responses, and some disagreement from members of the Committee.

The Committee approved the final reports and the 14 week and year-on responses (pending comments to be passed back to certain Schools).

Action: Academic Services to feedback to Schools.

- **Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) (Conducted by Electronic Business)**

The Committee discussed the PhD Agriculture and Environmental Studies validation report and the proposal for the programme to be validated as part of the existing accreditation arrangement. The Convenor noted that the University has a long working relationship with SRUC and is keen to support SRUC in developing its own PhD provision.

The Dean of Education, Quality Assurance and Culture (College of Science and Engineering) informed the Committee that she also sits on the SRUC Academic Board and commended SRUC on its QA processes and Equality Impact Assessments, and its engagement with the University's Doctoral College. The Doctoral College representative also informed the Committee of the Doctoral College's strong support for SRUC's proposal.

The Committee approved the validation report for the programme and the proposal for the programme to be validated as part of the existing Accreditation Agreement.

Action: Academic Services to communicate decision to SRUC.

- **Quality Enhancement & Standards Review (QESR)**

The Convener outlined the role of the upcoming Quality Enhancement & Standards Review (QESR) in the context of the transition arrangements from the previous Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR) process to the new tertiary quality assurance and enhancement arrangements in Scotland (due for implementation in academic year 2024-25). It was noted that Academic Services is leading the preparations for the QESR visit which will take place on 16th November 2023.

- **Scottish Concern Scheme**

The Convener informed the Committee that a concern had been raised through the Scottish Concern Scheme in the summer of 2023 in relation to the mitigations that had been put in place around the marking and assessment boycott (MAB). The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) investigated the University and found that the approach the university had taken had been appropriate and no further action was required.

Action: Committee Secretary to share the QAA Concern Scheme outcome letter with SQAC members.

4. Academic Collaborations Report (Paper B – CLOSED)

The Head of Regulations and Governance Team (Academic Services) presented a paper on behalf of the Academic Collaborations Advisory Group (ACAG). It was noted that this was the first time the Academic Collaborations Report had been presented to the Committee. The Committee was invited to advise on any additional data or information that it would like to see as the body responsible for oversight of academic collaborations, and how it would wish to exercise its responsibility for this oversight.

Action: Head of Regulations and Governance Team (Academic Services) to send Academic Collaborations SharePoint site link to Committee Secretary for circulation to the Committee.

SQAC discussed the gaps in monitoring that may occur in expired agreements and the potential need for interaction with Edinburgh Global (who have oversight over collaborative agreements at institutional level). It was noted, however, that some expired agreements may be dormant, so there would be benefit in having better data regarding which programmes were actively recruiting students. There is no main reporting link between Edinburgh Global and SQAC. SQAC also discussed the level of resource needed to support ACAG's work across the institution.

The Dean of Quality, College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences (CAHSS) informed the Committee that concerns had been raised within CAHSS about the ongoing oversight of collaborations and therefore confirmed support for SQAC taking a role in a more active oversight process. The Co-Director of the Institute for Academic Development (IAD) highlighted the Institute's work and involvement in collaborations and proposed that IAD should have a role within ACAG.

The Committee agreed that SQAC's role would be one of assurance that collaborations are operating as they should, with up-to-date Memorandums of Agreement (MOAs) and timely reviews of MOAs, and applying a quality lens to monitor risk and standards. The Committee noted that the strategic direction of academic collaborations sits outside its remit, with instead Senate and the Vice-Principal International having key strategic roles. However, the Committee agreed that SQAC may have a legitimate role in formulating questions for Senate regarding strategy pertaining to academic collaborations, for example in relation to types of collaboration (rather than potential collaborative partners, or regions). The Committee agreed that there may be benefit in using a sub-group of SQAC to consider these issues, as they arise.

Action: ACAG to consider where SQAC's input may be most beneficial with regard to matters of policy or strategy relating to academic collaborations, bringing papers to the Committee as appropriate.

5. Students' Association Sabbatical Officer Priorities 2023/24 (Paper C)

The Vice President Education (Students' Association) presented the priorities for 2023/24, outlining the focus on an inclusive and accessible learning environment, student engagement (especially in relation to strategic projects) and students within the academic community.

The Committee expressed support for the priorities, with particular focus on the work on student engagement. Members highlighted the difficulties that Schools experience with student engagement and expressed support for the Students' Association's role working with Student Voice initiatives. There was also discussion of the online student cohort, which is growing, and requires focussed efforts to establish representation and accessibility.

6. Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Annual Report 22-23 (Paper H)

The Committee agreed to consider Paper H in order to seek timely consideration due to the required approval timeline. The Acting Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement (Academic Services) presented the paper for approval and outlined the further stages - the paper will be presented to e-Senate for comments and then University Court for final approval before submission to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). It was noted that the report was informed by the themes which emerged in the annual monitoring report (paper 1D) and the IPR theme report (paper E).

The Committee agreed that while the new annual monitoring reporting template had ensured coverage of postgraduate research (PGR) in all reports, the guidance on the annual monitoring reporting template should be reviewed to ensure that key aspects of the PGR experience are reported on. It was also agreed that the Doctoral College representative should join the annual monitoring sub-group from 2023/24 to enhance the focus on PGR themes. The Committee agreed that the annual monitoring reporting template should also require a response in relation to online students.

Due to time constraints, the Committee agreed to submit further comments on Paper H to the Committee Secretary during the following week. The Convener confirmed that a communication will then be issued to the Committee regarding the outcome.

Action: Doctoral College representative to join the annual monitoring sub-group from 2023/24 to enhance the focus on PGR themes.

7. Any Other Business

The meeting was adjourned before consideration could be given to the further items on the agenda.

Action: Committee Secretary to circulate agenda and papers for outstanding items to be considered as e-business.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The Committee noted that the next meeting will take place on Thursday 7th December 2023, 2-4pm. This is to be a hybrid meeting, taking place in the Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House and via Microsoft Teams.