

Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee
Thursday 21 March 2024 2:00pm
Boardroom, Chancellor's Building (hybrid meeting)

AGENDA

1.	Welcome and apologies	
2.	Minutes of the previous meeting To approve <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 January 2024 	APRC 23/24 6A
3.	3.1 Matters Arising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convener's communications • Approval for taught-only Masters programmes • Special circumstances final deadlines for August 2024 resits and PGT dissertations • Actions log 3.2 Report of Convener's Action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of approved concessions • Concessions for Academics Beyond Borders • Update to list of Student Discipline Officers 	Verbal Update
4.	Update on Watch the Gap project To note	APRC 23/24 6B
5.	Exceptional Circumstances policy To approve	APRC 23/24 6C
6.	Student Maternity and Family Leave policy To approve	APRC 23/24 6D
7.	Undergraduate Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study To recommend to Court	APRC 23/24 6E
8.	Postgraduate Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study To recommend to Court	APRC 23/24 6F
9.	Student Appeal Regulations To approve	APRC 23/24 6G
10.	Committee priorities for 2024/25 To comment	APRC 23/24 6H
11.	Any Other Business	
Date of next meeting Thursday 23 May 2024, 2-5pm, Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House, Central Area		

Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee
Thursday 25 January 2024 2:00pm
Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House (hybrid meeting)

Unconfirmed minutes

<p>Present: Dr Aidan Brown Dr Adam Bunni Professor Jeremy Crang Lisa Dawson Dr Murray Earle Lucy Evans Professor Patrick Hadoke (Convener)</p> <p>Clair Halliday Karen Howie</p> <p>Alexandra Laidlaw Professor Antony Maciocia Callum Paterson Rachael Quirk Dr Deborah Shaw Professor Tim Stratford Dr Emily Taylor Dr Uzma Tufail-Hanif Professor Stephen Warrington (Vice-Convener) Kirsty Woomble</p> <p>Substitute members: Lauren Byrne on behalf of Carl Harper Philippa Burrell on behalf of Isabel Lavers</p> <p>In attendance: Cristina Matthews</p> <p>Apologies: Professor Jamie Davies Carl Harper Isabel Lavers Professor Antony Maciocia Dr Donna Murray</p>	<p>Elected member of Senate Head of Academic Policy and Regulation, Academic Services Dean of Students (CAHSS) Academic Registrar, Registry Services Elected member of Senate Deputy Secretary, Students (Co-opted member) Director of Postgraduate Research and Early Career Research Experience (CMVM) The Advice Place, Deputy Manager Head of Digital Learning Applications and Media, Information Services Head of Academic Affairs (CSE) Dean of Postgraduate Research (CSE) Academic Engagement Coordinator, Students' Association Head of Taught Student Administration & Support (CAHSS) Dean of Students (CMVM) Dean of Learning and Teaching (CSE) Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Validation (CAHSS) Elected member of Senate Dean of Student Experience (CSE) Head of PGR Student Office (CAHSS)</p> <p>Vice President Welfare, Students' Association Head of Academic Administration (CMVM)</p> <p>Academic Policy Officer, Academic Services</p> <p>Dean of Taught Education (CMVM) Vice President Education, Students' Association Academic Administration Manager (CMVM) Dean of Postgraduate Research (CSE) Head of Taught Student Development (IAD)</p>
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1.	<p>Welcome and apologies</p> <p>The Convener welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted the substitute members present. Reminder to the Committee that members can propose a substitute member, to be approved by the Convener, if they are unable to make the meeting.</p> <p>The Convener proposed that next academic year, members would be asked to nominate substitute members at start of the year, so that they can be included in the induction briefing. If there is a need for substitute members who have not attended the induction briefing to attend a meeting throughout the year, the aim will be to provide a short induction prior to the meeting, where there is sufficient time to do so.</p> <p>The Convener noted that the CSE representatives would need to leave the meeting at 15:00 following the discussion of item 3.</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes of the previous meeting</p> <p>To approve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23 November 2023 (open minutes) <p>The Committee approved the minutes.</p> <p>Approved.</p>	APRC 23/24 5A
3.	<p>Exceptional Circumstances policy - update</p> <p>To comment</p> <p>Presenters: Dr Adam Bunni and Lisa Dawson</p> <p>The paper presents an updated draft of a proposed Exceptional Circumstances policy. The proposed policy is looking to address issues raised when this was considered by the Committee previously in June and July 2023, as well as to consider the work of the APRC task group, convened in 2022/23. The paper also provides the Committee with an update regarding the systems and process changes required to implement such a policy. If the Committee were to agree to progress with this draft policy in principle, the systems work could commence in order to achieve the implementation of changes for 2024/25.</p> <p>The paper includes a proposal to set up an informal stakeholder group to work with the project team in Registry Services over the coming months. The purpose of the group would be to consider and advise on how the policy, process and systems would work in a range of detailed and complex scenarios, and to build and test the system in partnership.</p> <p>The Convener clarified that the draft policy is for comment and for agreement in principle so that the systems development can progress. The paper will return to the Committee with a final policy for approval in March.</p> <p>Key points discussed in relation to the proposed policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Groups of students and circumstances not covered by the policy: Noting the discussion at previous meetings, it was reiterated that the purpose of this policy is to support students who have short-term, 	APRC 23/24 5B

unexpected, exceptional circumstances that could impact on their ability to undertake their assessments. In addition, the Disability and Learning Support Service (DLSS) work with Schools on providing reasonable learning adjustments for their assessments, and other aspects of teaching. Previous discussions had highlighted a set of students with particular needs that are currently falling through the gaps and feel unsupported, such as student parents and carers.

The Deputy Secretary Students has commissioned a review focussing on these groups of students. A report is expected to outline actions we may be able to take urgently to understand any gaps and how these may be addressed. It was noted that a longer-term set of recommendations linked to our Widening Participation Strategy as to how we achieve greater inclusive and connected support for our underrepresented students across the University is also expected. The Deputy Secretary Students noted that she would update the Committee on this work, but that this was not the purpose of this Policy.

The Committee will receive an update on this project at its March meeting, alongside the Exceptional Circumstances policy.

Members agreed that there should be signposting to students on what other policies or types of support are available for these groups of students and for circumstances not covered by the Exceptional Circumstances policy.

- **Supporting evidence and self-certification:** Members expressed a range of views regarding changes to self-certification and the requirements for medical evidence; some members viewed the changes as necessary in order for the policy to be fit for purpose, whilst others viewed them as punitive to students.

Student representatives from the Students' Association and The Advice Place reminded the Committee of the difficulties and cost of obtaining non-routine types of evidence, such as GP letters, certified translations, and letters from employers. It was noted, for instance, that some types of employers would not provide letters. Where certified translations are necessary, it should be considered whether students or the ESC team could provide their own translations. The Academic Registrar noted a follow up meeting with the Students' Association would be arranged to discuss the approach to evidence.

Amongst members who were supportive of the changes, there was still concern about the requirement for evidence in particularly sensitive cases, particularly in cases of gender-based violence, and there was discussion regarding whether the set of circumstances for which no evidence is needed (i.e., bereavement) could be widened to include these situations. Members expressed concerns regarding the viability of escalating all such cases to the Deputy Secretary, Students, and suggested that these types of cases could instead be incorporated into the policy.

College representatives noted that there were significant workload implications for student support teams if Student Advisers and Wellbeing Advisers were to be asked to provide letters of support as evidence of students' Exceptional Circumstances. It was also noted that the reference in

the policy to accounts provided by friends and family was confusing, and that it would be best to either fully accept these or not accept them.

- **Period for coursework extensions:** Members welcomed a decision on the period for coursework extensions, given the current discrepancies on this across the University. Members also welcomed the allowance for part-time programmes to allow seven-day, rather than three-day, extensions.

Notwithstanding, a number of concerns were expressed regarding the impact of the shorter period for extensions on students. Student representatives would have liked to see the recommendation from the APRC task group to allow a single self-certification to cover up to seven days, rather than three days. One member noted that most other Russell Group universities allow at least seven-day extensions. Another member noted that the rationale for this change was to address issues regarding the volume and impact of extensions in some areas of the University, but that for other areas the longer period for extensions was unproblematic.

Another member noted that seven-day extensions were important for parents and carers, although it was acknowledged that being parent or carer is not an exceptional circumstance and that appropriate policies and adjustments need to be in place for these students outside of this policy.

One member proposed that feedback could be collected on how the three/four-day extension period has been working so far in 2023/24, and incorporate reflections on this into the rationale for the policy amendments.

There was also some reflection on the reasons under-pinning the volume of extensions, and that some of these are the University's responsibility to resolve, e.g., under-provision of assessment guidance, over-assessment. The Convener noted however that the volume of assessment is not within the remit of the Committee to resolve.

- **Assessments not eligible for extensions:** Members noted that Schools must retain the option for some assessments to not allow extensions, for pedagogical reasons.
- **Late submissions and ESC expedited decisions:** Members noted that it was desirable to give early outcomes to students where possible. There was discussion about whether or not this would save any workload for Schools and also about how this would operate, e.g., if the ESC team are expediting decisions, it is not clear how they would distinguish cases where there has been an impact on the quality of the assessment.

Members agreed it will be important for the stakeholder group to work through late submission scenarios in detail and establish the routine practices for these scenarios.

- **Concerns about the complexity of the policy and its implementation:** Members noted a general concern regarding the complexity of the policy and how this would affect its implementation, as well as staff and student understanding of the policy. The paper authors noted that the points of complexity were considered to add value, but agreed that if there was complexity that was not adding value, that these points could be simplified. In terms of the systems implementation, colleagues in Registry Services

have been modelling the changes that would be required to the system, and there are resources allocated and ready to begin the work. The Committee member representing ISG noted that consideration should also be given to how these changes may impact on marking and release of feedback.

- **Need to define “best academic interest”**: Members noted that staff and students may have different views on what constitutes “best academic interest” and that this should be defined. Consideration should also be given to any impact on allowances for credits on aggregate, especially for disciplines accredited by professional bodies.

Members representing the Colleges, IAD and some of the members representing Senate were broadly supportive of the changes, and the direction of travel of the proposed policy. The College leads for academic administration agreed to send a list of more detailed questions and scenarios via email following the meeting, for further consideration.

Student representatives from EUSA and The Advice Place noted that improvements had been made since this policy was last reviewed in July 2023 and that notable efforts had been made to incorporate some of the points from the APRC task group. Nevertheless, the student representative members of the Committee did not support the proposed policy. Members noted that students perceived the changes to the existing policy as punitive to students. The key features they would like to see in the policy, as stated in an open letter from EUSA sent to members of APRC in July 2023, still apply to the revised proposal:

- Self-certification to apply for seven days, rather than three days
- Four-day extensions
- Relaxation of evidence requirements

Student representatives also highlighted the importance of having associated or additional policies in place in order to support students whose circumstances are not covered by the Exceptional Circumstances policy.

The Deputy Secretary, Students, thanked members for the feedback and also thanked colleagues who have been working hard on the amendments to the policy and systems requirements. There was an acknowledgement that no policy will be able to cover every circumstance, but that we will need to agree on a policy that covers the majority of circumstances, whilst also covering gaps in support by other policies. It was also noted that the current policy, and the interim local workarounds (e.g., College-defined extensions), were not fit for purpose and were not providing a consistent student experience.

The Convener summarised the key points of the discussion and noted that discussions on aspects of the policy where there was disagreement (e.g., requirements for evidence, period of extension) would continue to be reviewed. There was agreement that these discussions should not have an impact on the fundamental changes required to the systems, and that the systems work required should progress.

A revised policy, an update regarding system and process readiness and confirmation of communications resource to build and execute a communication plan, is expected to be brought to the Committee for approval at its next meeting in March.

	CSE representatives left the meeting at this point in order to attend another meeting.	
4.	<p>4.1 Matters Arising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convener's communications - Update regarding Assessment and Feedback groups: Senate Education Committee (SEC) approved last week a proposal to dissolve the Assessment and Feedback Guidance, Procedures, Data, Systems and Evaluation (AFGPDSE) Group and reconstitute the Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group with a refreshed membership and remit focused on delivering the outcome of the QESR and longer-term ambitions for assessment and feedback. This Group will continue to report to SEC. - Updated Guidance for Senate Standing Committee members: Following feedback from members of Standing Committees, further information has been added to the Senate Standing Committees' Members' Guidance to clarify members' constituencies and methods of consultation for ensuring representation of these constituencies. Any member who is uncertain about their responsibilities, or about representing their constituency, should discuss these with the Convener of the relevant Committee. The guidance is published on the Committee website and Sharepoint. - Ongoing consultation on amendments to the student appeal regulations: Student representatives on APRC will be invited to meet with colleagues working on the student appeal regulations to discuss the proposed amendments. The regulations are expected to come to the Committee for approval at the meeting in March 2023. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions log <p>The Convener provided a brief update on the action log, which is available on the Committee's new Sharepoint site.</p> <p>4.2 Report of Convener's Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of approved concessions since last Committee meeting in November 2023 - Total number of individual student concessions approved: 13 (10 PGR, 2 PGT, 1 UG). One of these cases was reviewed by the full Committee due to impact from industrial action. - Total number of cohort concessions approved: 1 (UG cohort). The case was reviewed by the full Committee as it related to the role of an External Examiner, which affected a cohort of students. • Updates to membership of Student Appeal Sub-Committees: There are new members from CMVM on both the Undergraduate and the Postgraduate Student Appeal Committees. The updated membership was approved by both the Convener and Vice-Convener by Convener's Action in December 2023. 	Verbal Update

5.	<p>Academic Year dates 2025/26 and Provisional Academic Year Dates 2026/27 To approve</p> <p>Presenter: Cristina Matthews</p> <p>The paper requests Committee approval for the academic year dates for 2025/26, which were approved as provisional dates at the 26 January 2023 meeting of APRC. The paper also requests Committee approval to amend the provisional academic year dates for 2026/2027. The dates for 2026/27 will remain as provisional and the period for revision and for the examination diet in December 2026 will remain as ‘to be confirmed’ pending the outcomes of an on-going review of the Exams Service.</p> <p>The Committee agreed to carry forward the point made at previous meetings that a two-day revision period is not adequate, and this should be reflected when the dates for 2026/27 come back for final approval. The Committee did not agree on what the adequate minimum period would be, and this will need to be considered once there is more clarity on what options are available for the examination period.</p> <p>Members noted that there needs to be at least one working day between the end of the December examination period and the winter closure of the University, in order to allow Schools to collect and receive examination papers. It was noted that the Committee has not previously been consulted on the University winter closure dates, but that this can be noted when the dates for 2026/27 return to the Committee for approval.</p> <p>There was discussion regarding the need to have a later date for Welcome Week 2026, as requested by ACE (Estates and Accommodation, Catering and Events), and whether it was the Committee’s responsibility to accommodate the requirements of the Fringe Festival. The Convener noted that while the Fringe Festival was not the business of the Committee, it is the responsibility of the Committee to approve dates that the University will be able to implement.</p> <p>There was also discussion of how the October break in teaching for online PGT programmes align with the different sets of school holidays. It was clarified that the academic year dates approved by the Committee do not include a break week in October, and that Colleges and/or Schools have the ability to determine when those breaks should be.</p> <p>The paper also lists the programmes with non-standard academic year dates, and members were asked to check if this information is still correct at the time of the meeting. One member noted that the online MBA programme is not included in the appendix, but is listed on the website. Another member noted that the MSc Veterinary Epidemiology (Online Learning) should be removed from the list as the programme is no longer running.</p> <p>The Committee agreed to approve the academic year dates for 2025/26. The Committee agreed to approve the provisional academic year dates for 2026/2027 as proposed, and noted that these dates will need to return to the Committee for approval as final dates, including further detail regarding the period of revision and examination diet for December 2026.</p> <p>Action: APRC administrator to update the list of programmes with non-standard dates and request an update to these on the University website.</p>	APRC 23/24 5C
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	<p>Action: APRC administrator to request an update to the provisional academic year dates for 2026/2027 published on the University website.</p>	
6.	<p>Committee priorities - mid-year reflection To comment</p> <p>Presenter: Professor Patrick Hadoke</p> <p>The Convener noted that the purpose of the mid-year reflection was to provide further insight to Senate on the Committee's activities this year and an update on progress of the Committee priorities. Members were invited to comment on the paper before the update to Senate.</p> <p>The Convener noted that the induction to Senate members may not provide sufficient information on what the Committee does.</p> <p>Members welcomed the paper and agreed that it should provide helpful information to Senate members.</p> <p>There was discussion regarding the approvals process for papers related to the Curriculum Transformation Project (CTP) and members agreed that the approvals process had not been clear at the Senate session on CTP in January. The Convener clarified that the next step will be for the archetypes and framework papers to go to SEC, who would make recommendations to Senate. The papers would then go to Senate for approval.</p> <p>The policies within the remit of APRC that have an interaction with CTP (see paper APRC 23/24 5D) are an enaction of, and therefore dependent on, the information in the archetypes and frameworks that are to be approved at Senate. The Convener noted that there would be further opportunity to discuss this in more detail at the next Senate meeting in February.</p> <p>The Convener noted that the amendment to the Committee priorities that was approved at the Senate meeting in October 2023 was an amendment in relation to quality assurance, which would be within the remit of the Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) rather than the remit of this Committee. Although the paper that carried the amendment was not approved by Senate, the reflection of the impact of industrial action in 2022/23 on quality assurance is being addressed and has been explicitly included as part of the School and College Quality Assurance reports.</p> <p>No further comments.</p>	APRC 23/24 5D
7.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Committee discussed the two concessions that had been circulated for comment via email to members. The concessions had been circulated to members, rather than reviewed by Convener's action, either because the concession affected a cohort of students, or because the concession was in the context of industrial action. Members at the meeting agreed to approve both concessions, although the deadline for comments via email had not yet passed, so the outcome of the concession requests would be confirmed via email. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- One member noted that approval of one of these concessions would have been more straightforward if information supplied by the Convener at the meeting had been available on the form. The Convener agreed that revision of the forms should be considered to ensure appropriate information was supplied by the College requesting the concession. Action: APRC Convener and Administrator to review and update APRC concession forms.- One member noted a paper that came to the Committee in May 2023 about updates to the Programme and Course Approval and Management policy. The paper was accepted in May 2023 but progress has stalled. Action: Academic Services to follow up with Nichola Kett regarding updates to the Programme and Course Approval and Management policy.	
Date of next meeting Thursday 21 March 2024, 2-5pm, Boardroom, Chancellor's Building, BioQuarter campus		

Freedom of Information Open

DRAFT

Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee

21 March 2024

Watch That Gap: A Student Experience Project briefing note

Description of paper

1. The paper presents in Appendix 1 a briefing note providing a summary of findings and preliminary recommendations from a project considering the needs of student parents and carers undertaking study at the University.

Action requested/recommendation

2. APRC is asked to note the attached briefing note (Appendix 1).

Background and context

3. At its January 2024 meeting, APRC noted its interest in the progress of the Watch That Gap project.

Discussion

4. Appendix 1 includes a summary of the findings and preliminary recommendations arising from the Watch That Gap project. These preliminary recommendations are being considered further by the Deputy Secretary, Students. Where concrete policy proposals arise from the recommendations, these will be brought to APRC, where they fall within the Committee's remit.

Resource implications

5. The paper does not contain any proposals for action at this stage, and does not therefore carry resource implications. Where concrete proposals arise from the recommendations, these will be subject to an assessment of resource, risk, and equality and diversity implications.

Risk Management

6. See section 5, above.

Equality & Diversity

7. See section 5, above.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

8. The paper is provided as a briefing note for APRC on the progress with the Watch That Gap project. Where concrete proposals arise from the recommendations, a communications and implementation plan will be put in place for these.

H/02/27/02

APRC 23/24 6B

Author

Lucy Evans
Deputy Secretary, Students

Presenter

Lucy Evans

Freedom of Information *Open*

Watch That Gap: A Student Experience Project Briefing note

Update for APRC.

Note that the report is not fully signed off and so this note is for APRC's information only and should not be regarded as final.

1. Overview, and scope

On behalf of Lucy Evans (Deputy Secretary, Students) and with endorsement from the University Secretary and the Vice Principal Students, Lindsay Jack carried out a short-term research project, 'Watch That Gap', exploring the learning and assessment needs of students with caring responsibilities.

In this project, Lindsay sought to capture the needs of students who are parents and carers and do not fit into the short-term purpose of the Extensions and Special Circumstances (ESC) Services and/or disability needs provided for by the Disability and Learning Support Service (DLSS) (There will be some students who are parents and/or carers who will also be eligible for ESC and DLSS adjustments based on other factors, but this report sought to identify potential solutions that lie outwith those mechanisms) The recent year-long review of the Extensions and Special Circumstances Policy suggests this is likely to be Student Carers and Student Parents.

'Watch That Gap' took into account the experiences of multiple stakeholders including students, and those who support and teach students. It encompassed one-to-one interviews, focus groups, surveys, and attendance at relevant events and committee meetings.

We sought to better understand the experiences of students, and listen to staff and student suggestions on what they thought might improve these students' time at university. The report presents the issues staff and students identified, codified into broad themes. Solutions have been suggested, including recommendations for short- and longer-term work that is needed.

2. Approach

Students and staff were asked four questions covering the difficulties students faced in learning and assessment that they would consider fall between the scope of the ESC Policy and the DLSS Adjustments process, any current support in this regard, what is working well to supports carer/parent/other status, and why, and what they think would alleviate the identified difficulties. 37 staff, and 47 students participated in this project.

The challenges are expanded on in the report and include academic skills, and assessment; attendance, at classes, and at extras; contacts and relationships; data, estate, finance; identity and belonging, resources; systems and processes, and trust.

While pockets of good practice exist, and there is a lot to celebrate, these are ad-hoc and rely too much on the onus being on students to communicate those issues and staff finding 'workarounds'

3. Findings

Difficulties students face faced in learning and assessment

The major themes that came through were around attendance and the lack of flexibility in options for attending. Lack of connection owing to being unable to take part in the 'other' things. Data also came up a lot from a staff perspective as we do not ask students to tell us they are parents, and so this data is not collected.

Current support

Edinburgh Cares featured often as do colleagues in Schools/Colleges. Work of individual staff features, which

tells us there are pockets of great practice but also speaks to the inequity of experience if those individuals don't happen to be staff those students know or work with.

What is working well.

Edinburgh Cares features as examples of best practice. Authorised Interruption of Studies good for leave of absence and flexibility (but see financial implications, and using this as a solution to a system that doesn't fit every student). Colleagues being understanding and flexible, individual staff members helping people out, e.g., any flexibility around hand-in dates. Understanding and not being rigid.

Recommendations

1. *Change our approach in 'teaching adjustments' for students – immediate and longer term:*

a) **Immediate: Implementation of 'modifications' applicable to students with caring responsibilities, allowing ease of application and supporting better data collection**

In this scenario, eligible students would have access to a curated set of modifications that they can apply to their courses as and when they need them. The adjustments available to them to be applied whenever they might need them include, e.g. extensions, flexibility in tutorial attendance, bookable room for study, arrangement of placements close to home, not sitting exams on consecutive days, requesting materials for unavoidable periods of absence, and more.

This would be undertaken by staff (potentially a new role) in SES, working with relevant colleagues in Schools, Colleges, other service teams.

It is envisaged that we will pilot it with this group – those with caring responsibilities - while other background work goes on to identify other groups whose university experience would be made more equitable as a result.

b) **Longer term**

Seek to achieve earlier and accurate release of teaching and exam timetables so plans can be made as early and easily as possible. Recording of all lectures to allow students to keep up with their studies where unavoidable life events prevent them from attending class.

To monitor the pilot above and review after year 1, and revise and/or extend.

2: *How can we provide support for students "Beyond the gap"?*

To undertake further review work to consider:

Continuation and development of training around what it means to be a carer or a student with parental responsibilities, to all student-facing staff.

More funding for childcare for students, and/or enhanced communication of what exists.

Improve data collection, and explore the communications students currently receive about when and how to provide and/or update information related to their carer status. To explore the possible use of MyEd or the student record to prompt students to provide and/or update this information.

Consider whether the imminent student case management tool might more broadly negate the need for students to have to retell their 'story.'

Cultural change, and an overhaul of the way the institution (broadly) thinks about students.

Provision of a drop-and-go, short-term stay creche facility where children can be dropped off for short periods of time so that a student can go to class or get some work done.

Reconsideration of the policy that prevents children from being brought onto campus.

Priority allocation of tutorials and other classes outwith lectures.

(Re?) Encouragement for Schools and Course Organisers of the power they have in tailoring modes and number of assessments etc to cater to their student demographics.

Look into the overall assessment picture in terms of number of assessments, and the level to which the 'over-assessment' some interviewees spoke of exists across the institution.

Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee

21 March 2024

Exceptional Circumstances Policy

Description of paper

1. This paper presents for approval a final draft of the proposed Exceptional Circumstances Policy.

Action requested / recommendation

2. **The Committee is asked to approve the proposed Exceptional Circumstances (EC) Policy** (Appendix 1), for introduction from September 2024. The policy would replace the existing Special Circumstances Policy. Proposed changes to the Taught Assessment Regulations (TAR) are presented in Appendix 2. In the event that APRC approves the EC policy, the Committee will be asked to approve the changes to the TAR alongside other proposed regulation changes at the May meeting.

Background and context

3. APRC 23/24 5B, presented to the January 2024 meeting of APRC, provided in detail the background and context to the proposed policy.
4. The proposed policy is designed to address concerns with the current approach to handling requests for coursework extensions and Special Circumstances. The concerns about the current approach are summarised below:
 - Schools feel that students are using coursework extensions to manage their workload, in a way that departs from the original, “exceptional” intention for the policy;
 - This presents a fundamental concern that the existing policy does not adequately equip students with skills required to succeed in the workplace, such as management of deadlines and juggling the normal stressors of academic study;
 - The high volume of extensions is leading to significant challenges in marking and moderation, with high proportions of students receiving extensions for many assessments (up to 60% of a cohort in some cases);
 - This can impact negatively upon the ability to complete marking and moderation to a required standard and within TAR deadlines;
 - Some staff report completing the moderation process twice (i.e. once for work submitted on time, and again for work submitted with an approved extension), affecting workload and posing a potential risk to marking consistency;
 - Students are experiencing inconsistency in the handling of their requests for coursework extensions in particular, with some Schools offering three calendar days for extensions, and others four days;
 - Students also often face a long wait for information about what action will be taken in relation to their application for Special Circumstances, following the meeting of the relevant Board of Examiners;

- The ESC Review process revealed significant differences in practice between Schools regarding handling of special circumstances applications, especially in relation to consideration of the severity of circumstances and the use of algorithmic decision trees, posing a risk to the consistency of the student experience.
5. At the January meeting of APRC, feedback on the draft of the EC policy presented focused on the following areas:
- Some members raised concerns about circumstances not exceptional to individual students causing significant disruption, like parenting, employment, chronic health conditions, and undiagnosed mental health issues. Since the policy is not designed to address these situations, members emphasised the need for alternative ways to support these groups.
 - Members presented mixed views on changes to self-certification and medical evidence requirements. Some members raised concerns about the difficulties and costs of obtaining bespoke evidence, and certified translations of evidence not provided in English.
 - Members were supportive of waiving the requirement for evidence in sensitive cases, such as gender-based violence, but some raised concerns about the practicality of escalating cases to higher authorities.
 - Most members welcomed the proposal for a consistent position regarding the default period for coursework extensions, but EUSA colleagues raised concerns about shorter extension periods impacting students negatively.
 - Some members emphasised the need to retain the position that some assessments do not offer coursework extensions for pedagogical reasons (e.g. due to quick feedback turnaround).
 - There was agreement that it is desirable to provide early outcomes to students where possible, but some members expressed scepticism regarding the workload benefits of the proposed approach to removal of late penalties.
 - Some members raised general concerns about the complexity of the policy and its impact on implementation and understanding by staff and students.
 - Members recognised that there are differing views between staff and students on what constitutes "best academic interest" and suggested that a clearer definition may be required in the policy on this issue.

Discussion

Updated version of the proposed policy

6. An updated version of the policy is presented in Appendix 1. This revised version takes account of feedback received at the January 2024 meeting of APRC, and during subsequent discussions with colleagues in Colleges, Student Systems, EUSA, Disability and Learning Support Service, Student Counselling Service, and Wellbeing Service. The proposals remain focused on seeking to address the concerns around existing policy identified in section 4 of this paper.
7. The table below describes the key features of the draft policy, highlighting where revisions have been made from the version considered by APRC in January 2024. It also notes where that feature aligns with recommendations made by the

APRC task group in March 2023. More information about the changes made to the policy- including some which are not listed in the table- is provided below the table.

Key feature of policy	Revised in this version?	Task Group recommended?
The policy encompasses both shorter coursework extensions, and other concessions currently handled via Special Circumstances	No	Yes
Students can self-certify for extensions up to three times in a year	No	Yes
One self-certification request can cover a period of up to four days	Yes	Seven days
Self-certified extensions will be for four calendar days	Yes	Yes
On courses taken primarily by students on part-time programmes, self-certified extensions will be for seven days	Yes	Yes
Students can apply for Exceptional Circumstances no earlier than 10 days before the relevant assessment deadline	No	Yes
Self-certified requests for extensions must be submitted in advance of the relevant assessment deadline	No	Yes
Other requests must be submitted with evidence	Yes	Yes
Requests must be submitted by a deadline published by the Exceptional Circumstances (EC) service for the relevant Semester	Yes	Yes
Applications after the relevant deadline must be supported by evidence indicating why they were not submitted on time	No	N/A
Where a student submits work late and their EC application is accepted, late penalties will be removed by default	Yes	N/A
Accepted EC requests will be considered by the relevant Exceptional Circumstances Committee (ECC) in a School/Deanery	Yes	Yes
The ECC will make recommendations to the relevant Board of Examiners, who can offer one or more of a small range of outcomes	No	Yes

Amendments made to the policy since January 2024

- As noted above, there are several aspects of the policy which have been amended since the last version considered by APRC. These amendments take

account of the feedback presented at the January 2024 meeting, and subsequent discussions regarding implementation.

- a) Addition of specific circumstances (2)
9. We have added specific reference to coverage under the policy of the experience of sexual or gender-based violence and harassment, and of breakdown of a long-term relationship, military conflict, natural disaster and extreme weather conditions. These additions are based on feedback from the Student Counselling Service and the Colleges.
10. We have separated out some of the examples of what we would consider an exceptional circumstance to support more useful reporting regarding why students are making applications in the EC system.
 - b) Clearer distinction between Coursework Extensions and Exceptional Circumstances processes (4)
11. Feedback received following the January meeting of APRC indicated that the conflation of processes relating to coursework extensions and other outcomes was adding unreasonable complexity to the policy. As such, we have revised this section and subsequent sections (especially section 7) to draw a clearer distinction between the processes (and sections of the policy) relating to coursework extensions, and those relating to other outcomes. In this version, Exceptional Circumstances is the blanket term which encompasses two processes: Coursework Extensions, and Exceptional Circumstances. Section 7 now encompasses the process for Coursework Extensions, and allows subsequent sections of the policy to focus on Exceptional Circumstances (i.e. other outcomes).
 - c) Submission window for Exceptional Circumstances (4.2, 4.3)
12. There have been queries from EUSA and some Schools regarding the provision in the policy stating that students should be permitted to apply for Exceptional Circumstances no earlier than **ten calendar days** before the deadline for a relevant assessment. Data from the ESC Dashboard indicates that most applications for Special Circumstances are made shortly before, or after assessment deadlines. Where students apply earlier than this currently, in many cases they (and the ESC service) may not be sure when their circumstances may resolve themselves. Most assessments should only take a small number of days to complete. The EC service need to be confident that the student's circumstances will still be affecting them at the point that submission for assessment is due. Preventing earlier submission in most cases avoids situations where the EC service either have to defer making a decision, presenting continued uncertainty for students, or make premature decisions which would be binding on Schools to take some action. In the context of the approach the policy takes to Boards of Examiners taking action in a student's "best academic interest" (see section 26, below), premature decisions could lead to situations where academic standards are compromised unreasonably, for example with component or course results being discounted for students where this was not a

necessary mitigation for Exceptional Circumstances. Nonetheless, the policy includes provision (4.4) for the EC service to accept earlier submission, where it is clear that the circumstances will continue to affect the student at the point of submission.

d) Default coursework extension length (7.2)

13. The default coursework extension length has been revised to **four calendar days** (from the previous three calendar days). The decision to arrive at four calendar days as the final proposal for default extension length takes account of the following factors:

- The different measures proposed in relation to coursework extensions work in tandem with each other, the most significant of which is the cap on the number of self-certifications at three per year, coupled with the restriction on the period covered by each self-certification. These are new developments which fundamentally alter students' experience of the coursework extension process as a whole. We feel that setting a default extension length of four days takes a balanced approach to this issue, which takes account of the new restriction on the number of times students can self-certify.
- This is supported by data regarding use of ESC processes during Semester 1 2023/24. All Colleges have seen significant decreases in the volume of coursework extension requests received this year, ranging from 19.1% fewer extensions in CAHSS, to 44.4% fewer in CSE. However, while there has been no change in the volume of students submitting Special Circumstances requests in CAHSS (which has operated a default of four days for extensions this year), between 9% (CMVM) and 9.9% (CSE) more students have submitted Special Circumstances requests in those Colleges which have operated with a default of three days for extensions.
- In addition to this, four days was proposed as the default extension length by the 2022/23 APRC task group.

14. There have also been queries from EUSA and some Schools regarding the use of calendar days, as opposed to working days. Four calendar days was the recommendation of the 2022/23 APRC task group. The use of calendar days supports clearer communication of deadlines, with students and staff not being required to work out which days to exclude. This is the existing approach for coursework extensions, Extra Time Adjustments, and in the application of penalties for late submission of coursework. It is desirable to take the same approach for each of these processes to avoid confusion for students. We would not propose to make changes to the established approaches for Extra Time Adjustments as this could be needlessly unsettling for students who currently receive these adjustments. In the case of penalties for late submission, it would lead to inequitable treatment of students were we not to apply penalties on weekend days, since it would lead to students receiving different penalties for missing a deadline by the same amount of time. For example, a student whose deadline fell on a Monday but submitted on a Thursday would lose 15%, while a student whose deadline was on a Thursday but submitted on a Sunday would lose only 5%.

15. We have also removed the provision to offer an extension of seven calendar days for dissertations. Feedback from CMVM in particular indicated that offering seven calendar days for dissertations was not appropriate given the overall length of time offered to students to complete the dissertation, and would pose unreasonable challenges to the marking and moderation processes for dissertations. Increasing the default extension duration for all coursework assessments (including dissertations) to four days offsets the removal of the seven-day provision for dissertations.
16. In line with feedback from the January 2024 meeting of APRC, 7.1c) notes that Schools may specify that some in-course assessments are not subject to coursework extensions.
- e) Period covered by self-certification (7.1e)
17. We have amended the period covered by each self-certified application for coursework extensions from three calendar days to **four calendar days**. Having changed the default extension length to four calendar days, it makes sense also to change the period covered by each self-certification to four calendar days in order to support clearer communication to students of the provisions under the policy. This will be helpful to students in situations where they may have circumstances affecting submissions due on a Friday and the following Monday, which can now be covered by a single application. This approach also brings the final proposal closer to what was recommended by the 2022/23 APRC task group, which was that each self-certification period should cover seven calendar days.
- f) Extension duration for part-time programmes (7.3)
18. The draft of the policy which went to APRC in January proposed to offer seven days for extensions for students on part-time programmes. Subsequent discussions with Colleges and EUSA suggested that colleagues felt that it would be desirable to apply this to all students studying part-time, as opposed to those on programmes defined as part-time. However, extensive discussion of this issue with Systems colleagues has raised significant concerns regarding how far this could be implemented, and has moreover prompted fundamental challenges to the underlying policy position.
19. The ESC system is designed around courses, with extension length being set at course level, and no functionality to support different lengths of extension for different students. It is also the case that there is no straightforward way to recognise which students are studying part-time within the student record, unless they are on a defined part-time programme. The volume of development work it would take to address this issue could not be achieved ahead of 24/25, but moreover does not appear to be proportionate given the following issues:
- Where part-time students share courses with full-time students we would need either to: a) offer them longer extensions than the rest of their cohort; or b) offer 7-day extensions to all students on a course being taken by any part-time students. Neither of these options seems optimal.

- Aside from those students on defined part-time programmes, the majority of part-time taught students are undergraduate students on part-time repeat years. It is not clear that there is the same need or justification for offering longer extensions to these students as there may be for some categories of part-time students.

20. Given these issues, the final version of the policy has reverted to the original request from CMVM to cater specifically for those students on part-time programmes whom we have reason to know are in full-time employment alongside their studies. However, we would propose to leave it in the hands of Schools and Deaneries to determine where to apply longer extensions for courses, within certain parameters. As at present, the default extension length for courses would be set in the Assessment and Progression Tools- at four calendar days as above- but with Schools and Deaneries able to amend this to seven calendar days for courses being taken by part-time students, or where students are undertaking placement. As such, the policy has been revised to state that **Schools and Deaneries may extend the default length of coursework extension to seven calendar days for courses taken primarily by students on part-time programmes, or who are undertaking placement.** This approach would avoid a situation where students on the same courses or programmes would receive different lengths of extension (except where Extra Time Adjustments are offered), which would pose a risk to students' perception of fair treatment.

g) Evidence requirements (8)

21. Various amendments have been made to this section to take account of feedback received from colleagues, and benchmarking within the sector.

- 8.3 makes clearer that, in some cases, evidence need not give direct confirmation of the circumstances themselves, since this is not often possible for Student Advisers, for example. In these cases, the evidence will instead focus on their engagement with the student, and their understanding of the impact of the student's circumstances on their assessments. This avoids a potential conflict of interest for Student Advisers, where they could be called upon to make a judgement as to how "deserving" the student is of concessions.
- 8.4 has been added (following a sector precedent) to put clearer parameters around when we would, and may not, expect to receive direct medical evidence.
- 8.5 has been amended to state that we do not require certified translations where evidence has been provided in a language other than English. Feedback from ESC has indicated that it is sufficient to check translations provided by students for accuracy using online translation services. The policy elsewhere makes clear the expectation that action will be taken if students submit fraudulent evidence.
- 8.6 b) has been amended to reflect the feedback (from EUSA in particular) that bespoke medical letters are difficult to obtain, incur a cost to the student, and are often of limited benefit, for example simply restating what the student told their GP. The proposed addition (which reflects wording used at other

institutions) allows for students instead to provide other, more routinely provided medical evidence, such as appointment or referral letters, hospital reports and discharge letters. It has also been suggested here that students should contact their Student Adviser to notify them of their circumstances and the impact upon their studies, so that the Student Adviser can provide a statement confirming their awareness of this.

- 8.6 c), d), e) have seen minor amendments to wording, based on input from DLSS.
- 8.6 g) adds reference to advisers at the Advice Place as a potential source of supporting evidence for students.
- 8.6 h) has been amended in recognition of feedback from EUSA regarding the difficulty of obtaining bespoke evidence from employers. Provision has been added for students to submit other forms of evidence, such as screenshots of correspondence with their employer, rotas etc. The onus would be on the student to explain why the change in their employment circumstances was beyond their control.
- 8.6 j) amended to state that supporting evidence will not be required where a request is based on the experience of sexual or gender-based violence, following feedback from Equally Safe team and at the January meeting of APRC.
- 8.7 removed reference to evidence from family and friends. Feedback from EUSA stated that, if this could not be accepted on its own as evidence for ECs, it would be better to remove it.

h) Quorum for Exceptional Circumstances Committees (ECCs) (9.3)

22. We have amended the quorum for ECCs to a minimum of a Convener, who must be a member of academic staff, plus one member of professional services staff. As currently, Schools and Deaneries can supplement this as appropriate. The previous draft retained the existing quorum used for Special Circumstances Committees, which is a minimum of a Convener (who must be an academic), plus two other members of staff, one of whom must be an academic, and the other of whom may be a member of professional services staff. This amendment is based on feedback from the Colleges which indicates that, in many cases, SCCs are operating as part of pre-board activities, using prescriptive decision trees to enable algorithmic decision-making regarding the appropriate action to recommend. As minimal discretion is required, a reduction of quorum will not impact on this activity. It remains the case that ECCs will make only recommendations to Boards of Examiners, with Boards having the ultimate responsibility for making decisions regarding outcomes in cases. The amendment also gives more appropriate recognition to the role professional services staff routinely play in the work of Special Circumstances Committees.

i) Removal of lateness penalties (10.2.2)

23. The previous draft of the policy suggested a process by which the Exceptional Circumstances (EC) service could approve the removal of late penalties for up to 10 days after the original submission deadline. Feedback at the January meeting of APRC raised questions about the workload implications of the proposed approach. We have therefore revised this proposal to provide the same outcome

with a reduced level of complexity. The proposal is that late penalties will be removed by default where a student has had their EC application accepted in relation to an item of assessment which they have submitted late, provided that their work has been accepted for submission by their School or Deanery.

24. Based on this approach, students who had submitted work late and had their Exceptional Circumstances application accepted for that assessment could have confidence that- at a minimum- their late penalties would be removed by their Board of Examiners. However, the policy emphasises that this will only apply where the late submission has been accepted by the School, to guard against situations where a student attempts to submit long after the original deadline for the assessment, and even after the Board of Examiners has met. This approach is neutral from a resourcing perspective both for Schools or for the Exceptional Circumstances service, since it does not entail the operation of a further process. The EC service will consider and accept as appropriate applications for ECs in line with the policy; Exceptional Circumstances Committees in Schools will consider these cases as normal and can either simply apply the default removal of late penalties, or a greater concession, based on what is in the student's best interest.

25. Schools operate different processes currently regarding at what point they apply late penalties to provisional marks. In the event that it is not possible to harmonise these processes ahead of 24/25, we would need to provide clear advice to students about the fact that, where they have had an EC application accepted for an assessment submitted late, their provisional mark may include late penalties, but they can treat these as due for removal.

j) "Best academic interest" (10.4)

26. The proposed policy states that, "in coming to a decision where exceptional circumstances are considered, Boards of Examiners should act in the best academic interest of the student". At the January meeting of APRC, members of the Committee queried what was meant by the phrase "best academic interest". We have added a clarification to state that "Boards should apply whichever outcome(s) leads to a student achieving the best possible course or programme result, provided that this is consistent with the Board being satisfied that it has sufficient evidence of attainment of relevant learning outcomes (see 10.5), or of performance at the required level in the programme (see 10.6.2)." This is consistent with the approach taken in Schools under the current Special Circumstances policy, following developments in guidance in CAHSS in particular. It removes from ECCs and Boards any notional obligation to consider what outcomes are proportionate to the perceived severity of the student's circumstances: it is not only impossible to make such a determination with the information available to ECCs and Boards, but moreover unnecessary, given the fact that the EC service has determined that the student's circumstances are exceptional.

27. Section 10.6.2 has been added to clarify that there is no limit on the credit volume of courses which can be excluded from calculations in line with 10.6 b), provided that Boards are satisfied that they have sufficient evidence of performance at the

required level. This is consistent with published guidance provided to Schools during industrial action and the Covid-19 pandemic, and leaves appropriate discretion to Boards of Examiners.

Revised Taught Assessment Regulations

28. Appendix 2 presents revised versions of the Taught Assessment Regulations which currently relate to the coursework extensions and Special Circumstances processes. These will return for approval at the May meeting of APRC alongside any other proposed changes to the regulations, but APRC is invited to comment on the drafts in the meantime. There are also several other regulations which refer to the Special Circumstances policy and would therefore need minor amendments.
29. In addition to the regulations, there are a large number of other policies and guidance which make reference to the Special Circumstances policy. Should APRC approve the introduction of the policy, **we are requesting that APRC agree to delegate to the Convener of the Committee the power to approve minor amendments to policies to change references to the Special Circumstances policy, or to TAR 28, to refer to the Exceptional Circumstances policy.** Where any proposed amendments are more substantial than simple changes to wording, these will be referred to the full Committee for consideration as normal.

Resource implications

Systems

30. As noted previously, there are resource implications for Student Systems in making the required changes to the ESC system. This is, however, a priority, and the Student Systems team has recently engaged the relevant members of staff to understand the scope of the changes. As the proposed policy currently stands, the team anticipates that it can deliver the system changes needed for the rollout in 2024/25, if the required resources are prioritised.
31. Student Systems have embarked on a user centred approach in mapping the system capabilities that will be needed to support the policy and intend to engage students via Student Panels and staff via the ESC User Group during the design, development and delivery of the features. They intend to mitigate any risks in delivering the system by phasing the delivery of features based on the features needed at a given point in the academic session. For example, the development of features needed for applying for exceptional circumstances for first sit assessments will begin immediately in order to deliver them before the start of semester 1, but updates to BI reports and handling of exceptional circumstances for reassessments will be completed after the start of semester 1. The team will share their feature priorities as they progress.

Staff resource

32. Staff in Schools and the Exceptional Circumstances service familiarising themselves with the new policy will take time, but will be supported by briefings and guidance. For Schools, the experience of receiving accepted cases from the Exceptional Circumstances service should be largely unchanged, with the exception of cases where Schools will be advised to remove late penalties by default.
33. Some colleagues have raised concerns about the workload implications for Student Advisers of being asked to provide supporting evidence in some cases. Although it is already common practice for Student Advisers to provide supporting evidence to students in some cases, the proposed policy may lead to Student Advisers being asked to do this more frequently than at present, especially where students are unable to provide other forms of independent evidence. We propose to mitigate this impact by providing templates for Student Advisers to complete where they are asked for supporting evidence. These templates will request the minimum amount of factual information about what the student has told their Student Adviser, and the level of engagement between them. Some Student Advisers have expressed a view that involvement at an early stage in EC cases may be beneficial in terms of the support they provide to students with difficult circumstances. In particular, in circumstances where cases are currently escalated by the ESC service to Schools based on concerns about student welfare arising from coursework extensions or Special Circumstances applications, it would provide a better experience for students and staff if Student Advisers had more advanced notice of significant issues affecting students.

Risk management

Risks of retaining the status quo

34. As noted above, Colleges and Schools have already taken steps to address some of the perceived challenges with the existing policy by reducing the default length of extension to offered. It remains the case, however, that this approach leads to inconsistency of experience for students, for example with each College now operating a different default duration for coursework extensions.
35. Many staff feel that the current approach to extensions and Special Circumstances is failing to adequately prepare students for life beyond University by supporting an appropriate approach to deadlines. The existing policy no longer meets its purpose of applying only to “special” or exceptional situations, and is perceived as having become a process through which students manage their deadlines. A consequence of this is that Schools experience extremely high volumes of coursework extensions and Special Circumstances requests, making the process of timely marking and moderation of work for return to students increasingly challenging.

Risks relating to the proposed policy

36. As noted above, the successful implementation of the proposed policy would be contingent upon changes being made to the associated systems. Resource from

within the Student Systems Partnership is currently built into plans and will be ringfenced to deliver these changes.

37. There is a risk that the reduction in the permitted period for extensions and the restriction on the number of self-certified extensions is perceived by students as a less generous approach than what has been in place previously. This will need to be addressed by clear communications regarding the goals of the proposed policy. This risk must be balanced against concerns around the existing policy noted above, i.e. that it does not adequately equip students with skills required to succeed in the workplace, such as management of deadlines and juggling the normal stressors of academic study.
38. There is a risk that staff will not be sufficiently aware of the new policy to provide appropriate advice to students on how it will be applied. This may lead to students being given incorrect advice based on the existing policy. This risk can be mitigated by a comprehensive communications plan, with particular focus on ensuring that Student Advisers are well-versed in the new policy.

Equality & diversity

39. An Equality Impact Assessment for the policy is provided in Appendix 3.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

40. Student communications resource from within Communications and Marketing has been assigned to support the development and delivery of a communications plan for the rollout of the proposed policy. This is likely to include:
- Email communication to students;
 - Email communication and briefing sessions for staff in Schools;
 - Additional, small-group training sessions for staff in Schools on request.
41. If the policy is approved, we will aim to bring a communications plan to the May meeting of APRC for comment. APRC will be asked to review the implementation of the new policy at an agreed point following its rollout.

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Freedom of Information: Open

Exceptional Circumstances Policy



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH

Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure fair and consistent response to student experiencing unexpected short-term circumstances which are exceptional for the individual student, beyond that student's control, and which could reasonably be expected to have had an adverse impact on the student's ability to complete the assessment on time.

Overview

This policy outlines the principles of exceptional circumstances, sets out the circumstances which would be considered exceptional circumstances, the process for requesting consideration of exceptional circumstances and the certification or evidence required to support applications. The policy outlines requirements for Exceptional Circumstances Committees, the process for the consideration of applications, possible outcomes and process for notifying students of the outcome and maintaining records.

Scope: Mandatory Policy

The policy applies to undergraduate and taught postgraduate students, and to the taught components undertaken by research postgraduate students.

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Document control

Dates	Approved: DD.MM.YY	Starts: DD.MM.YY	Equality impact assessment: DD.MM.YY	Amendments: DD.MM.YY	Next Review: YYYY/YYYY
Approving authority	Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee				
Consultation undertaken	State bodies/officers/constituencies				
Section responsible for policy maintenance & review	Academic Services				
Related policies, procedures, guidelines & regulations	Taught Assessment Regulations, Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees: www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/policies-regulations/regulations/assessment Guidance on policy, principle and operation of Boards of Examiners: www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/staff/assessment/boards-examiners Degree Regulations & Programmes of Study: www.drps.ed.ac.uk/				
UK Quality Code	Expectations are covered in the UK Quality Code Advice and Guidance on "Assessment"				
Policies superseded by this policy	Special Circumstances Policy				
Alternative format	If you require this document in an alternative format please email Academic.Services@ed.ac.uk				
Keywords	Exceptional Circumstances, Extension, Board of Examiners				



Exceptional Circumstances Policy

1. Principles

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure a fair and consistent response to students experiencing unexpected short-term circumstances which are exceptional for the individual student, beyond that student's control, and which could reasonably be expected to have had a significant adverse impact on the student's performance in an assessment, or resulted in non-attendance or a non-submission for a scheduled assessment.
- 1.2 Exceptional Circumstances are designed for emergencies and short-term circumstances. Circumstances acceptable under this policy must be exceptional (i.e. serious and unusual) relative to the normal daily challenges that academic study presents, and unpredictable in that the student could not reasonably have been expected either to avoid them, or to allow for them in planning the assessment work or preparation.
- 1.3 Approval of any exceptional circumstances request is not automatic. The decision is at the discretion of the University.
- 1.4 If a student's circumstances are not covered by this policy, the University has a wide range of other options to help students to manage the challenges and demands of academic study.
- 1.5 Students with a disability as defined by the Equality Act 2010 are expected to engage with the Disability and Learning Support Service (DLSS) in order to discuss where relevant adjustments may be made, and/or to develop coping strategies which will support them through their study; such arrangements are separate to this Policy (see section 6).
- 1.6 Students who do not have a disability but have known responsibilities or circumstances (e.g. caring responsibilities) that mean engagement with their studies may be impacted in other ways should speak with their Student Adviser in the first instance.
- 1.7 Students who frequently apply for exceptional circumstances will be proactively contacted by their School or Deanery to offer support.
- 1.8 In the case of some professionally accredited programmes this Policy will extend to exceptional reasons for absence from classes where attendance is required in order to meet learning outcomes, e.g. practical, tutorial and clinical rotations in CMVM. These classes will be specifically identified by the School or Deanery and communicated to students at the start of the course.

2. What would the University consider an exceptional circumstance?

- a) Bereavement through the death of a close relative, partner or close personal friend.
- b) Serious short-term physical illness or injury; this includes sudden worsening or a flare-up of a chronic physical health issue.



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- c) Serious short-term mental illness; this includes sudden worsening or a flare-up of a chronic mental health issue.
- d) Serious illness of a close relative (such as parent, child or spouse/partner) or a person who is dependent upon the student for their care.
- e) Victim of a crime whose impact upon a student is serious; this includes the experience of sexual or gender-based violence and harassment.
- f) Adjustments for a disability have not been made in time for a course assessment, where the student can demonstrate that the delay is not their responsibility.
- g) Exceptional personal circumstances, e.g. events that result in a serious impact on a student's ability to engage with academic work during the assessment period in question; this includes unexpected changes to caring responsibilities, and breakdown of a long-term relationship.
- h) For students in paid employment, an exceptional and significant change in their employment commitments, where this is beyond their control.
- i) Other exceptional circumstances that have affected, or will affect the student's ability to meet a deadline or complete an assessment. Such circumstances will be considered on a case-by-case basis and may include military service, military conflict, natural disaster or extreme weather conditions.
- j) Students taking part in elite level sporting events may be permitted to request extensions to coursework deadlines under the Performance Sport policy.

3. What would not be considered an exceptional circumstance?

- a) A long-term or chronic health condition (including mental ill-health) which has not worsened recently or for which the University has already made a reasonable adjustment.
- b) A minor short-term illness or injury (e.g. a common cold), which would not reasonably have had a significant adverse impact on the student's performance in an assessment or ability to complete the assessment on time.
- c) Holidays, including getting married, attendance at weddings, festivals and similar events.
- d) Loss of work not backed up, computer or printing problems;
- e) Poor working practices such as:
 - i. Accidental submission of an incorrect document, wrong file type or a corrupted file;
 - ii. claim of technical issues on behalf of the University with no proof of an error message/ system failure on a University system (e.g. Learn);
 - iii. poor time management;
 - iv. misunderstanding of the examination timetable or instructions on assessment deadlines.
- f) Deadlines for work or exams being set close together.



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4. Requesting consideration of exceptional circumstances

4.1 Under this policy, students can make a specific request for an extension to a deadline for a coursework assessment (referred to below as **Coursework Extensions**). Students can also request consideration of other outcomes where they have submitted an assessment late without an approved extension, not submitted an assessment (including missing an exam), or they feel their performance in an assessment was detrimentally affected by their circumstances (referred to below as **Exceptional Circumstances**).

Coursework Extensions

4.2 It is the responsibility of students to submit their application for a coursework extension to the Exceptional Circumstances (EC) service using the online system:

- no earlier than 10 calendar days before the submission deadline for the relevant assessment (including the date of an examination); and
- no later than the submission deadline for the relevant coursework assessment. (Where a student has an Extra Time Adjustment, this will be the amended deadline.)

Further information about applying for Coursework Extensions is provided in section 7.

Exceptional Circumstances (outcomes other than coursework extensions)

4.3 It is the responsibility of students to submit their application for Exceptional Circumstances to the EC service using the online system:

- no earlier than 10 calendar days before the submission deadline for the relevant assessment (including the date of an examination); and
- no later than the Exceptional Circumstances deadline for the School responsible for the student's programme published on the EC web pages for each Semester.

Further information about applying for Exceptional Circumstances is provided in sections 8-11.

All applications

4.4 Students may submit requests earlier than 10 calendar days prior to the relevant assessment deadline where it is clear that their circumstances will still be having an effect at the point of submission for the assessment. For example, where an exceptional event is scheduled to take place e.g. medical procedure, court proceedings, that would reasonably be expected to result in more than one day's absence and cannot be rescheduled. Where a student anticipates an absence of



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more than a week, they should discuss this with their Student Adviser, before applying under this policy.

4.5 In their application, students should describe the circumstances, state when the circumstances affected them, and all assessments and courses affected. Students should ensure that they provide sufficient documentary evidence. It is advised that students consult their Student Adviser, or Student Support Team when completing their application. The EUSA Advice Place are available for support.

Late applications

4.6 Deadlines for submission of Exceptional Circumstances are set in such a way as to allow ample time for students to submit their applications. The EC service will therefore only consider accepting submissions after the relevant School deadline where students provide an explanation for why they were unable to submit on time, with sufficient evidence to support this. No late applications will be considered after the final deadline for the relevant Semester published on the EC web pages.

5. Confidentiality

The University will treat the information provided by students as confidential in line with the University's Data Protection Policy, and will only share it with staff who have a legitimate need to access the information in order to consider the student's case or to provide students with support.

6. Students with Disabilities

6.1 The University supports students with long-term or chronic health conditions, including mental ill-health, if they are deemed to be disabled as defined by the Equality Act 2010, by putting in place a Schedule of Adjustments to provide reasonable adjustments to study and assessment support arrangements. Students are responsible for contacting the Disability and Learning Support Service (DLSS) to discuss the adjustments and support that they need.

6.2 Support and reasonable adjustments, including adjustments for fluctuating conditions, should be approved by the DLSS as part of an agreed plan.

6.3 Students with disabilities can claim exceptional circumstances where adjustments have not been made in time for an assessment, and where the student can demonstrate that the delay is not their responsibility. Consideration of disability as an exceptional circumstance may also be appropriate where evidence is provided that the impact of a disability has unexpectedly worsened significantly (whether temporarily or permanently).



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6.4 Students with disabilities are also able to use the Exceptional Circumstances process when they encounter circumstances other than their disability which meet the criteria within the policy.

7. Coursework Extensions

7.1 Students can apply for an extension to a coursework deadline under Exceptional Circumstances on a limited number of occasions, within defined criteria.

- a) Applications will be self-certified and do not require the submission of independent, supporting evidence.
- b) Students should only submit applications that meet the criteria set out in Section 2 “What we would consider Exceptional Circumstances”.
- c) Coursework extensions will only be offered for in-course assessments. In line with Taught Assessment Regulation 28.2, Schools may specify that coursework extensions are not offered for some in-course assessments.
- d) Students can apply for a Coursework Extension under this process up to **three times** within one academic year, including students with teaching over the summer (e.g. Taught Postgraduate Masters students). For any further applications for late submission without penalty, students should use the Exceptional Circumstances process (see sections 8-11).
- e) One application can cover more than one assessment where the submission deadlines for each assessment fall during the same **four calendar day period**.
- f) Coursework Extensions applications can only be considered before the submission deadline for the relevant assessment. Where students have an Extra Time Adjustment, this will be the amended deadline. Any applications submitted after the relevant deadline must be accompanied by evidence and will be considered under the Exceptional Circumstances process.
- g) Students can only apply for a Coursework Extension under this process once for each assessment (students cannot apply for successive extensions on the same piece of work, for example).
- h) Falsification is a serious offence. If a student is suspected of submitting a fraudulent Coursework Extensions application, this will be considered as a potential breach of the Code of Student Conduct.

7.2 The University’s Exceptional Circumstances (EC) service will confirm the acceptance of applications for coursework extensions, where these meet the above criteria. Where an application is accepted, the student will be offered an extension to the deadline for the affected assessment(s) for **four calendar days**.

7.3 Schools and Deaneries may extend the default length of coursework extension to **seven calendar days** for courses taken primarily by students on part-time



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programmes, or who are undertaking placement. Schools and Deaneries will advise students in advance via course and programme handbooks where this applies to courses.

7.4 Where the EC Service does not accept an application, they will inform the student of this, providing an explanation for their decision.

7.5 Once a decision has been made by the EC service on an application for a Coursework Extension (whether it is accepted or not accepted), the process of handling the application under this policy is concluded and the application will not be considered further.

8. Exceptional Circumstances (outcomes other than coursework extensions)

8.1 Where a student wishes to request an outcome other than a coursework extension, they must apply for Exceptional Circumstances and submit satisfactory supporting evidence with their request. A request can be submitted in anticipation of the receipt of the supporting evidence.

8.2 Supporting evidence will normally be from a relevant professional, including staff at the University (e.g. Student Advisers, Wellbeing Advisers).

8.3 In most cases, the evidence provided will be expected to give direct confirmation of the circumstances (e.g. a medical diagnosis). In other cases, however, it is understood that the person providing evidence will rely on the student's account of the circumstances, and will instead provide an account of their engagement with the student, and their understanding of the effect of the student's circumstances on the student's ability to engage with their assessments.

8.4 Students should only seek medical attention where they may require treatment. The University does not expect that students should seek medical attention purely for the purpose of requesting evidence to support an Exceptional Circumstances application, for example relating to acute gastroenteritis affecting attendance at an examination. In cases such as these, students are encouraged to make contact with their Student Adviser to notify them of their circumstances and the impact upon their assessments, and to seek support with applying for Exceptional Circumstances. Where appropriate, Student Advisers may confirm their awareness of the student's circumstances in a supporting statement. In most cases, however, it is expected that medical issues which did not require medical attention will not meet the criteria to be considered as Exceptional Circumstances.

8.5 Evidence should be provided in English, or accompanied by translations into English where appropriate. Translations will be checked for accuracy.

8.6 The required evidence is as follows:

- a) for bereavement:



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- no further evidence required.
- b) for illness:
- a signed and dated letter from a medical practitioner (GP, counsellor, therapist or clinical specialist) that states the dates when the illness affected the student and how the circumstances affected or are likely to affect the student's ability to prepare, submit or attend for an assessment or other event;
 - Where such a letter is not routinely available, a student may provide other formal evidence, such as appointment or referral letters, hospital reports or discharge letters;
 - Where other independent evidence is not available, the student should contact their Student Adviser to notify them of their circumstances and the impact upon their studies, so that the Student Adviser can provide a statement confirming their awareness of this and of their engagement with the student;
 - Where the student has a chronic condition that is subject to flare-ups or a sudden worsening, a signed and dated letter from a medical practitioner (GP or clinical specialist) or the Disability and Learning Support Service (DLSS) that states the nature of the condition and how flare-ups or a sudden worsening are likely to affect the student's ability to prepare, submit or attend for an assessment or other event. Once this evidence has been provided on the first occasion there is no need to obtain new evidence on subsequent occasions although the student will still need to submit a request on each occasion;
- c) for a situation where adjustments for a disability have not been made in time for a course assessment, and where the student can demonstrate that the delay is not their responsibility, confirmation from DLSS of the diagnosis and the date it was made, and details of any delays to the implementation of the required reasonable adjustments;
- d) For situations where the impact of a medical condition has unexpectedly worsened significantly, a signed and dated letter from a medical practitioner (GP or clinical specialist) confirming the nature of the condition and its impact upon the student's studies, or from DLSS confirming the details of any information provided by the student;
- e) for a student awaiting a diagnosis of a condition affecting them or a close relative or dependent other:
- a signed and dated letter from a medical practitioner (GP or clinical specialist) if the student is awaiting a diagnosis that a clinician has arranged an assessment for, that states the dates when the student or patient attended for treatment, when tests were undertaken, and when a diagnosis is expected;
 - A statement from a Student Adviser or Wellbeing Adviser regarding the information shared with them by the student.



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- f) for accident or injury to the student:
 - a copy of an accident report provided by a police officer or other public official, or a signed and dated letter from a medical practitioner (GP or clinical specialist);
 - in all cases where a letter is provided it must state the dates when the accident or injury affected the student, the position and qualification(s) of the person providing the letter and their contact details;
- g) For significant adverse personal or family circumstances being encountered by the student:
 - a signed and dated letter or appropriate proforma from one or more of the following: University staff member e.g. Student Counsellor, Student Adviser, Student Wellbeing Adviser; an adviser at the EUSA Advice Place; a medical practitioner (GP or clinical specialist), a social worker (stating their position with respect to the student), an officer of the law, a teacher outside the University;
 - the statement they provide must give their position and their contact details and must provide information on the timing and impact of the circumstances upon the student;
- h) for students in employment, who have experienced an exceptional and significant change in their employment commitments, where this is beyond their control:
 - where they are in employment: a signed and dated letter from their employer, or their employer's authorised representative, stating that the student has been required by them to undertake work in the interests of the employer and, if relevant, that this was in time that had previously been agreed would be available for the student to study, prepare for assessment or other event, or take an assessment or attend another event
 - where they are self-employed: evidence from their client or the client's authorised representative stating that they have required the student to undertake unforeseen work that was necessary in the interests of the client's business, together with the dates and times when the student had been required to meet the client or undertake the previously unforeseen work;
 - Where the above evidence is not reasonably available, students may provide other evidence, such as screenshots of correspondence with their employer/client, rotas; in these circumstances the student should also contact their Student Adviser to notify them of their circumstances and the impact upon their studies, so that the Student Adviser can confirm their awareness of this.
- i) for military service:
 - the individual's call-up papers;
- j) for other exceptional circumstances:



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- official documentation relevant to the event which may include court or legal papers;
- supporting evidence will not be required where a request is based on a student's experience of sexual or gender-based violence.

8.7 Self-certification will not be accepted as evidence for Exceptional Circumstances outside of the agreed arrangements for Coursework Extensions (see section 7).

8.8 Where supporting evidence is provided it will be taken at face value. However, the University reserves the right to make follow-up enquiries to establish the authenticity of the documentation provided. If at any stage of an application it is suspected that the evidence put forward to support the application may have been dishonestly acquired or is itself dishonest, consideration of the application will be suspended and the matter referred for consideration as a potential breach of the Code of Student Conduct.

9. Exceptional Circumstances Committees (ECCs)

9.1 Each School or Deanery is responsible for having one or more Exceptional Circumstances Committees (ECCs) to consider appropriate outcomes in accepted Exceptional Circumstances cases and make recommendations to the relevant Board of Examiners.

9.2 Schools may set up one ECC per Board of Examiners or ECCs which cover a number of Boards of Examiners. The Board sets up an ECC as a sub-committee of the Board.

9.3 To be quorate, an ECC will consist of a Convener, who must be a member of academic staff, and one member of professional services staff. Schools can include additional members (from among academic or professional services staff), but should seek to keep the membership as small as is consistent with robust decision-making, in order to avoid providing sensitive information about students to more people than is necessary.

9.4 If a Board of Examiners is very small and wishes to operate as its own ECC, this requires College approval. The Convener of the Board of Examiners may also convene the ECC but this is not a requirement.

9.5 ECCs will meet before the relevant Board of Examiners meetings take place. ECCs can also conduct business by correspondence where it is necessary to consider cases submitted after the scheduled ECC meeting, as long as all decisions are confirmed by a quorate membership (see above).



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10. Process for consideration of Exceptional Circumstances applications

10.1 Acceptance or rejection of exceptional circumstances requests

In relation to each request for consideration of Exceptional Circumstances, taking into account all information available to it, the EC Service determines:

- Whether there is sufficient evidence regarding the submitted circumstances and their impact on the student's performance in an assessment;
- Whether the submitted circumstances were exceptional for the individual student, whether they were beyond the student's control, and whether it is reasonable to conclude that they would have had a significant adverse impact upon the student's performance in an assessment, or resulted in non-attendance or a non-submission for a scheduled assessment;
- During what period the submitted exceptional circumstances were affecting the student's performance.

Based on their assessment, the EC Service will determine whether the application is accepted. Where the EC Service does not accept an application, they will inform the student of this, providing an explanation for their decision.

10.2 Determination of outcomes in accepted cases

10.2.1 The EC service will refer all accepted applications for consideration by the relevant Exceptional Circumstances Committee(s) in the School(s) or Deaneries responsible for the course(s) to which the application relates. The decision by the EC service to accept an application is binding on an Exceptional Circumstances Committee (ECC).

Removal of lateness penalties

10.2.2 Where a student's application for Exceptional Circumstances has been accepted by the EC service for an assessment which they submit late (i.e. beyond the original assessment deadline, or any extended deadline offered under section 7 of this policy or as a result of any Extra Time Adjustments), any penalties for late submission will be removed by default at the Board of Examiners (under 10.5 c), **provided that the late submission of the assessment is accepted by the School or Deanery**. Schools/Deaneries will inform students when a late submission cannot be accepted, for example where the marking or moderation process has already taken place. In all cases, including those where late work could not be accepted, the ECC will proceed to consider the other options available to them (under section 10.5) in regard to the student's application. This may in some cases lead to the removal of late penalties being superseded by, for example, the offer of a null sit (10.5 e), or disregarding an unreliable component (10.5 d).



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10.3 Exceptional Circumstances Committee (ECC) consideration

10.3.1 On receipt of an accepted exceptional circumstances request from the EC service, the ECC will consider all of the information relevant to the student's assessment, which may include information regarding the student's performance in the affected assessment(s) (including provisional marks, where available), and their performance in other assessments (as relevant).

10.3.2 The ECC will make a recommendation to the Board of Examiners regarding the appropriate action to take with regard to the affected assessments, courses, or programme. The ECC can either make a specific recommendation or recommend a range of options to the Board of Examiners. These recommendations are not binding on the Board of Examiners.

10.3.3 The ECC will provide a report of its recommendations to the relevant Board of Examiners through the EC online system.

10.4 Exceptional circumstances: general points about Board of Examiners decisions

In coming to a decision where exceptional circumstances are considered, Boards of Examiners must act in the best academic interest of the student. This means that Boards will apply whichever outcome(s) leads to a student achieving the best possible course or programme result, provided that this is consistent with the Board being satisfied that it has sufficient evidence of attainment of relevant learning outcomes (see 10.5), or of performance at the required level in the programme (see 10.6.2).

10.5 Exceptional circumstances: decisions regarding course outcomes

Where a student's exceptional circumstances application has been accepted, the relevant Board of Examiners decides on one or more of the options set out in the table below, taking into account the recommendations of the ECC.

Action	College approval required?
a) No action – the actions available would not be in a student's best academic interest	No
b) No action at course level; flag for consideration in relation to progression or award decision	No
c) Disregard penalties for late submission of coursework	No
d) Disregard missing or unreliable component(s) and derive overall mark/grade from completed work (see 10.5.1)	No
e) Record the course as a 'null sit', with the option of allowing the student to be examined at the next available diet, and / or to submit missing assessment and / or repeat some or all assessments, on a first sit basis	No
f) Permit the student to resubmit a revised dissertation for a postgraduate Masters programme	Yes



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gf) Permit the student to take specially prepared alternative assessments, including oral assessment	No
g) If course result is borderline (within 2 percentage points of the pass mark), award pass	No

10.5.1 Where marks/grades for specific components of assessment are missing or deemed unreliable, a Board of Examiners can only derive an overall mark/grade for the course from the existing assessed work if it is satisfied that there is sufficient evidence of attainment of the Learning Outcomes in other components of the course.

10.5.2 Boards of Examiners cannot adjust marks / grades as a consequence of exceptional circumstances.

10.5.3 Where a Board of Examiners applies one or more of the outcomes above at course level, it need not refer the case for further consideration at programme or award level, unless it is not satisfied that the options available at course level are in the best academic interest of the student (see 10.4).

10.6 Exceptional circumstances: decisions regarding progression and award

Where a student's exceptional circumstances application has been accepted, the relevant Board of Examiners decides on one or more of the options set out in the table below, taking into account the recommendations of the ECC.

In rare cases where the Board wishes to request permission for a student to graduate without the required volume or level of credit, the Board must request a concession via the relevant College committee; where the College committee supports the request, they will seek approval for the action from the Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC) via a concession.

Action	College or APRC approval required?
a) No further action – the actions available would not be in a student's best academic interest	No
b) Where a mark for a course is missing or deemed unreliable, exclude the affected course(s) from the relevant calculation for the award of credit on aggregate; progression; award of degree; degree classification (including the award of PGT Merit and Distinction)	No
c) Allow a student to graduate without the required number and / or level of credits for the degree	Yes (APRC)

10.6.1 Irrespective of any action taken with regard to exceptional circumstances, Honours and Postgraduate Taught students may also be awarded credit on aggregate for failed courses as normal, in line with Taught Assessment Regulations 52 (Honours students) and 56 (Postgraduate Taught students).



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10.6.2 There is no limit on the total credit volume of courses Boards of Examiners can exclude from calculations in line with 10.6 b). However, Boards must be satisfied that the remaining courses provide them with sufficient evidence of performance at the required level to support the decision being made, e.g. in terms of progression, award of a degree, or degree classification. Where the volume of unreliable course results leaves a Board with insufficient evidence to support a decision, they should consider offering null sits and reassessment as a first attempt, in line with 10.5 e).

10.6.3 For decisions regarding aegrotat degrees and posthumous degrees, see the relevant Undergraduate and Postgraduate Degree Regulations.

11. Notifying students of the outcomes of requests for consideration of exceptional circumstances

The EC service will notify students of the decision regarding whether or not their exceptional circumstances application has been accepted using the online system within five working days. The School or Deanery will notify students of any action taken by the Board of Examiners in relation to their exceptional circumstances application using the online system no later than five working days after the publication of ratified marks as noted in the University Key Dates. The School or Deanery will also inform the student's Student Adviser of the decision.

12. Appeal

Students have the right to appeal a decision by the EC service not to accept an application, or an outcome decision made either by the EC service or their Board of Examiners under the Student Appeal Regulations.

13. Reporting and maintaining records on requests for consideration of Exceptional Circumstances

14.1 Where the EC service decides not to accept a request for consideration of exceptional circumstances, the service will record the reason for this decision in the relevant online system.

14.2 The School or Deanery will minute ECC meetings (including meetings conducted by correspondence), recording all decisions and recommendations in the relevant online system. The ECC will report its decisions and recommendations to the Board of Examiners in as concise a form as is consistent with clarity and the student's interest, where possible maintaining the anonymity of the student.

14.3 The EC service and the School or Deanery will maintain records in line with Data Protection guidelines.



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14. Sources of further guidance

Further guidance for students regarding the exceptional circumstances process is available at: www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/students/assessment/exceptional-circumstances

Edinburgh University Students' Association provides further guidance to students regarding exceptional circumstances, and the Students' Association Advice Place can provide independent advice to students regarding the preparation of their requests for consideration of exceptional circumstances.

www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/adviceplace/academic/exceptional-circumstances

In order to support consistency of handling of student requests for consideration of exceptional circumstances, Colleges, Schools and Deaneries must not produce their own supplementary guidance.

Insert latest date approved/amended

DRAFT

Taught Assessment Regulations extracts for Exceptional Circumstances policy

Regulation 27 Resit assessment

The number of assessment attempts students are entitled to for each course depends upon the type of programme the student is taking and the SCQF level of the course.

Honours undergraduate students are entitled to:

- a maximum of four assessment attempts for courses at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework level 7 and 8;
- one assessment attempt for courses at SCQF level 9 to 11 unless Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements apply, in which case a maximum of four assessment attempts are permitted.

Non-Honours undergraduate students (excluding Visiting Undergraduate Students) are entitled to:

- a maximum of four assessment attempts for courses at SCQF level 7 to 11.

Visiting undergraduate students are entitled to:

- a maximum of two assessment attempts for courses at SCQF level 7 to 11.

Taught postgraduate students are entitled to:

- one assessment attempt for courses at SCQF level 9 to 12 unless specific Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements apply, in which case a maximum of four assessment attempts are permitted.

Application of the regulation

- 27.1 Boards of Examiners must publish the requirements for resits for those courses that they are responsible for. Boards must take the same approach to resits for all students on a particular course, except where a student's previous attempt is a null sit.
- 27.2 Boards of Examiners must set requirements at resit that are as demanding as those made of students at the first attempt.
- 27.3 Boards of Examiners will inform students who are required to undertake resit assessment of the format of their resit assessment. Resit methods need not be the same as those used to assess the learning outcomes at the first attempt, but all relevant learning outcomes must be assessed. Resit arrangements must

Taught Assessment Regulations extracts for Exceptional Circumstances policy

give students a genuine opportunity to pass the course. Boards of Examiners choose between two options to achieve this:

- (a) Carry forward any component of assessment (coursework or examination) that has been passed already and require the student to retake the failed element;
- (b) Set an assessment covering all learning outcomes for the course, and weight this as 100% of the course result.

- 27.4 Students are not allowed to resit a course or components of a course that they have passed, unless the relevant Board of Examiners has permitted this under Special Circumstances by granting a null sit for the attempt that the student has passed (see 27.9).
- 27.5 The four assessment attempts are the initial assessment and a maximum of three further assessment opportunities, of full assessment, examination or coursework only basis, at the next available opportunities. There may be PSRB requirements which mean that fewer than four assessment attempts are permitted.
- 27.6 The first sitting and subsequent attempts must take place over no more than two academic sessions, unless the relevant College grants an exemption.
- 27.7 Non-attendance or non-submission is considered an assessment attempt.
- 27.8 Some Honours programmes require students to pass specified courses at the first attempt in the first or second year in order to progress to Junior Honours. Any such requirements will be specified in the Degree Programme Table or Programme Handbook for the relevant programme.
- 27.9 Where an assessment attempt has been affected by special circumstances, a Board of Examiners may declare this attempt a null sit. Null sits do not count towards the maximum number of permitted attempts. Where a student receives a lower mark in a subsequent assessment attempt than that achieved in the attempt declared as a null sit, they may be awarded the higher mark for the relevant assessment.
- 27.10 Re-assessment attempts are not generally permitted for courses at SQCF level 9 and above for Honours and taught postgraduate students since Honours and taught postgraduate programmes permit the award of credit on aggregate (see Taught Assessment Regulations 52, 54, 56, 57). Where resits are permitted for Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body requirements, any classification decision must use the result obtained on the first attempt.
- 27.11 The Academic Policy and Regulations Committee decides whether a programme may offer resits which are required for Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body requirements for courses at SCQF level 9 and above for

Taught Assessment Regulations extracts for Exceptional Circumstances policy

Honours and taught postgraduate students. This decision is based on a case proposed by the relevant College.

27.12 Students who are subject to immigration control have restrictions on their entitlement to resit as a result of being in the UK on a Student visa. Students on a Student visa can only take a fourth assessment attempt where they have valid [special-Exceptional Ceircumstances](#) (in line with the [Special-Exceptional Circumstances Policy](#)), and specific additional conditions are met (as outlined below).

If a student on a Student visa does seek a fourth assessment attempt, they should apply for this via the [Special-Exceptional Circumstances](#) process. Where the student has valid [special-Exceptional Ceircumstances](#), the relevant Board of Examiners will determine what action to take. Where the Board of Examiners decides to award the student a null sit for the affected assessment attempt, this will not count as one of the four assessment attempts; null sits for any previous attempts are also not counted towards the total permitted attempts. Where the Board does not award a null sit, but wishes to offer the student a fourth assessment attempt, they may only do so where:

- i) the student has provided satisfactory '[greater weight](#)'[independent](#) evidence of their circumstances (~~in line with para 6.2 of the [Special Circumstances Policy](#)~~);
- ii) the circumstances that had disrupted the student's previous attempt(s) have been mitigated or no longer apply.

The Student Immigration Service provides advice and guidance to students and staff in relation to the immigration regulations. It is able to support students on Student visas should permission to undertake a fourth assessment attempt affect their visa status (for example, by requiring an extension), and can also support students to understand their immigration status in the event that they are not granted a fourth assessment attempt.

27.13 If repetition of the in-course assessed work is not possible outwith semester time, the student, with the permission of the relevant Head of School, may be allowed to repeat any coursework on its own in the following year. Students who do not receive such permission may be permitted by the relevant Head of School to repeat the course, including examination, in the following year.

27.14 The full range of marks offered by the relevant Common Marking Scheme is available at resit assessment. Resit marks are not capped.

27.15 Where a degree programme's Honours classification is based on the final year only, students are permitted a maximum of four assessment attempts for courses in non-final years.

Taught Assessment Regulations extracts for Exceptional Circumstances policy

27.16 In the case of collaborative degrees, where not otherwise stipulated in the collaborative agreement, any permitted resit attempt must be within two years of the first attempt.

Regulation 28 Late submission of coursework

Students need to submit assessed coursework (including research projects and dissertations) by the published deadline. [Where a student submits work late, this will normally lead to a marking penalty being applied. Under the Exceptional Circumstances policy, students meeting certain criteria may be permitted to submit work late without incurring a marking penalty:](#)

[LINK](#)

~~[Where the student meets the criteria for late submission, the Extensions and Special Circumstances Team will consider accepting late submission of up to seven calendar days without applying a penalty.](#)~~

Application of the regulation

28.1 If assessed coursework is submitted late without an ~~[agreed extension to the deadline for an accepted good reason](#)~~ [coursework extension request having been accepted](#), it will be recorded as late and a penalty will be applied by the School. The penalty applied is a reduction of the mark by 5% of the maximum obtainable mark per calendar day (e.g. a mark of 65% on the Common Marking Scheme scale would be reduced to 60% up to 24 hours later). This applies for up to seven calendar days (or to the time when feedback is given, if this is sooner), after which a mark of zero will be given. The original unreduced mark will be recorded by the School and the student informed of it.

28.2 Schools may choose not to permit the submission of late work for particular components of assessment where the specific assessment and feedback arrangements make it impractical or unfair to other students to do so. If Schools do not permit the submission of late work for particular components of assessment, they must publicise this to students on the relevant course.

~~28.3 Where Schools accept late submissions of coursework, the Extensions and Special Circumstances Team will consider cases for accepting late submissions up to a maximum of seven calendar days without applying a penalty. Schools will indicate where components of assessment have a maximum permitted extension of less than seven days. This will be in addition to any extensions offered in line with a student's Schedule of Adjustments. Students are responsible for submitting their requests in advance of the published deadline for the coursework, using the relevant online system.~~

~~28.4 The Extensions and Special Circumstances Team decides whether the student has provided an accepted reason to justify an extension.~~

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~~28.5—Self-certification will provide sufficient evidence in all circumstances. The Extensions and Special Circumstances Team are responsible for ensuring a record is kept of the decision and the information provided by the student with their request.~~

~~28.6—Accepted reasons for coursework extensions are unexpected short-term circumstances which are exceptional for the individual student, beyond that student's control, and which could reasonably be expected to have had an adverse impact on the student's ability to complete the assessment on time. Accepted reasons may include:~~

- ~~• Recent short-term physical illness or injury;~~
- ~~• Recent short-term mental ill health;~~
- ~~• A long-term or chronic physical health condition, which has recently worsened temporarily or permanently;~~
- ~~• A long-term or chronic mental health condition, which has recently worsened temporarily or permanently;~~
- ~~• The recent bereavement or serious illness of a person with whom the student has a close relationship;~~
- ~~• The recent breakdown in a long-term relationship, such as a marriage;~~
- ~~• Emergencies involving dependents;~~
- ~~• Job or internship interview at short notice that requires significant time, e.g. due to travel;~~
- ~~• Victim of a crime which is likely to have significant emotional impact;~~
- ~~• Military conflict, natural disaster, or extreme weather conditions;~~
- ~~• Experience of sexual harassment or assault;~~
- ~~• Experience of other forms of harassment;~~
- ~~• Exceptional and significant change in employment commitments, where this is beyond the student's control;~~
- ~~• Exceptional (i.e. non-routine) caring responsibilities;~~
- ~~• Severe financial difficulties;~~
- ~~• Exposure to a difficult/challenging home environment;~~
- ~~• Significant problems with access to teaching and learning materials, e.g. due to connectivity, power, or equipment issues;~~
- ~~• Catastrophic technical failure preventing submission of an online assessment by the relevant deadline;~~
- ~~• Lack of access to library resources, where there are no viable alternatives.~~

~~28.7—In addition to these unexpected circumstances, the Extensions and Special Circumstances Team will also consider requests for coursework extensions in relation to:~~

- ~~• A student's disability where the student's Schedule of Adjustments includes relevant provisions;~~

Taught Assessment Regulations extracts for Exceptional Circumstances policy

- ~~Representation in performance sport at an international or national championship level, in line with the University's Performance Sport Policy:~~
~~www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/performance_sport_policy.pdf~~

~~28.8 The following are examples of circumstances which are unlikely to be accepted reasons for coursework extensions:~~

- ~~A long term or chronic health condition (including mental ill health or similar ill health) which has not worsened recently or for which the University has already made a reasonable adjustment;~~
- ~~A minor short term illness or injury (e.g. a common cold), which would not reasonably have had a significant adverse impact on the student's ability to complete the assessment on time;~~
- ~~Occasional low mood, stress or anxiety;~~
- ~~Circumstances which were foreseeable or preventable;~~
- ~~Holidays;~~
- ~~Pressure of academic work (unless this contributes to ill health);~~
- ~~Poor time management;~~
- ~~Proximity to other assessments;~~
- ~~Lack of awareness of dates or times of assessment submission.~~

~~28.9 Where a student has a good reason for requiring a coursework extension of more than seven calendar days, the student should apply via the Special Circumstances process to request an alternate deadline. Accepted applications relating solely to extensions of more than seven days can be handled under the "expedited decisions" function of the Special Circumstances Policy (7.6).~~

Regulation 43 Special Exceptional circumstances

Where a student's performance in assessment has been affected by illness, accident or circumstances beyond their control, it is the student's responsibility to submit an application containing an account of these special Exceptional Circumstances, along with supporting evidence, for consideration by the Extensions and Special Exceptional Circumstances (ESC) service. ~~Where the ESC service accepts an application, it is referred to the relevant Board of Examiners, who decide what action to take.~~

Application of the regulation

43.1 The Special Exceptional Circumstances Policy sets out the arrangements for students to request consideration of special Exceptional Circumstances, types of circumstances which are and are not likely to be accepted by the ESC team, requirements for evidence to support special circumstances requests, the composition and operation of Special Exceptional Circumstances Committees, and the actions available to Boards of Examiners

Taught Assessment Regulations extracts for Exceptional Circumstances policy

(including Progression Boards) in relation to an accepted [Special-Exceptional](#)
Circumstances application. The policy is available at:
www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/special_circumstances.pdf[LINK](#)



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Equality Impact Assessment Template

Before carrying out EqIA, you should familiarise yourself with the University's EqIA Policy Statement and Guidance and Checklist Notes, and undertake our online training on Equality and Diversity and EqIA. These, along with further information and resources, are available at www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/equality-diversity/impact-assessment

EqIA covers policies, provisions, criteria, functions, practices and activities, including decisions and the delivery of services, but will be referred to as 'policy/practice' hereinafter.

A. Policy/Practice (name or brief description):

Exceptional Circumstances Policy

The University is committed to providing its students with a fair and consistent response to unexpected short-term circumstances which are exceptional, beyond their control and reasonably could be expected to have an adverse impact on the student's ability to complete an assessment.

The Exceptional Circumstances Policy has been developed to replace the University's existing policies on coursework extensions and Special Circumstances. Prior to the development of this policy, the two processes were handled and governed by two separate policies. This new policy brings these two elements of support into a single policy.

Students and staff have consistently raised concerns regarding the two policies prior to summer 2022. Two strands of work were simultaneously undertaken by the University to review these policies: a Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee task group to consider where policy changes may be necessary to alleviate these concerns; and a review of the ESC processes undertaken by Registry Services. The task group's findings were referred to the Deputy Secretary, Students who led further policy work alongside Heads of Schools and Colleges. The policy has undergone further development in response to comments raised by the University's approving authority, the Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee.

The University has undertaken benchmarking of similar policies at other UK institutions, including Russell Group institutions. Benchmarking has established that the Exceptional Circumstances Policy is in line with the status quo within the field with some elements of the policy standing out as sector leading.

B. Reason for Equality Impact Assessment (Mark **yes** against the applicable reason):

- Proposed new policy/practice **yes**
- Proposed change to an existing policy/practice
- Undertaking a review of an existing policy/practice
- Other (please state):

C. Person responsible for the policy area or practice:

Name: **Lisa Dawson**

Job title: **Academic Registrar**

School/service/unit: **University Secretary's Group**

D. An Impact Assessment should be carried out if any of the following apply to the policy/practice, if it:

- affects primary or high level functions of the University. **Yes**
- is relevant to the promotion of equality (in terms of the Public Sector Equality Duty 'needs' as set out in the Policy and Guidance)? **Yes**
- It is one which interested parties could reasonably expect the University to have carried out an EqlA? **Yes**

E. Equality Groups

To which equality groups is the policy/practice relevant and why? (add notes against the following applicable equality group/s)

Extensive consultation has been undertaken on the Exceptional Circumstances Policy with key stakeholders including the Students' Association and Disability and Learning Support Services providing specific input as representative of the wider student body and of specific protected characteristics. The Policy has undergone numerous revisions in response to feedback.

All nine of the protected characteristics will be discussed in reference to specific features of the policy, with any impacts noted, noting there is crossover between protected characteristics. Widening Participation (WP) students will also be discussed with impacts on this cohort also noted within the EQiA. Whilst WP students are not a protected characteristic, this particular cohort of students has been considered throughout policy development and the impact of the policy on this cohort is a high priority consideration.

The Exceptional Circumstances Policy is not expected nor designed to address any existing gaps in the support that is available via the University's existing student support.

The Exceptional Circumstances Policy is a mandatory policy for all staff and students and therefore has the potential to impact on all nine protected characteristics.

The Exceptional Circumstances Policy has streamlined what has previously been two separate policies (coursework extensions within the Taught Assessment Regulations and the Special Circumstances Policy) into a single Exceptional Circumstances Policy. This has a positive impact for all protected characteristics and WP cohorts as it simplifies the process and reduces the barriers to requesting outcomes via the Policy by preventing the need to engage with two separate policy documents.

The specific features of the policy which have the potential to impact on a number of the protected characteristics, and widening participation students are as follows:

Valid reason for a coursework extension: Mental ill health

The inclusion of mental ill health as a valid reason is expected to have a broadly positive impact on all protected characteristics and WP cohorts as it enables students to seek a coursework extension for short-term mental ill health. Students have a limited number of applications for a coursework extension (maximum of 3) under the Exceptional Circumstances Policy and it is anticipated that this is appropriate for supporting students through a period of short-term mental ill health. Where a student has exhausted these three applications, their circumstances are likely to go beyond those which are managed under this

policy, i.e. they are no longer short-term, unexpected circumstances, and they will be advised to seek further support via their Student Advisor or the University support systems including the Student Counselling Service.

We anticipate that this may be perceived by some students as having negative impact, as it may prevent students from managing their circumstances under the policy. As noted above, however, the policy is designed to address short-term circumstances, and is not an appropriate mechanism for support with longer-term or chronic ill health. It is desirable that students with longer-term mental ill-health engage with other sources of support, both within the University (e.g. DLSS and Counselling), and via statutory services, so that the University can make appropriate adjustments. We recognise that there exist for some protected groups, for example, under race, perceived barriers to accessing support for mental health difficulties. However, it remains the case that this policy is not designed for longer-term circumstances, so the priority for the University must be to address these barriers through the provision of the relevant services (i.e. DLSS, Counselling). The University is taking steps to do so, for example via the prioritised recruitment of Black and ethnic minority counsellors in the Student Counselling Service.

Students would continue to retain choice over whether to seek support via the University's support services and policies and it is reasonable that parameters are in place to ensure students are directed to appropriate support, rather than managing their circumstances via a policy which is not designed or intended to provide longer-term mental health support.

Valid reason for a coursework extension: Employment

The valid reasons for applying for Exceptional Circumstances include employment and this reason is available to all students who are in employment including full-time students. This is likely to have a positive impact on protected characteristics, and in particular age and WP cohorts. Based on benchmarking, Edinburgh is one of the only institutions that takes account of employment commitments, especially for full-time (as well as part-time) students. Feedback from the Students' Association has informed the approach to evidence for this category, and we have amended this to remove the requirement to provide an employer letter to support applications based on employment grounds.

There is likely to be a higher proportion of mature age and commuter students who are in paid employment, and therefore the inclusion of employment as a valid reason for exceptional circumstances is likely to have a positive impact on the protected characteristic of age and WP cohorts.

Coursework extensions: self-certified applications

The policy permits students to self-certify their applications for coursework extensions. Students will not be required to provide independent supporting evidence to substantiate an application for a coursework extension.

This will have a positive impact on all nine protected characteristics and WP cohorts as this alleviates the administrative burden, potential financial impact of seeking evidence and reduces potential barriers to seeking outcomes via this policy.

Coursework extensions: limit of three coursework extensions in an academic year

Students will be able to apply for coursework extensions on a maximum of three occasions in an academic year. Each application can cover any number of assessments during a period of up to four calendar days.

Once the limit of extensions has been reached, students will be able to seek support available under the Exceptional Circumstances element of the policy.

We expect that this limit will be perceived negatively by some students in all categories. However, we feel that it is justified in order to meet the aims of the policy to:

- Encourage students to make more appropriate use of extensions, rather than using them as a tool to manage deadlines;
- Ensure students are directed towards more appropriate forms of support for longer-term circumstances.

Data regarding usage of extensions from the 2022/23 session is provided below for categories of students where this is available:

Group	Average coursework extensions applications 2022/23
All students	2.78
Students with a disability	2.76
Students without a disability	2.79
Ethnicity "BAME"	3.06
Ethnicity "White"	2.55
WP students	2.68
Female students	2.81
Male students	2.73
"Other" sex	2.50

In all categories except for students identifying as BAME, the average number of applications per year was less than 3. Data for Semester 1 2023/24, which takes account of changes in default extension length offered in Colleges (CAHSS have moved to four days; CSE and CMVM 3 days) suggests a narrowing in the difference between students identifying as BAME (1.46) and those identifying as White (1.42), with both groups projected to come under an average of 3 for the full year. We do not regard the variation in the range of average numbers of applications for different categories of students as cause for concern in the context of the proposed policy on the basis that the difference is so marginal, in all cases rounding up or down to an average of 3 applications per year.

In all categories of students there will be individual students who apply for more extensions than the average, including a small proportion who apply for a very large number of extensions. For example, 701 students overall applied for 10 or more extensions in 2022/23. Students who currently make frequent use of extensions are likely to perceive as detrimental the reduction in their ability to allow for extensions. However, we consider this acceptable in line with the aims of the policy, and the steps we have taken to amend the policy during consultation. Students who have exhausted their coursework extensions allowance can still apply for Exceptional Circumstances, and if their application is accepted for an assessment which they submit late, they will receive early assurances that their late penalties will be removed. We have also developed evidence requirements which are flexible, and take account of the challenges for students in acquiring independent evidence.

Coursework extensions: Four calendar days

The number of days available for a coursework extension has been reduced from 7 calendar days to 4 calendar days within the Exceptional Circumstances Policy.

In 2023/24 a local decision was made across all Colleges to reduce the duration available for a coursework extension under the Taught Assessment Regulations. Two Colleges (CSE and CMVM) reduced coursework extensions to 3 calendar days. CAHSS reduced coursework extensions to 4 calendar days. As such, the change proposed will not be experienced by students as detrimental.

Based on data available via the ESC Dashboard, Colleges in which coursework extensions of 3 calendar days were offered during Semester 1 2023/24 have seen a 9-9.9% increase in Special Circumstances applications. Where coursework extensions of 4 calendar days were offered, however, there has been no increase in special circumstances applications. This

suggests, based on the data available, that a coursework extension of four calendar days is likely to be adequate for the majority of students.

The reduction in coursework extension does not impact on the duration of extra time adjustments available to students who have notified the University of a disability. These students are separately assessed by the Disability and Learning Support Services and may be entitled to an Extra Time Adjustment, which is separate and additional to any coursework extension which they may also be eligible for.

Coursework extensions: Seven calendar days

There remains provision for Schools and Deaneries to extend the default length of coursework extension to seven calendar days for some courses. Based on feedback, it is anticipated that this provision is likely to be used primarily by part-time programmes whose cohort is mostly mature age students who are working full-time alongside their studies.

This has the potential to have a positive impact on mature age and WP students, who juggle employment commitments alongside their studies.

This also has the potential to have a positive impact on female and WP students, who are more likely to juggle family and caring responsibilities alongside their studies.

Exceptional circumstances: medical evidence & expectations around seeking treatment

Where a student is seeking an outcome other than a coursework extension, the policy requires students to submit satisfactory supporting evidence with their request. This approach broadly aligns with that taken under the previous Special Circumstances Policy.

Under Exceptional Circumstances, greater clarity is provided to students who submit an Exceptional Circumstances request based on medical grounds. The policy allows for students to seek supporting evidence from relevant professionals, including University staff, and confirms that students are not expected to submit bespoke medical evidence, where this has not been routinely provided to them during the course of treatment. This is a lower threshold than has been required in the previous Special Circumstances policy, and is therefore expected to be achievable for the majority of students.

This is anticipated to have a positive impact on all nine protected characteristics, as well as WP students, as this reduces the administrative burden when applying for exceptional circumstances on medical grounds. This is also anticipated to reduce the likelihood of students having to pay fees to obtain medical documentation, and reduce the barriers of students being able to seek appropriate supporting evidence as University staff are able to provide evidence to support a student's application. This also increases the likelihood of students engaging with University support staff at a point where they are likely to need increased support, which is expected to be broadly to the student's benefit.

Exceptional circumstances: translations

Under Exceptional Circumstances, students are expected to submit supporting evidence in English, but may submit evidence in other languages with a translation provided by the student. Students are no longer expected to submit a certified translation of any supporting evidence.

This is anticipated to have a positive impact with regard to the race (including ethnicity and nationality) protected characteristic. This reduces the administrative burden of seeking certified translations of evidence when applying for exceptional circumstances. This is also anticipated to reduce the likelihood of students having to pay fees to obtain certified translations, and reduce the barriers of students being able to provide appropriate evidence to support an application.

Exceptional circumstances: expectations surrounding evidence for sexual or gender-based violence

Under Exceptional Circumstances, a student who experiences sexual or gender-based violence is not expected to provide any supporting evidence with their application. This clarifies the expectation for students who experience these circumstances and removes a potential barrier to students seeking support under exceptional circumstances due to sexual or gender-based violence where supporting evidence may not be available, and may cause additional distress to a student.

This is anticipated to have a positive impact for all students, but especially for female students under the sex protected characteristic, as well as transgender students under the gender reassignment characteristic, with these groups being the most likely to experience sexual or gender based violence.

Best academic interest

Under Exceptional Circumstances, a Board of Examiners must reach a decision which is in the best academic interest of the student. This builds upon the existing Special Circumstances Policy by strengthening the instruction provided to Boards around determining appropriate outcomes. Boards will apply whichever exceptional circumstances outcome(s) leads to a student achieving the best possible course or programme result, provided that this is consistent with the Board being satisfied that it has sufficient evidence of attainment of relevant learning outcomes (see 10.5), or of performance at the required level in the programme (see 10.6.2). This measure removes the potential for Boards to distinguish between the severity of impact of a student's circumstances on their studies. This leads to an overall equitable process which promotes good relations for all students as no one individual student or group will be unreasonably advantaged over another. This is anticipated to have a positive impact for all nine protected characteristics, including WP students.

The following will focus on the nine protected characteristics and outline any potential impact on specific groups:

Age

The policy does not limit or prejudice any student based on their age. Mature age students, including adult learners and Postgraduate Taught students, are more likely to have external factors which impact on their academic study, including caring responsibilities. There remains provision within the Exceptional Circumstances Policy for students to seek support where they are impacted by unexpected changes to caring responsibilities. However, this policy is not designed to provide targeted or holistic support to students who have caring responsibilities. The University has commissioned research into the needs of students with caring responsibilities, and expects to design a range of other measures to support this group.

Mature age students, including adult learners and Postgraduate Taught students, are more likely to be in employment, and those Postgraduate Taught students studying part-time programmes are more likely to be in full-time employment. The inclusion of employment as a valid reason for exceptional circumstances is likely to have a positive impact on this protected characteristic. Mature age students are generally also more likely to live further from University campuses and commute to study, and therefore any reduction in barriers to support such as lowering the threshold for evidence and increasing access to coursework extensions will have a positive impact on this protected characteristic

Disability

The policy does not limit or prejudice any student based on disability. The provision of appropriate support for disabled students is primarily offered via the Disability and Learning Support Service and the Schedule of Adjustments process. Under this process, students may receive an adjustment to aid them in the completion of assessments, in most cases via the

provision of an Extra Time Adjustment. The provision of Extra Time Adjustments is not covered by the Exceptional Circumstances Policy and is handled under a separate process. The Exceptional Circumstances Policy does, however, provide support to disabled students where they experience a flare up of their condition, or where there are delays to the application of adjustments which are no fault of the student. This aligns with the approach taken under the EC Policy's predecessors for coursework extensions and the Special Circumstances Policy. This will continue to have a positive impact on this protected characteristic by allowing for gaps in the Schedule of Adjustments support to be addressed under the Exceptional Circumstances Policy. In the 2022/23 academic year, 58.9% of undergraduate students with a disability (n=4063) applied for a coursework extension in comparison to 48.4% of undergraduate students without a disability (n=11,114).

Under the new Policy, students who experience a flare up of a chronic condition are required to provide medical evidence only once to support their Exceptional Circumstances. This reduces the barriers for disabled students seeking support under the policy by alleviating the requirement to provide evidence for each application and leading to a positive impact for this protected characteristic.

As noted above, based on 2022/23 data, students with disabilities made on average fewer applications (2.76) for extensions than students without disabilities (2.79). As such, we do not expect that the restriction on coursework applications should detrimentally affect disabled students, relative to other students. Moreover, for all students the policy includes provision for alternative outcomes where a student has exhausted their allowance for coursework extensions.

Race (including ethnicity and nationality)

The policy does not limit or prejudice any student based on race (including ethnicity and nationality). The change to permit students to submit self-translated evidence will have a positive impact on students within this protected characteristic by reducing the barriers to seeking support by alleviating the administrative burden of seeking certified translations and the financial impact of having documentation formally translated.

As outlined above in the section *Coursework extensions: limit of three coursework extensions in an academic year*, the average number of coursework extensions applications in 2022/23 for students in the BAME category was 3.06, which we have noted is a marginally higher average than for other categories. However, as explained above, we do not regard this as a cause for concern that students in this category will be treated detrimentally relative to other students. In this section, we have noted the steps taken to amend the policy and that further outcomes are available under Exceptional Circumstances for students who have exhausted their coursework extensions allowance.

Religion or belief

The policy does not limit or prejudice any student based on religion or belief. Students within this protected characteristic are not anticipated to experience any specific impact. Taught Assessment Regulation 25.2 outlines the means for seeking concessions where, due to religious reasons, a student's attendance at an examination is expected to be impacted.

Sex

The policy does not limit or prejudice any student based on sex. Women are statistically more likely to have a caring responsibility and therefore female students are more likely to have caring responsibilities. There remains provision within the Exceptional Circumstances Policy for students to seek support where they are impacted by unexpected changes to caring responsibilities. However, this policy is not anticipated nor designed to address an existing gap in the support available to students who have caring responsibilities and it is expected that any shortfall in support is to be addressed via other work being undertaken by the

University. The University has commissioned research into the needs of students with caring responsibilities, and expects to design a range of other measures to support this group.

As outlined under *Exceptional circumstances: expectations surrounding evidence for sexual or gender-based violence*, clarifying the expectations regarding evidence to support exceptional circumstances cases based on sexual and gender-based violence is expected to have a positive impact for this protected characteristic.

Sexual orientation

The policy does not limit or prejudice any student based on sexual orientation. Students within this protected characteristic are not anticipated to experience any specific impact.

Gender reassignment

The policy does not limit or prejudice any student based on gender reassignment..

As outlined under *Exceptional circumstances: expectations surrounding evidence for sexual or gender-based violence*, clarifying the expectations regarding evidence to support exceptional circumstances cases based on sexual and gender-based violence is expected to have a positive impact for this protected characteristic.

Pregnancy and maternity

The policy does not limit or prejudice any student based on pregnancy and maternity.

Students within this protected characteristic are not anticipated to experience any specific impact and the University has a Student Maternity and Family Leave Policy for students within this protected characteristic.

Marriage or civil partnership¹

The policy does not limit or prejudice any student based on marriage or civil partnership. Students within this protected characteristic are not anticipated to experience any specific impact.

Widening Participation

Widening Participation is outwith the protected characteristics, however due to the potential impact on this cohort, and for completeness this is being included.

The policy does not limit or prejudice any student based on widening participation status. There remains a gap in the provision of support for WP students. These students are not eligible for Extra Time Adjustments and therefore may use coursework extensions and special circumstances to help manage their circumstances. WP students are more likely to be disproportionately impacted by circumstances which are exceptional for the average student. At present, WP students could manage their circumstances via the existing coursework extensions and special circumstances policies. Data from 2022/23 indicates that the average number of coursework extension requests for WP students was lower (2.68) than for students without WP markers (2.78). We therefore have no specific reason to anticipate that the limit on the number of extensions will be detrimental to WP students, relative to other students. It is, moreover, desirable that WP students are directed to university support services for appropriate support to help them to manage their studies alongside their circumstances. This policy is not anticipated nor designed to provide tailored or holistic support to WP students, with this support being provided through other routes within the University.

Based on the statistics within the ESC Dashboard, WP Students are statistically more likely to apply for a coursework extension due to exceptional caring responsibilities, when compared with the remainder of the University population. There remains provision within the

¹ Note: only the duty to eliminate discrimination applies to marriage and civil partnership. There is no need to have regard to advancing equality or opportunity or fostering good relations in this respect.

Exceptional Circumstances Policy for students to seek support where they are impacted by unexpected changes to caring responsibilities.

WP students are also more likely to be in employment. The inclusion of employment as a valid reason for exceptional circumstances, including for students who are studying full-time, is expected to have a positive impact on this protected characteristic. The relaxation of the evidence requirement for applications based on employment reasons is anticipated to have a positive impact on this cohort, as it further reduces the barriers to seeking support via the policy.

WP students generally are also more likely to live further from University campuses and commute to study, and therefore any reduction in barriers to support such as lowering the threshold for evidence and increasing access to coursework extensions will have a positive impact on this cohort.

Add notes against the following applicable statements:

- **On any available information about the needs of relevant equality groups:**

Extensive consultation has been undertaken with the Students' Association who have provided input into the drafting of the policy. The Students' Association representative body includes section and liberation groups who represent students with protected characteristics, including those considered within this equality impact assessment.

Consultation has been undertaken with the University's Disability and Learning Support Service, Student Counselling Service and Student Wellbeing Service. These services have provided input into the drafting of the policy.

Student Systems has developed an ESC Strategic Data Dashboard which provides data and statistics regarding the usage of coursework extensions and special circumstances. This data has been useful in determining the average use for students, including those with protected characteristics.

- **Any gaps in evidence/insufficient information to properly assess the policy, and how this be will be addressed:**

Student Systems has established an ESC Strategic Data Dashboard which has been used to analyse the use of the existing coursework extensions and Special Circumstances policies. This data has been used in formulating the policy and has been reviewed in preparing this Equality Impact Assessment. This data has aided in aiming to project the impact of some of the measures within the policy on protected characteristics.

The ESC Strategic Data Dashboard is expected to continue to be a useful source of data in informing student usage of the Exceptional Circumstances Policy and monitoring the application of the policy on protected characteristics.

- **If application of this policy/practice leads to discrimination (direct or indirect), harassment, victimisation, less favourable treatment for particular equality groups:**

It is not anticipated that the policy would lead to direct or indirect discrimination, harassment, victimisation or less favourable treatment for any equality groups or Widening Participation students.

- **If the policy/practice contributes to advancing equality of opportunity²**

The Exceptional Circumstances policy is designed to prevent academic detriment to students of circumstances beyond their control. As noted above, we are aware that students in some protected characteristics are more likely to experience adverse circumstances affecting their

² This question does not apply to the protected characteristic of marriage or civil partnership

studies. As such, the policy is designed to advance equality of opportunity and outcomes for students.

- **If there is an opportunity in applying this policy/practice to foster good relations:**

The Exceptional Circumstances Policy is designed to take an equitable approach to adverse circumstances experienced by students and to determining the outcomes offered by the University in response to these circumstances. Specific consideration has been given to students with protected characteristics, including WP students, in formulating the approach and possible outcomes.

- **If the policy/practice create any barriers for any other groups?**

It is not anticipated that the policy would create any barriers for other groups, including Widening Participation students.

- **How the communication of the policy/practice is made accessible to all groups, if relevant?**

The communication of the new policy will be supported by the University's Communications and Marketing Team with dedicated resource provided to support the development and delivery of a communications plan to ensure the policy is well understood among all groups.

- **How equality groups or communities are involved in the development, review and/or monitoring of the policy or practice?**

Extensive consultation has been undertaken throughout the development and review of the Exceptional Circumstances Policy with the Students' Association and Disability and Learning Support Service consulted throughout. The Students' Association are responsible for representing all students and support Section and Liberation Groups who provide specific representation for certain categories of students.

- **Any potential or actual impact of applying the policy or practice, with regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and promote good relations:**

As detailed above, this impact assessment has identified any potential or actual impact on any groups through the application of the policy.

F. Equality Impact Assessment Outcome

Select one of the four options below to indicate how the development/review of the policy/practice will be progressed and state the rationale for the decision

Option 1: No change required – the assessment is that the policy/practice is/will be robust.

Significant amendments have been made to the proposed policy during its development. Based on these, we are confident that the policy is robust.

G. Action and Monitoring

1. Specify the actions required for implementing findings of this EqIA and how the policy or practice will be monitored in relation to its equality impact (or note where this is specified above).

Around one year after its introduction, we will review the implementation of the policy, taking account of data available through the ESC Strategic Data Dashboard, and feedback from students, Schools and Deaneries.

2. When will the policy/practice next be reviewed?

See above.

H. Publication of EqlA

Can this EqlA be published in full, now? Yes (once policy is approved)

If No – please specify when it may be published or indicate restrictions that apply: n/a

I. Sign-off

EqlA undertaken by (name(s) and job title(s)): Olivia Hayes, Academic Policy Officer

Accepted by (name):

TBC

Date: TBC (once policy is approved)

Retain a copy of this form for your own records and send a copy to equalitydiversity@ed.ac.uk

Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee

21 March 2024

Student Maternity and Family Leave policy

Description of paper

1. The paper proposes amendments to the Student Maternity and Family Leave policy, following the periodic review of the policy. The updated version of the policy, showing the amendments, is presented in Appendix 1. An updated Equality Impact Assessment is presented in Appendix 2.

Action requested / recommendation

2. The Committee is asked to **approve** the proposed amendments to the policy. Given that this policy is not dependent on the academic year cycle, the proposed date the policy would come into effect is 1 April 2024.

Background and context

3. This policy was first developed and approved in 2013, and has only had minor amendments since then. The policy was therefore in need of a significant review and refresh.

Discussion

4. The proposed amendments incorporate feedback received through consultation with the Students' Association, the Student Parent Action Group, the Widening Participation team, the Student Immigration Service and Legal Services, as well as discussions with stakeholders in Colleges and Schools who had provided feedback on this policy since its last review.
5. The majority of the proposed amendments relate to the reorganisation of the information, the rewording of sections for the purpose of clarity or comprehensiveness, and amendments required to bring it up to date with current practices and terminology used across the University. A smaller number of amendments relate to substantive changes in the policy (highlighted below as substantive amendments in *Table 1. Summary of amendments*).

Table 1. Summary of amendments
<p>Substantive amendment: Amendment to the title of the policy</p> <p>The proposed amendment is to replace 'family leave' with 'parental leave' since this is what the policy primarily focusses on. The policy included no definition of 'family leave', which allowed for confusion, and references to 'family leave' have therefore been reworded.</p>

Amendments to ‘Purpose’, ‘Overview’ and ‘Scope’ of the policy

These sections have been reworded in order to include students who are already parents at the start of their studies, not just students who become parents during their studies. There is also clarification that the policy also applies to guardians and students who have become parents by other means. The ‘Overview’ section now includes a definition of ‘parental leave’ for the purpose of the policy as including ‘adoption leave, partner leave following the birth of a child, or any other subsequent period of leave due to parental responsibilities’.

Reorganised headings and structure of the policy

Feedback from the consultation suggests that students and staff find the current policy difficult to navigate, and had difficulties finding particular information. The headings and structure of the policy have been reorganised to make it more user-friendly for students and staff, and now has the following sections:

- **Section A: Students who are to become parents**
 - o Pregnancy, wellbeing and health and safety
 - o Students living in University accommodation
 - o Maternity leave, parental leave and adjustments to programme of study
 - o Finance, funding and scholarships
 - o Students with student visa sponsorship
- **Section B: Applicants who are to become parents**
- **Section C: Resumption of studies following maternity leave or parental leave**
- **Section D: Support for parents**
 - o Sources of advice for student parents

Amendments throughout the policy

Amendments to wording to reflect the fact that being a parent, or becoming a parent, during your studies is not an exceptional or unexpected circumstance, and that the University is committed to supporting and providing adjustments for student parents.

Amendments to provide more clarity throughout that students who have a partner who is pregnant are also entitled to adjustments, parental leave and other aspects covered by the policy.

Amendments to acknowledge that students can become parents through ways other than pregnancy, and other means of becoming a parent, such as adoption, surrogacy, or being a guardian, have been added where appropriate.

Gendered language has been removed throughout the policy.

New section ‘Section A: Students who are to become parents’ (previously ‘Students and applicants who are to become parents’)

This section (2-21) aims to bring together the necessary information for students who are to become parents, including health and safety during pregnancy, circumstances such as living in student accommodation, or being on student exchange, as well as considerations regarding maternity or parental leave, finances and visa sponsorship.

Information for applicants moved to a new section (22) ‘Section B: Applicants who are to become parents’.

New sub-section on 'Pregnancy, wellbeing and health and safety'**Substantive amendment:**

(2) Acknowledgement that students may not wish to disclose their pregnancy to others. Additional information on advice and support to be provided by Schools in cases where students do disclose their pregnancy, including arrangements for maternity leave or other parental leave.

(3) School responsibilities for risk assessments (previously under 'health and safety') include reference to programmes of study involving laboratories, clinical settings, fieldwork or placements.

New sub-section on 'Students living in University accommodation' (previously under 'Health and Safety')

(5) New item which encourages students to notify Residence Life staff in order for appropriate adjustments to be made, if needed.

(6) Removed wording regarding pregnancy being an 'exceptional circumstance'.

Substantive amendment:

(7) Included all students who have parental responsibilities (rather than just birth parents) as students who would be entitled to adjustments to their accommodation.

Amendments to sub-section 'Maternity leave, parental leave and adjustments to programme of study' (previously 'Implications for programme of study')

(7) More comprehensive list of issues for students to discuss with their Student Adviser or Research Supervisor, bringing together information previously throughout the policy and some new information.

(8) Additional line to clarify that students are encouraged to take a period of leave beyond the minimum required.

(9) Clarification that the mechanism for maternity leave or any other parental leave is via an authorised interruption of study, and that this should be requested and approved following normal authorised interruption of study procedures.

Amendments to sub-section on 'Finance, funding and scholarships' (previously 'Finance')

Information has been reorganised under headings for undergraduate students and postgraduate students for ease of reference.

Substantive amendments:

Amendments in order to align with the position approved by the University Executive (15 February 2022 *Paper J Sick Leave and Parental Leave Policies for Doctoral Students*):

- (16) PGR students in receipt of a studentship, scholarship, or stipend with full maintenance from the University of Edinburgh will be entitled to the same terms and conditions for maternity leave, parental leave and maternity pay as those offered by the UK Research Councils;
- (17) For PGR students in receipt of a studentship, scholarship, or stipend with full maintenance from an external body which is administered by the University, and which does not cover the costs of maternity pay, the University will match the maternity pay offered by the UK Research Councils, as above.

(12-15) Names of teams to contact and contact pages within Registry Services have been updated.

Amendments to sub-section on ‘Students who have visa sponsorship’ (previously ‘Visa issues’)

(21) The information in this section has been simplified and agreed with the Student Immigration Service. The reference to visa rules at a given date has been removed, instead clarifying that visa-sponsored students must seek up-to-date advice from the Student Immigration Service. The name of the team and contact details for the Student Immigration Service have been updated.

New section: ‘Section B: Applicants who are to become parents’

(22) New section to separate out information that only applies to applicants

Amendments to ‘Section C: Resumption of studies following maternity or parental leave’ (previously ‘Resumption of studies’)

(23) Information has been moved to different sections, or simplified. Additional line to clarify that students who need to extend their period of maternity or parental leave should contact their Student Adviser or Research Supervisor.

New section: ‘Section D: Support for student parents’ (previously ‘Sources of advice for students’)

(24) New item to clarify that student parents who require a period of family leave should request this via an authorised interruption of studies.

Substantive amendment:

(25) New item to clarify the University position on children in public University spaces, and a proposed amendment to the University position on children in private University spaces, e.g. classrooms. The proposed amendment is to allow students, in an emergency situation only, to request to bring a child to a classroom or meeting, with defined parameters including exceptions to this and a non-exhaustive list of reasons why the request may be refused, e.g. health and safety. This amendment has been proposed following a number of discussions with the Students’ Association, the Widening Participation team and the Student Parent Action Group, including a survey of student parents with 130 responses conducted by the Student Parent Representative at the Students’ Association.

The consultation undertaken as part of the policy review has highlighted this as a position which students would like the University to consider in order to better support student parents and to reflect the University’s commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, and to its widening participation (WP) students. There is evidence from Schools and from students that some members of teaching staff are already allowing children in classrooms, and that some areas have implemented local arrangements and policies to allow for this, in contradiction with the current University policy. Staff in these situations considered that these temporary arrangements worked well, and students who benefited from this flexibility reported very positively on these experiences, explaining that they felt ‘seen’ and supported. The Students’ Association have made it clear they consider this an important issue, which they have raised with Academic Services since 2022.

The risk of implementing this amendment is considered minimal for the following reasons:

- the number of students this would apply to (on-campus students on taught programmes who are also parents of young children) is small;
- this flexibility is offered for emergency situations only, i.e. not for routine childcare;
- there is a list of non-exhaustive reasons for which the member of teaching staff is able to refuse the request

The benefits of implementing this amendment include:

- being able to address feedback from student parents and other groups regarding the gaps in support for student parents
- enacting the University's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and to its WP strategy
- providing a more consistent student experience

One of the risks of not implementing this amendment, and of retaining the status quo, is that students will experience different treatment depending on which School they are in, which member of teaching staff they ask, and whether or not they feel able to request this given the position in the current policy. As a consequence of this some students would be disadvantaged and we would not be providing a consistent student experience.

The benefits of implementing this amendment significantly outweigh any risks associated with it.

(26) The list of sources of advice for student parents has been updated. New sources added include the University Student Parents webpages, the Main Library Carer and Child Room and the Students' Association Student Parents' Community.

Resource implications

6. There are cost implications associated with the University's commitment to postgraduate research students in receipt of University scholarships or stipends, or external funding which is administered by the University, to match UKRI funding for maternity leave, parental leave and maternity pay. However the commitment to this resource was made by the University Executive on 15 February 2022 when it approved the Sick Leave and Parental Leave Policies for Doctoral Students, so the inclusion of this in the policy does not represent a commitment to new resource; it is simply reflecting the current commitment. Nevertheless, the inclusion of this information in the policy may highlight and improve consistency in its implementation, which may result in a small increase in expenditure for local areas. Experience from the Doctoral College suggests that much of this expenditure is likely to be covered by underspend on scholarships and stipends.

Risk management

7. The risks associated to the proposed amendments, including the risks of retaining the status quo, have been described in section 4. *Discussion* under the individual amendments. The overall risk of not approving an amended policy include the reputational risk of having a policy which is significantly outdated and does not match current practices across the University.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

8. The policy contributes to the following Sustainable Development Goals:
- SDG3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

- SDG4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Equality & diversity

9. Equality and diversity implications of the updated policy have been considered in an updated Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix 2).

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

10. Should the Committee approve the proposed policy, this would come into effect on 1 April 2024.

11. Academic Services will communicate the amendments to the policy via its standard communications regarding annual key changes to policies and regulations. It will also provide feedback to students and staff who took part in the consultation process. Once the policy were to come into effect, Academic Services will also update the published policy.

Author

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Freedom of Information *Open*

Student Maternity and Parental Family Leave Policy



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Purpose of Policy

The policy seeks to provide flexibility for students who are parents, or who become parents during the course of their studies, to ensure that they are not disadvantaged in their studies. This policy also seeks to provide flexibility to applicants who are to become parents before, or soon after, the start of their studies.

Overview

The policy provides guidance to students and staff on matters relating to students who are parents, as well as students and applicants who are pregnant, students and applicants who have a partner who is pregnant, or students who are to become parents through adoption, surrogacy or other means. For the purpose of this policy, parental leave includes adoption leave, partner leave following the birth of a child, or any other subsequent period of leave due to parental responsibilities.

Scope: Mandatory Policy

The policy applies to:

- Any student who is a parent or guardian;
- Any student who is pregnant during their studies;
- Any student who has a partner who is pregnant;
- Any student who is to become a parent or guardian during their studies, including through adoption, surrogacy or other means;
- Any applicant who is pregnant at the time of application; and
- Any applicant who has a partner who is pregnant at the time of application

Contact Officer

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Document control

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Approved:</u> 25.04.13 XXXXXX	<u>Starts:</u> 01.04.24	<u>Equality impact assessment:</u> 13.6.13 13.03.24	<u>Amendments:</u> 01.06.2017 25.05.2023	<u>Next Review:</u> 2027/28
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Approving authority

[Academic Policy and Regulations Committee](#)

Consultation undertaken

[Academic Policy and Regulations Committee, Students' Association, Widening Participation, Student Parent Action Group, Doctoral College, Student Immigration Services, Legal Services.](#)

Section responsible for policy maintenance & review

[Academic Services](#)

Related policies, procedures, guidelines & regulations

[N/A](#)

UK Quality Code

[N/A](#)

Policies superseded by this policy

[Maternity Leave policy for Postgraduate Students 2005](#)

Alternative format

[If you require this document in an alternative format please email \[Academic.Services@ed.ac.uk\]\(mailto:Academic.Services@ed.ac.uk\)](#)

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Keywords

Student pregnancy, student maternity leave, parental leave, adoption, childcare

DRAFT



Student Maternity and Parental Family Leave Policy

- 1 The University is committed to providing adjustments to students ~~to ensure that they are not disadvantaged in their studies due to pregnancy or adoption of a child who are parents, or who become parents during the course of their studies,~~ to ensure that ~~they are~~ they are not disadvantaged in their studies. This policy also seeks to provide adjustments to students and applicants who are pregnant or who have a partner ~~who~~ is pregnant.

Students or applicants to become parents

Section A: Students who are to become parents

Pregnancy, wellbeing and health and safety

- 2 ~~Students who are pregnant may or may not wish to disclose their pregnancy to others. Any student or applicant who is pregnant, who has a partner who is pregnant, has their pregnancy confirmed by a GP or midwife, is or who is to become a parent or guardian by other means, or is to adopt a child,~~ is encouraged to ~~report notify this to~~ their Student Adviser, ~~Postgraduate Director, or Research Supervisor, School Student Support Office or person nominated by their School~~ so that they can provide appropriate support and academic advice, including matters on health and wellbeing, maternity and parental leave, finance and scholarships, and signposting for visa advice.

- 3 The School will be responsible for ensuring that all necessary risk assessments are carried out to ensure that the student, or their ~~ir pregnancy unborn baby~~, are not at any additional risk. This is particularly important for students whose programme of study involves being in laboratories, clinical settings, undertaking fieldwork or placements.

- 2 ~~Where a student has their pregnancy confirmed whilst studying abroad or at a partner institution, they are encouraged to contact their Student Adviser, Research Supervisor, Student Exchange Coordinator or other person nominated by the School, in order to ensure that adequate steps are taken to support them.~~

- 3 ~~Please note: a student who is undertaking a programme of postgraduate study via a Postgraduate Sponsor has the sole responsibility to inform their Postgraduate Sponsor of any change of circumstance.~~

- 4 ~~Where an applicant notifies the University of their pregnancy, they are encouraged to discuss any possible implications for commencing their studies with Student Recruitment and Admissions. Applicants are entitled to request deferred entry; however deferral may not be possible in all cases, depending on the programme of study.~~

Students living in University accommodation

- 5 ~~Students living in University accommodation whilst pregnant, are encouraged to notify Residence Life staff in order for appropriate adjustments and risk assessments to be carried out, and to ensure that the accommodation provided to the student is appropriate.~~

- 6 ~~Students living in University accommodation who have given birth to a child, or who have parental responsibilities,~~ are entitled to be re-housed if their accommodation is unsuitable for infants or children. Should there be no suitable accommodation available, the student will be released from their lease and will not incur any penalties for non-fulfilment of the term of the lease, in order that the student may move to or seek other more suitable accommodation.



Student Maternity and Parental Family Leave Policy

- ~~67~~ The student will meet with their Student Advisers, Postgraduate Director, Research Supervisors, or another person nominated by their School, will arrange to meet with students who are pregnant, who have a partner who is pregnant, or who are to become parents by other means, in order to discuss: where the following issues should be addressed:
- Any necessary adjustments in order to attend medical appointments or antenatal classes throughout pregnancy, or to attend adoption placement meetings. If such appointments conflict unavoidably with lectures, tutorials or supervisory sessions, students will be entitled to flexible adjustments ask for flexibility in respect of this;
 - Whether an authorised interruption of studies will be required and, if so, for how long (an interruption would not normally exceed one academic year);
 - If assessments are pending, whether the student is fit to attend classes, attempt any the assessments pending, and if so, whether there are necessary adjustments to be put in place;
 - Any wellbeing issues and relevant health and safety issues (see section 2);
 - Arrangements for maternity leave, parental leave or adoption leave, including a proposed start and end date, which is to be submitted as an authorised interruption of studies request (see section 9). Authorised interruptions of study may have implications for visa sponsorship as well as fees and funding. Students who have visa sponsorship should seek advice from the Student Immigration Service at the earliest possible occasion (see section 21 Students who have visa sponsorship). Student Advisers should signpost students to sources of information and advice regarding fees and funding (see sections 11-20 Finance, funding and scholarships);
 - Any time off or possible modifications to attendance that might be required so that the student can attend medical appointments or antenatal classes;
 - Any steps to be taken to support a smooth return to study following the a period of leave, including support and facilities available upon the return to study;
 - Any advice on self-guided study for the a period of leave, where the student requests this.

~~6~~ Students whose partner is pregnant, or who are to adopt a child, are entitled to request adjustments. These may include permissible absence for medical and antenatal appointments prior to and after the birth, and a period of absence at the time of birth or adoption. If such appointments conflict unavoidably with lectures, tutorials or supervisory sessions, students will be entitled to ask for flexibility in respect of this.

- 8 Students who have given birth must should not return to the University within two weeks after the birth of their child, as outlined in s.8(b) of the 'Maternity and Parental Leave (etc) Regulations 1999': www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/1999/3312/contents/made. All students who are to become parents are encouraged to consider taking a period of maternity or parental leave (including adoption leave) beyond the minimum two weeks, and to agree the period of interruption of studies with their Student Adviser or Research Supervisor, prior to the birth or adoption of the child.

- 79 The mechanism used to enable a period of student maternity leave or parental leave (including adoption leave) is an authorised interruption of studies. Students may also apply for an authorised interruption of studies due to parental responsibilities at other times. Students should provide the necessary information in the interruption of studies request form, which will be reviewed and approved following the standard procedures.

- 810 A written record of the aAny agreed adjustments should be produced and retained recorded on the student's record by the Student Adviser or Research Supervisor, following standard procedures, student and the relevant administrator with responsibility for the student's programme of study.



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Please note—~~Student Advisers or Research Supervisors would not be responsible for granting interruption of studies to Postgraduate Students. In these instances, the normal interruption of studies procedure for Postgraduate Students should be followed.~~

~~Where a student intends to take an interruption of studies, the Student Adviser, Postgraduate Director, or Research supervisor will discuss with the student any steps which may be taken to support a smooth return to study following the period of interruption. This may include offering advice on self-guided study where the student requests this, and discussing what academic support will be offered on the student's return to study.~~

Finance, funding and scholarships

~~911~~ ~~It is recommended that any s~~Students taking an authorised interruption of studies due to maternity leave or other parental leave should contact the Fees and Student Support Team (<https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-funding/contact>) ~~Student Administration~~ (www.ed.ac.uk/student-administration) ~~about the possible effect on to discuss any fee implications and confirm the~~any fees to be charged when they resume their studies ~~resumes~~.

Undergraduate students

~~4012~~ Undergraduate students in receipt of funding should contact their funding body for advice on fee and loan related issues, and notify them of any period of maternity leave or other parental leave.

- Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS): www.saas.gov.uk/
- Student Loans Company (SLC): www.slc.co.uk/
- The Advice Place can provide advice to students on a number of finance related issues: www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/advice/
- For queries relating to impact on fee liability, student should contact fees@ed.ac.uk or see <http://www.ed.ac.uk/student-funding/tuition-fees/undergraduate/fee-policy>

~~4413~~ Lone Parents' Grant: Undergraduate students from Scotland who are lone parents with at least one dependent child can apply to the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) for the Lone Parents' Grant. More information is available from www.saas.gov.uk/.

~~4214~~ Lone Parents' Childcare Grant: In addition to the Lone Parents' Grant, undergraduate students can receive financial assistance for formal childcare costs such as childminders, after school clubs and providers of day care and pre-school education through the Lone Parents' Childcare Grant. More information is available via the Scholarships and Financial Support Team (<https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-funding/contact>)

~~4315~~ Childcare Fund: Means-tested childcare funds are available for undergraduate students using registered childcare. More information is available via the Scholarships and Financial Support Team (<https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-funding/contact>)

Postgraduate students

16 Postgraduate research students who are in receipt of a studentship, scholarship or stipend with full maintenance from the University of Edinburgh will be entitled to the same terms and conditions for maternity and parental leave, and maternity pay, as those offered by the UK Research Councils as outlined in their Research Council Training Grant Guide. <https://www.ukri.org/apply-for-funding/before-you-apply/your-responsibilities-if-you-get-funding/meeting-ukri-terms-and-conditions-for-funding/>



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- 17 For postgraduate research students who are in receipt of a studentship, scholarship or stipend with full maintenance from an external body which is administered by the University, and which does not cover the costs of maternity and parental leave, the University will match the maternity and parental leave funding offered by the UK Research Councils (see section 16).
- 18 Postgraduate taught and research students who are in receipt of funding from external bodies which is not administered by the University should contact their funding body for advice on funding related issues. Students undertaking a programme of study via a Postgraduate Sponsor have the responsibility to inform their Postgraduate Sponsor of any change of circumstance, including notification of maternity leave or other parental leave.
- ~~4419~~ Any student who is also an employee of the University should contact HR for advice on their any entitlement to maternity pay, maternity leave or parental leave. Further Information on sources of information for financial support for students with children can be found at: www.ed.ac.uk/student-funding/financial-support/students-children The Advice Place: www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/advice/ www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/adviceplace/money/benefits/studentparents
- ~~4520~~ Please note that childcare fund awards are not available to postgraduate students, unless the student is in receipt of a postgraduate tuition fee loan from the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS).

Study-abroad

- ~~16~~ Where a student has their pregnancy confirmed whilst studying abroad, they are encouraged to contact their Student Adviser, Postgraduate Director, Research Supervisor or person nominated by their School to ensure that adequate steps are taken to make necessary adjustments.

Health and Safety

- ~~17~~ Where a student informs the University of their pregnancy, there are health and safety issues that the University must take into consideration in order to protect the mother and unborn baby:
- ~~• The Student Adviser, Postgraduate Director, Research Supervisor or person nominated by the School must ensure that the relevant health and safety staff within the School/College are informed so that, where necessary, a risk assessment can be carried out; the risk assessment will take account of the requirements for the student's programme of study and determine whether any adjustments need to be made;~~
 - ~~• If the student is resident in University accommodation whilst pregnant, in order for appropriate adjustments to be made, informing Accommodation Services of their pregnancy can ensure that the accommodation provided to the student is appropriate;~~
 - ~~• Accommodation Services consider a student who has given birth to a child to have 'Exceptional Circumstances', and as such would seek to re-house a student staying in unsuitable University accommodation to a more suitable arrangement. Should this prove impossible, the student will be released from their lease and will not incur any penalties for non-fulfilment of the term of the lease, in order that the student may move to or seek other more suitable accommodation.~~
 - ~~• If the student requires, the Student Adviser, Postgraduate Supervisor or person nominated by their School will advise on appropriate adjustments and provisions to allow the student to breastfeed or express milk. The University must provide space to~~



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~~accommodate breastfeeding.~~

Students with student visa sponsorship

~~1821~~ Students ~~in receipt of studying at Edinburgh under a~~ University ~~S~~student ~~v~~Visa sponsorship ~~must seek up-to-date immigration advice from the Student Immigration Service-~~ will need to consider the ~~length of maternity/paternity/adoption leave depending upon;~~ who will provide a confidential and supportive service, including written advice, to set out possible options for students and ~~staff who are supporting them.~~ Under UK Home Office regulations ~~as of March 2024,~~ students cannot extend their student visa for reasons relating to pregnancy ~~or maternity.~~ There are no concessions within the ~~S~~student ~~V~~visa rules specifically allowing for maternity ~~or parental~~ leave. The ~~maximum~~ period of ~~authorised~~ interruption of study will be considered on an individual basis but is similarly limited by UK Home Office regulations. ~~Student Immigration~~ Advisors can be contacted at visahelp@ed.ac.uk and further details are available on the Student Immigration Service webpages: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-administration/immigration/contact-us>

- ~~• The timing of any interruption of studies;~~
- ~~• The due date;~~
- ~~• Academic programme type and semester dates;~~

~~Students on Student Visas who become pregnant during their studies must seek up-to-date immigration advice from the International Student Advisory Service at Edinburgh Global. Advisers will provide a confidential and supportive service, including written advice, to set out possible options for students and their academic supervisors. Under rules as of April 2017, students cannot extend their visa for reasons relating to pregnancy or maternity. The maximum period of approved authorised interruptions of studies will be considered on an individual basis but is similarly limited by Home Office regulations. Advisors can be contacted through visahelp@ed.ac.uk~~

Section B: Applicants who are to become parents

~~22~~ ~~Where an applicant notifies the University of their pregnancy, they are encouraged to discuss any possible implications for commencing their studies. Applicants who are pregnant, or who have a partner who is pregnant, are encouraged to notify Student Recruitment and Admissions and, where appropriate, Residence Life.~~ Applicants are entitled to request deferred entry; however deferral may not be possible in all cases, depending on the programme of study.

Section C: Resumption of studies following maternity or parental leave

~~23~~ The student will be responsible for confirming ~~that whether or not~~ they are ready to resume their studies at the end of ~~their-any~~ agreed period of interruption. ~~They should inform their Student Adviser, Postgraduate Director, or Research Supervisor that they are to return so that the appropriate arrangements can be made in terms of course enrolments, etc.~~ Directly before, or as soon as ~~is~~ practicable after their return, the student should meet with their Student Adviser, ~~Postgraduate Director,~~ or Research Supervisor to ensure that appropriate academic ~~and pastoral~~ support is provided, and any necessary adjustments are made to facilitate a smooth return to their programme of study. ~~Students are reminded that it is not permitted to bring children into classes. Students who need to extend their period of maternity or parental leave should contact their Student Adviser or Research Supervisor to~~

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discuss this.

Section D: Support for parents

24 Student parents who require a period of leave due to caring responsibilities should request this via an authorised interruption of studies, following the standard procedures. Students who are in receipt of funding from external bodies or who have visa sponsorship should seek advice on any funding or visa implications in relation to taking an authorised interruption of study (see section *Students with student visa sponsorship*).

25 Students may bring children into public areas of the University. Students are not routinely permitted to bring children into classrooms, and must ensure that they have suitable childcare arrangements in place at times when they have scheduled teaching or research activities. In an emergency situation, students may request to the relevant member of teaching staff to bring a child to a classroom or to a one-to-one meeting in advance of the start of the class or meeting, with as much notice as possible. For health and safety reasons, children are not allowed in areas such as, but not limited to, laboratories or equipment rooms, clinical spaces, animal houses or art studios. Lecturers or tutors should consider requests on a case-by-case basis. Where a request is refused, the member of staff should provide an explanation, which may include, but is not limited to, one or more of the following reasons:

- There are health and safety concerns;
- The topic of the lecture would be inappropriate for a child;
- The child has been excluded from school or nursery because they have an infectious condition;
- There is not sufficient capacity in the teaching space to accommodate the child, where the child is not 'in arms' or on their parent's lap.

Where exceptions have been granted to allow children in the classroom, and a child is making noise or disturbance, the student must immediately exit the room with the child. In all circumstances students are wholly responsible for the supervision of their children. Students must ensure the safety of their children at all times and children must never be left unattended.

Finance

19 Undergraduate students in receipt of funding should contact their funding body for advice on fee and loan related issues.

- Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS): www.saas.gov.uk/
- Student Loans Company (SLC): www.slc.co.uk/
- The Advice Place can provide advice to students on a number of finance related issues: www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/advice/
- For queries relating to impact on fee liability, student should contact fees@ed.ac.uk or see <http://www.ed.ac.uk/student-funding/tuition-fees/undergraduate/fee-policy>

20 Postgraduate taught and research students who are in receipt of funding from external bodies should contact them for advice on funding related issues. The University will not be liable if an external funding body does not cover Maternity costs. Where a student is also an employee of the University, they should contact HR for advice on any entitlement to Maternity pay.

- The Advice Place can provide advice to students on a number of finance related issues: www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/advice/

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~~21— Information on sources of financial support for students with children can be found at: www.ed.ac.uk/student-funding/financial-support/students-children:~~

~~Please note that Childcare fund awards are not available to postgraduate students, unless the student is in receipt of a Postgraduate tuition fee loan from the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS).~~

~~22— Lone Parents Grant— Undergraduate students from Scotland who are lone parents with at least one dependent child can apply to the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) for the Lone Parents' Grant. More information is available from www.saas.gov.uk/.~~

~~23— Lone Parents Childcare Grant— In addition to the Lone Parents Grant, undergraduate students can receive financial assistance for formal childcare costs such as child minders, after school clubs and providers of day care and pre-school education through the Lone Parents Childcare Grant. More information is available via email to studentfunding@ed.ac.uk~~

~~24— Childcare Fund— Means tested Childcare funds are available for undergraduate students using registered childcare. More information is available via email to studentfunding@ed.ac.uk~~

~~25— It is recommended that any student taking an interruption of studies should contact Student Administration (www.ed.ac.uk/student-administration) about the possible effect on the fees to be charged when study resumes.~~

Visa issues

~~26— Students studying at Edinburgh under University Student Visa sponsorship will need to consider the length of maternity/paternity/adoption leave depending upon:~~

- ~~• The timing of any interruption of studies;~~
- ~~• The due date;~~
- ~~• Academic programme type and semester dates;~~

~~27— Students on Student Visas who become pregnant during their studies must seek up-to-date immigration advice from the International Student Advisory Service at Edinburgh Global. Advisers will provide a confidential and supportive service, including written advice, to set out possible options for students and their academic supervisors. Under rules as of April 2017, students cannot extend their visa for reasons relating to pregnancy or maternity. There are no concessions within the Student Visa rules specifically allowing for maternity leave. The maximum period of approved authorised interruptions of studies will be considered on an individual basis but is similarly limited by Home Office regulations. Advisers can be contacted through visahelp@ed.ac.uk~~

~~28— The visa implications of a maternity/paternity/adoption leave should be considered at the earliest possible opportunity and it is vital therefore that the International Student Advisory Service are included in discussions relating to any absence due to pregnancy. They can be contacted at isas@ed.ac.uk~~

~~(<http://www.ed.ac.uk/global/student-advisory-service>)~~

Sources of advice for students [parents](#)

~~29~~~~26~~ The following [sources](#) [links](#) may provide useful information.

- ~~• University Student Parents webpages: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/health-wellbeing/student->~~



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parents

- University Health Service: www.health-service.ed.ac.uk/
- ~~The Advice Place (Advice Places are located at the Students' Association in Bristo Square and KB House, Kings Buildings, West Mains Road):-~~
www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/advice/
<https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/adviceplace/money/benefits/studentparents>
- ~~Details of childcare facilities available at the University are as follows:-~~
www.ed.ac.uk/studying/undergraduate/facilities/childcare
- ~~There are also numerous council approved nurseries within the city of Edinburgh. Please consult~~ www.scottishfamilies.gov.uk for more information.

Edinburgh Global: <http://global.ed.ac.uk>

- ~~International Student Centre:~~ <http://www.ed.ac.uk/global/student-advisory-service/social-connections/isc>
- ~~Childcare Student Parent Facilities on campus at the University of Edinburgh:~~
www.ed.ac.uk/studying/undergraduate/facilities/childcare
<https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/health-wellbeing/student-parents/student-parent-facilities-on-campus>
- ~~Main Library Carer and Child Room:~~ <https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/students/study-space/carer-child-room>
- ~~Students' Association Student Parents' Community:~~
<https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/activities/view/StudentParentsCommunity>
- ~~Council approved nurseries:~~ <https://www.mygov.scot/nursery-place>
- ~~Scholarships and Student Funding Services:~~ <https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-funding>
www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-funding/home
- NHS (National Health Service) Scotland: www.nhsscotland.com/
- ~~NHS 24, a 24 hour contact and advisory service — 111~~

[Insert approval date]



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Equality Impact Assessment Template

Before carrying out EqIA, you should familiarise yourself with the University's EqIA Policy Statement and Guidance and Checklist Notes, and undertake our online training on Equality and Diversity and EqIA. These, along with further information and resources, are available at www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/equality-diversity/impact-assessment

EqIA covers policies, provisions, criteria, functions, practices and activities, including decisions and the delivery of services, but will be referred to as 'policy/practice' hereinafter.

<p>A. Policy/Practice (name or brief description): Student Maternity and Family Leave policy</p>
<p>B. Reason for Equality Impact Assessment (Mark yes against the applicable reason):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertaking a review of an existing policy/practice
<p>C. Person responsible for the policy area or practice:</p> <p>Name: Lisa Dawson</p> <p>Job title: Academic Registrar</p> <p>School/service/unit: Registry Services</p>
<p>D. An Impact Assessment should be carried out if any of the following apply to the policy/practice, if it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • affects primary or high level functions of the University - Yes • is relevant to the promotion of equality (in terms of the Public Sector Equality Duty 'needs' as set out in the Policy and Guidance)? - Yes • It is one which interested parties could reasonably expect the University to have carried out an EqIA? - Yes
<p>E. Equality Groups</p> <p>To which equality groups is the policy/practice relevant and why? (add notes against the following applicable equality group/s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • age – the policy applies to all students who are parents, or who are to become parents; and students of all age groups may be parents. This assessment has not identified any differential impact of this policy for students of any particular age group. • disability – students with disabilities who are parents, or who are pregnant, are likely to have different experiences to student parents with no disabilities, due to intersectionality factors. The nature of these experiences, and the challenges that may arise as a result of these, will be dependent on the type of disability. Some

examples are listed below, although it should be noted that this is an illustrative rather than an exhaustive list:

- students with particular health conditions are more likely to suffer pregnancy or labour complications;
- students with depression are more likely to suffer from post-natal depression;
- students with mobility issues may have additional challenges both during pregnancy and post-birth

It is also important to consider that student parents who have children with disabilities will have different experiences and challenges.

Both of these groups (i.e. student parents with disabilities and student parents with children with disabilities) are more likely to benefit from flexible arrangements outlined in some of the amendments to the policy, e.g. allowing students, in an emergency situation, to bring a child to a classroom or to a 1-1 meeting.

The policy aims to be as inclusive as possible to all students, and encourages students to meet with their Student Adviser or Research Supervisor to discuss any adjustments needed to their programme of study, and as well as health and wellbeing issues.

- **race (including ethnicity and nationality)** – students of non-UK nationality will usually require a student visa in order to study at the University. The UK Home Office imposes limitations regarding the duration of periods of authorised interruption of study (AIS) for students on student visas. Given that AIS is the mechanism used within the University to enable a period of maternity or parental leave, students who have student visas will have limitations on the duration of the period of maternity or parental leave to which students who do not have a visa are not subject. The UK Home Office regulations are, however, outwith the University's control so this is an impact for which there is little mitigation. The policy is clear that students who have a student visa should seek advice from the Student Immigration Service at the earliest opportunity.

Students of non-UK nationality are also less likely to have support from family or friends nearby who can help with emergency childcare situations, given that they are living away from their home country. They are therefore more likely to benefit from flexible arrangements outlined in some of the amendments to the policy, e.g. allowing students, in an emergency situation, to bring a child to a classroom or to a 1-1 meeting.

- **religion or belief** - the policy applies to students of all religions or none. Students of all religious groups, including no religion, may be parents. This assessment has not identified any differential impact of this policy for students of any particular religion.
- **sex** – aspects of the policy that relate specifically to pregnancy will affect only female students, but the majority of aspects of the policy affect all students regardless of sex.¹ Enquiries received in relation to the policy over the years indicate that male, or non-biological, student parents were unclear to what extent the policy applied to them. The amendments to the policy clarify the aspects that apply to all student parents, or students who are to become parents, regardless of whether or not they are the birth parent.

¹ The Equality Impact Assessment guidance requires the consideration of protected characteristics as defined under the Equality Act (2010). This section therefore considers sex as defined under the Equality Act (2010). Considerations specific to transgender students are included alongside LGBT+ students under the protected characteristics of sexual orientation and gender reassignment.

Historically, women have been more likely to be primary care-givers, and to be disadvantaged in their education and careers after having children. While there have been improvements to address this over the past decades, it is generally accepted that this situation persists to some extent today. Female students are therefore more likely to benefit from flexible arrangements outlined in some of the amendments to the policy. The amendments to the policy to clarify aspects that apply to all students, regardless of whether or not they are the birth parent, should be beneficial to both male and female students as this promotes gender equality and a more balanced distribution of parental responsibilities.

- **sexual orientation** – LGBT+ students who are parents are likely to have different experiences and challenges to non-LGBT+ student parents due to socio-cultural and intersectionality factors. For example, LGBT+ students are more likely to become parents via assisted reproduction, or through adoption, surrogacy or foster care. The amendments to the policy clarify that the policy applies to all student parents, or students who are to become parents, regardless of the means to parenthood. The policy aims to be as inclusive as possible to all students, and encourages students to meet with their Student Adviser or Research Supervisor to discuss any adjustments needed to their programme of study, and as well as health and wellbeing issues.
- **gender reassignment** – students who have gone through gender reassignment and who are parents are likely to have different experiences and challenges to non-LGBT+ student parents due to socio-cultural and intersectionality factors. The amendments to the policy have removed gendered language in order to make the policy more inclusive. The policy aims to be as inclusive as possible to all students, and encourages students to meet with their Student Adviser or Research Supervisor to discuss any adjustments needed to their programme of study, and as well as health and wellbeing issues.
- **pregnancy and maternity** – the policy explicitly covers students who are pregnant or who are mothers, and considers various circumstances in relation to pregnancy and maternity, including:
 - health and safety during pregnancy
 - health and wellbeing
 - adjustments to programme of study in order to support students with issues related to pregnancy or maternity
 - maternity and parental leave
 - other periods of leave due to parental responsibilities

It is worth noting that amendments to the policy clarify that many of the considerations above also apply to non-birth parents, and that including non-birth parents as eligible for this support is beneficial to students who are pregnant or who are mothers, as it helps to distribute parental responsibilities.

- **marriage or civil partnership**² – the policy applies to all students who are parents, or who are to become parents, regardless of marriage or civil partnership status. This assessment has not identified any differential impact of this policy for students of a particular marriage or civil partnership status.

Add notes against the following applicable statements:

- **On any available information about the needs of relevant equality groups:**
As noted above, students of all equality groups may be student parents and therefore the policy aims to consider the needs of all equality groups. Particular consideration is

² Note: only the duty to eliminate discrimination applies to marriage and civil partnership. There is no need to have regard to advancing equality or opportunity or fostering good relations in this respect.

given to the protected characteristic of pregnancy and maternity, and some aspects of the policy are specific to pregnancy and/or maternity (e.g. health and safety during pregnancy, maternity pay). Throughout the review of the policy, consultation has taken place with the following groups in order to better understand the needs of student parents:

- Students' Association
 - Student Parent Action Group, including a survey of student parents
 - Widening Participation team
 - A number of schools and staff who support student parents
-
- **Any gaps in evidence/insufficient information to properly assess the policy, and how this will be addressed:** The University does not routinely collect data on whether or not students are parents. Throughout the consultation, estimates given by staff and students suggest that the population of student parents may be in the region of 2,000-3,000 students, although there is no means by which to ascertain this. This lack of information limits the insight of this assessment on the differential impact of the policy on different equality groups which the University does have data on, e.g. age, disability, race or ethnicity. Nevertheless, given that the policy applies to all students, and that students of all equality groups may be parents, the aim of the policy is to be as inclusive as possible of all equality groups. Feedback from the consultation also suggests that students do not consider it necessary for the University to collect data on whether or not students are parents, and that the focus should be on ensuring that policies and practices do not disadvantage students due to pregnancy or parenthood. This impact assessment considers therefore that the gaps in the data do not preclude the fair assessment of the policy.
 - **If application of this policy/practice leads to discrimination (direct or indirect), harassment, victimisation, less favourable treatment for particular equality groups:** This impact assessment considers that the policy as amended should not have a negative impact on any of the equality groups.
 - **If the policy/practice contributes to advancing equality of opportunity³:** Yes. As described in the 'Purpose of policy' section, "the policy seeks to provide flexibility for students who are parents, or who become parents during the course of their studies, to ensure that they are not disadvantaged in their studies". The amendments to the policy contribute to advancing equality of opportunity by providing more flexibility, highlighting sources of support, and by clarifying the University's commitment to offering maternity pay for postgraduate students in receipt of a studentship, scholarship, or stipend with full maintenance from the University of Edinburgh.
 - **If there is an opportunity in applying this policy/practice to foster good relations:** Yes. There are opportunities in the policy to offer more flexible arrangements to students who are parents, or who are to become parents, which are reflected in the amendments to the policy.
 - **If the policy/practice create any barriers for any other groups?** This impact assessment considers that the policy as amended does not introduce additional barriers for any student groups.
 - **How the communication of the policy/practice is made accessible to all groups, if relevant?** Academic Services will communicate the amendments to the Student Maternity and Family Leave policy to key staff in Schools and Colleges in its annual update of policies. Academic Services will also communicate the amendments to the

³ This question does not apply to the protected characteristic of marriage or civil partnership

various stakeholders involved in the consultation, including the Students' Association. The policy can also be made available in different formats upon request.

- **How equality groups or communities are involved in the development, review and/or monitoring of the policy or practice?** The amendments to the policy have been developed through a wide consultation process, including meetings with the Student Parent Action Group, the Students' Association VP Welfare and the Widening Participation team, as well as a number of Schools and staff who support student parents.

The policy is considered and approved by the Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC). APRC membership includes representation of the Students' Association, The Advice Place, the three Colleges and Senate.

- **Any potential or actual impact of applying the policy or practice, with regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and promote good relations:** This impact assessment has identified no negative impact on any groups that would derive from the proposed amendments. As detailed under *Section E: race (including ethnicity and nationality)* there is a continued impact on students of non-UK nationality who have student visas, given that the UK Home Office regulations have limitations on the duration of interruptions of studies and that these regulations do not make concessions for maternity or parental leave. Given that this is outwith the University's control, there is limited mitigation for this beyond making it clear that students who have a student visa should seek advice from the Student Immigration Service at the earliest opportunity.

F. Equality Impact Assessment Outcome

Option 1: No change required – the assessment is that the policy/practice is/will be robust.

G. Action and Monitoring

1. **Specify the actions required for implementing findings of this EqlA and how the policy or practice will be monitored in relation to its equality impact (or note where this is specified above).** If the amendments to the policy are approved, no change in current practice required.
2. **When will the policy/practice next be reviewed?** The expected date for the next review of the policy is 2027/28.

H. Publication of EqlA

Can this EqlA be published in full, now? Yes (once the policy is approved)

If No – please specify when it may be published or indicate restrictions that apply: n/a

I. Sign-off

EqlA undertaken by (name(s) and job title(s)): Cristina Matthews, Academic Policy Officer

Accepted by (name):
TBC

Date: TBC (once policy has been approved)

Retain a copy of this form for your own records and send a copy to equalitydiversity@ed.ac.uk

Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee**21 March 2024****Undergraduate Degree Regulations 2024/25****Description of paper**

1. This paper contains the draft Undergraduate Degree Regulations for 2024/25. A “Key Changes” section is included to draw the Committee’s attention to the key changes. The Undergraduate Degree Regulations contribute to the University’s Teaching and Learning focus of Strategy 2030.

Action requested / recommendation

2. For discussion and recommendation to Court. The Degree Regulations are approved via the Court Resolution process.

Background and context

3. The Degree and Assessment Regulations are reviewed annually to ensure that they remain fit for purpose and that enhancements can be made on a cumulative basis.

Discussion

4. APRC is invited to discuss the draft Undergraduate Degree Regulations for academic year 2024/25. Appendix 1 includes only those regulations which include proposed changes. Following this meeting, Academic Services will amend the draft regulations to take account of any Committee comments.
5. Degree Regulations are formally approved by University Court as a “Resolution”. Academic Services will submit a draft Resolution to Court at its 22 April 2024 meeting. Court will consult with Senate at Senate’s 22 May 2024 meeting. Court will then consider a final Resolution at its 17 June 2024 meeting.
6. In December 2023, all Colleges were invited to submit proposals for changes to the Degree Regulations, with the intention of identifying any necessary updates due to changes in related policies or practices, and to address any errors or lack of clarity. Colleges were also invited to recommend areas for potential enhancement to the Regulations.

Key Changes to Undergraduate Degree Regulations 2024/25

Links within the regulations to other information and changes in terminology have been updated as necessary. Other minor changes to wording are included in Appendix 1.

Regulation Updated	What has changed
22 and 23 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)	22 - This regulation has been amended to more closely reflect the wording relating to RPL in the PG Degree Regulations. A clarification has also been added to state that credit limits relating to RPL do not apply in cases where a student is

	transferring between degree programmes within the University. 23 – The link has been updated to the latest RPL policy for admissions.
29 Optional Study Abroad	Reference to Erasmus exchange has been removed, since students from the University are no longer eligible for this scheme.
88 BVM&S Progression	The requirements relating to progression on this programme have been amended, based on updated information from RDSVS.

Resource implications

7. The proposed amendments do not reflect changes in underlying policy, and do not therefore present resource implications.

Risk management

8. The proposed amendments do not reflect changes in underlying policy, and do not therefore present any new risks.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

9. The paper does not contribute to the Climate Emergency and Sustainable Development Goals.

Equality & diversity

10. The proposed amendments do not reflect changes in underlying policy, and do not therefore present equality and diversity implications.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

11. Academic Services will communicate approved regulations in the annual email update to Schools and Colleges on regulations and policies. Academic Services will also cover any changes to regulations in Boards of Examiners briefings and other relevant briefing events for staff in Schools and Colleges.

Author

Cristina Matthews and Adam Bunni
Academic Services

Presenter

Cristina Matthews

Freedom of Information Open

Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study

Undergraduate Degree Programme Regulations

2019/20



A General Undergraduate Degree Regulations

[...]

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

22. RPL can only be recognised at the point of admission to the University. The Head of College has the power to recognise the transfer of a student's credit previously gained either at the University or another institution and to count it towards their intended award. up to 240 credits of prior learning and on this basis to admit a student to the second or later years of a programme of study. RPL can potentially be granted for programmes taken at the University of Edinburgh, as well as those from elsewhere. Before approval is granted the College must be satisfied that the learning to be recognised and transferred provides an adequate basis for the programme or courses as set out in the appropriate Degree Programme Table. The Head of College can recognise the transfer of up to 240 credits of prior learning and on this basis to admit a student to the second or later years of a programme of study. This limit does not apply where students are transferring between programmes within the University, in line with regulation 48. University of Edinburgh courses which have a substantial curriculum overlap with any of the courses that contributed to a student's admission on the basis of RPL will not count towards the student's degree programme.

23. The University can also consider prior learning for admissions purposes. [University RPL policy for admissions](#)

[...]

Optional Study Abroad

29. Students undertaking Optional Study Abroad are required to complete a Learning Agreement in consultation with their School Exchange Coordinator prior to departure. Learning Agreements must be agreed and signed by the student, their School Exchange Coordinator, and ~~for Erasmus students only,~~ the partner university. In the case of joint degree programmes, the Learning Agreement must be approved by both Schools, but the School which owns the programme is ultimately responsible for the Learning Agreement. If any amendments are required to the Learning Agreement at any time, including on arrival at the partner university, students must agree these changes with the School Exchange Coordinator. The Exchange Coordinator is responsible for confirming that the amended Learning Agreement corresponds appropriately with the University of Edinburgh degree curriculum for the relevant year of study.

[...]

Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study

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C College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine Undergraduate Degree Regulations: Degree Specific Regulations

[...]

BVM&S Progression

88. Students are required to complete 12 weeks of animal husbandry extramural studies (EMS) and 26 weeks of clinical EMS. Students must submit satisfactory evidence of completion of a minimum of 12 weeks of approved animal husbandry extramural studies (EMS) by the submission deadlines provided by the School. Students who fail to satisfy the animal husbandry EMS requirement will be unable to progress into third year of the BVM&S programme and will be reported to the BVM&S Progression Committee. Students who have not completed 26 weeks of approved clinical EMS prior to the end of final year will be unable to graduate. [This requirement is 10 weeks of animal husbandry and 20 weeks of clinical EMS for students who enter the BVM&S programme.](#)

DRAFT

Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee**21 March 2024****Postgraduate Degree Regulations 2024/25****Description of paper**

1. This paper contains the draft Postgraduate Degree Regulations for 2024/25. A “Key Changes” section is included to draw the Committee’s attention to the key changes. The Undergraduate Degree Regulations contribute to the University’s Teaching and Learning focus of Strategy 2030.

Action requested / recommendation

2. For discussion and recommendation to Court. The Degree Regulations are approved via the Court Resolution process.

Background and context

3. The Degree and Assessment Regulations are reviewed annually to ensure that they remain fit for purpose and that enhancements can be made on a cumulative basis.

Discussion

4. APRC is invited to discuss the draft Postgraduate Degree Regulations for academic year 2024/25. Appendix 1 includes only those regulations which include proposed changes. Following this meeting, Academic Services will amend the draft regulations to take account of any Committee comments.
5. Degree Regulations are formally approved by University Court as a “Resolution”. Academic Services will submit a draft Resolution to Court at its 22 April 2024 meeting. Court will consult with Senate at Senate’s 22 May 2024 meeting. Court will then consider a final Resolution at its 17 June 2024 meeting.
6. In December 2023, all Colleges were invited to submit proposals for changes to the Degree Regulations, with the intention of identifying any necessary updates due to changes in related policies or practices, and to address any errors or lack of clarity. Colleges were also invited to recommend areas for potential enhancement to the Regulations.

Key Changes to Postgraduate Degree Regulations 2024/25

Links within the regulations to other information and changes in terminology have been updated as necessary. Other minor changes to wording are included in Appendix 1.

Regulation Updated	What has changed
24 Attendance and Participation	A clarification has been added to state that students on on-campus programmes are expected to continue in-person attendance during the dissertation or research project component of PGT Master’s programmes. This has been added following concerns raised by

	<p>the Student Immigration Service about visa-holding PGT students leaving the UK during the summer period to complete their dissertation or research project. In-person attendance is expected by UKVI for the entirety of programmes, so there is a risk to the University's status as a visa sponsor if students leave during this period.</p>
28 Reductions to the Prescribed Period of Study	<p>Amended to refer to regulation 18 of the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees for information about early submission on doctoral or MPhil degrees. An additional process for reduction to the prescribed period of study is not required in cases where early submission is supported by the relevant College.</p>
33 Authorised Interruption of Study	<p>A clause has been added stating that, on programmes with a prescribed period of full-time study of 9 months, the total permitted period of Authorised Interruption of Study is 12 months. This was approved by APRC on 21 September 2023.</p> <p>A further clause has been added to state that, on part-time continuous Masters programmes with a prescribed period of study of 36 months, the total permitted period of Authorised Interruption of Study is 24 months. This replaces the existing provision of 12 months for these students, and is based on experience of concessions cases from CMVM in particular. On a programme of three years' duration, it is not uncommon for students to have more than one period where they need to take an extended break from study, for example due to ill health or maternity leave. As such, this proposed change offers potential benefits to all students, and especially those in protected groups, especially women and students with disabilities. The proposed change also reduces the administrative burden currently presented by needing to escalate concessions cases to APRC for decisions. We do not foresee any risks or resource implications presented by this change.</p>
34 Extensions of Study	<p>We have added a statement that additional periods of study offered for the completion of corrections or resubmission of a thesis following examination on a PhD or MPhil programme do not count towards the total maximum period of permitted extensions. Currently, where students</p>

	<p>who have exhausted the maximum allowable period for extensions are offered a period of corrections or resubmission following examination, this requires approval of a concession by APRC to allow a further extension. This is an additional administrative hurdle which serves no purpose, since the APRC Convener would not reject a request of this nature, where the examiners have indicated that the student has a clear path to successful completion of the thesis. This change will save staff time and reduce uncertainty for students.</p>
43 Termination of supervision	<p>This regulation has been amended to refer to a separate document, which outlines the process for consideration of termination of supervision. This process was approved by APRC's predecessor Committee, CSPC, in April 2017.</p>
45 Request for Reinstatement on Doctoral and MPhil degrees	<p>This regulation has been amended to include coverage of students who withdraw before the end of their programme, who may also be permitted to apply for reinstatement. While students who have been excluded for lapse of time will be permitted only to return to submit a completed thesis, students who withdrew with time remaining in their programme may be offered this time to complete their thesis before submission. The proposed change carries minimal risk, since Colleges retain the right to refuse reinstatement for any reason, but especially where they are not satisfied that the student will successfully complete a passable thesis, or where appropriate supervision is not available. Students who have been excluded for any reason other than lapse of time (e.g. due to failure to progress following an annual review) will not be permitted to apply for reinstatement.</p> <p>The amended regulation advises that students who require a Student Visa to study must contact the Student Immigration Service for advice before applying for reinstatement.</p>
46 Vacation Leave for Research Students	<p>Clarification has been added that the allowance of eight weeks' vacation leave applies to each year of study, and that this is included in the prescribed period of study.</p>
48 PhD Thesis Length – Word Count	<p>Clarification has been added regarding what constitutes "preface material": table of contents, acknowledgements, list of abbreviations, list of illustrations.</p>

68 PhD – Submission by Portfolio in Art, Design and Landscape Architecture	Amended to state that the bibliography is not included in the word count for the thesis. This reflects the position for other PhD degrees.
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Resource implications

7. Any resource implications for the proposed changes are covered in the Key Changes table.

Risk management

8. Any risks associated with the proposed changes are covered in the Key Changes table.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

9. The proposals relating to interruption of study support the goals regarding good health and wellbeing, and gender equality by providing more generous concessions to students experiencing ill health or maternity.

Equality & diversity

10. Any equality and diversity implications of the proposed changes are covered in the Key Changes table.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

11. Academic Services will communicate approved regulations in the annual email update to Schools and Colleges on regulations and policies. Academic Services will also cover any changes to regulations in Boards of Examiners briefings and other relevant briefing events for staff in Schools and Colleges.

Author

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Academic Services

Presenter

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Freedom of Information Open

Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study

Undergraduate Degree Programme Regulations

2019/20



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Introduction

[...]

Authority Delegated to Colleges

4. Where the Head of College has the authority to grant permissions and concessions, this authority may be delegated to appropriate nominees in the College or Schools. Students must consult their Student Support Team, Supervisor, Student Adviser or School as to the appropriate point of contact, ~~and must not~~ rather than approaching the College directly. Where the College does not have authority to award a particular concession then the Academic Policy and Regulations Committee may award the concession.

[...]

Postgraduate Awards and Degree Programmes

8. The University awards the following types of postgraduate degrees, diplomas and certificates. The University's postgraduate awards and degree programmes are consistent with the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF: <http://scqf.org.uk/>) unless an exemption has been approved by the Academic Policy and Regulations Committee, or the award is not included in the SCQF. The SCQF credit levels required for each programme are specified within the appropriate Degree Programme Table.

General Postgraduate Certificate Postgraduate Certificate in a named subject discipline	At least 60 credits of which a minimum of 40 should be at SCQF Level 11 or above
General Postgraduate Diploma Postgraduate Diploma in a named subject discipline	At least 120 credits of which a minimum of 90 should be at SCQF Level 11 or above
Masters in a named subject discipline Master of a named discipline	At least 180 credits of which a minimum of 150 are at SCQF Level 11
Masters in a named subject discipline Master of a named discipline <u>(2 years full-time)</u>	At least 240 credits of which a minimum of 150 are at SCQF Level 11

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MSc by research	At least 180 credits of which a minimum of 150 are at level 11. The research element will be worth a minimum of 120 credits of which a minimum of 60 must be attributable to the research project (for example, a portfolio of artefacts, artworks and other practice-based outputs) or dissertation.
MPhil	At least 240 credits of which a minimum of 150 are at SCQF Level 11
ChM	At least 120 credits at SCQF Level 12.
Doctorate	At least 540 credits of which a minimum of 420 are at SCQF Level 12
EngD	720 credits of which at least 540 are at SCQF Level 12. Of the remaining 180 credits 150 should be at SCQF Level 11 or above
PhD with Integrated Study	720 credits of which at least 540 are at SCQF Level 12. Of the remaining 180 credits 150 should be at SCQF Level 11 or above
MD, DDS, DVM&S* Doctor of a named discipline	*Note: these awards are not included in the SCQF therefore a credit value has not been included here

A General Postgraduate Degree Regulations

[...]

Consecutive Registration

15. At the time of application, MSc by Research applicants may be invited to be registered for consecutive MSc by Research, followed by PhD study within the same School. This option may not be available in all Schools. Depending on the outcome of assessment the student will be invited to follow one of three routes:

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- a. Start First Year of Doctoral Programme. If successful in the MSc by Research programme, the student graduates and also registers in the next academic session on the first year of the doctoral programme; or
- b. Start Second year of Doctoral Programme. Prior to the completion of the masters research project or dissertation, the School is content that the quality of the student's work merits treating the masters year as the first year of doctoral study. No research project or dissertation is submitted, no masters degree is awarded, and the student registers in the next academic session on the second year of the doctoral programme; or
- c. Graduate with MSc by Research Degree ~~and Exit~~. If successful in the MSc by Research programme, the student graduates and permanently withdraws~~does not continue on the doctoral programme~~.

[...]

Attendance and Participation

24. Students must attend and participate as required in all aspects of their programme of study. This includes being available for teaching sessions, assessment, examination and meeting Student Adviser(s), Programme Directors or Cohort Leads or supervisors face-to-face and/or electronically. Except when registered on an designated online or distance learning programme, or where remote participation is specifically stated, students are expected to attend and participate in person, including during any period spent working on a dissertation or research project. The Degree Programme Table and programme handbook sets out programme requirements for attendance and participation. Certain students' visa conditions may require the University to monitor attendance and participation in specific ways.

[...]

Reductions to the Prescribed Period of Study

28. The College may reduce the prescribed period of study as indicated below:

- Postgraduate Certificate:
 - for **part-time continuous** students by up to 4 months.
 - for **part-time intermittent** by up to 12 months.
- Postgraduate Diploma:
 - for **part-time continuous** students by up to 8 months.
 - for **part-time intermittent** students by up to 24 months.
- Postgraduate Masters:
 - for **part-time continuous** students by up to 12 months.
 - for **part-time intermittent** students by up to 36 months.

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- MPhil:
 - Members of the University staff and students holding a MPhil research appointment under the auspices of the University may be registered for a minimum period of 24 months part-time.
 - Members of staff of Associated Institutions who can devote the whole of their period of study to research and who have regular and adequate involvement in the work of the University School may also be registered for a minimum period of 24 months part-time.
 - ~~For full-time students the College may reduce the prescribed period by up to two months. The College may reduce the prescribed period by up to 24 months for part-time students. Reductions to the prescribed period are not available to those members of staff who are registered for the minimum period of 24 months.~~ Early submission on research degrees is covered in the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees (18).
- Doctorate:
 - Members of the University staff and students holding a PhD research appointment under the auspices of the University may be registered for a minimum period of 36 months part-time.
 - Members of staff of Associated Institutions who can devote the whole of their period of study to research and who have regular and adequate involvement in the work of the University School may also be registered for a minimum period of 36 months part-time.
 - ~~For full-time students the College may reduce the prescribed period by up to three months. The College may reduce the prescribed period by up to 36 months for part-time PhD students. Reductions to the prescribed period are not available to those members of staff who are registered for the minimum period of 36 months.~~ Early submission on research degrees is covered in the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees (18).

See the Study Period Table:

www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/studyperiodtable.pdf

[...]

Leave of Absence

30. Leave of absence is required where students undertake compulsory and/or optional activities related to, or that are part of, their ir programme of study away from campus in Edinburgh. Students must have the formal approval of the College for any leave of absence to study away from Edinburgh that is 30 calendar days' duration or longer. Study location changes of less than 30 calendar days must be agreed with the Supervisor or Director of Teaching or delegated nominee (e.g. Student Adviser). Where

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the activity is a compulsory part of the programme of study and is organised by the School or College, permission may be given by the College for a cohort of students without individual applications being made. Colleges and Schools must maintain records of all leaves of absence. Certain students' visa conditions may be affected by study away from Edinburgh. This regulation does not apply to students on [a recognised online or distance learning programmes](#).

Withdrawal and Exclusion

31. Any student may withdraw from their programme of study at any point in the year. Students may be excluded for reasons outlined within the procedure for Withdrawal and Exclusion from Studies [or due to termination of supervision as outlined in regulation 43](#):
www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/withdrawal_exclusion_from_study.pdf

[...]

Authorised Interruptions of Study

33. A student may apply for an Authorised Interruption of Study, and it may be authorised by the College if there is a good reason for approving the interruption. Students may be required to provide evidence to support their applications. Interruptions of study will not be applied retrospectively. Any one period of authorised interruption of study will not exceed one year, unless authorised by the College. The total permitted period of Authorised Interruption of Study is the same for full-time and part-time continuous students and will not exceed 100% of the prescribed period of full-time study, [except in the following cases:-](#)

- For part-time intermittent students, the total permitted period of Authorised Interruption of Study is calculated as half of the prescribed period of study, for example, three years for a six-year Master's programme.
- [On programmes with a prescribed period of full-time study of 9 months, the total permitted period of Authorised Interruption of Study is 12 months;](#)
- [On part-time continuous Masters programmes with a prescribed period of study of 36 months, the total permitted period of Authorised Interruption of study is 24 months.](#)

The Head of College may exceptionally authorise an Interruption of Study which would take the total period of interruption beyond 100% of the prescribed period of study, provided this does not exceed the maximum allowable study period.

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/authorisedinterruption.pdf>

Also see the Study Period Table:

Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study

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www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/studyperiodtable.pdf

Extensions of Study

34. In exceptional circumstances, a student may apply ~~with the support of~~through their supervisor or School postgraduate director to the College for an extension and it may be authorised by the College if there is good reason. Colleges may authorise individual extensions of up to 12 months. The total maximum period of permitted extensions is 24 months, provided this does not take the student past their maximum allowable study period. Additional periods of study offered for the completion of corrections or resubmission of a thesis under Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees (22, 23, or 24) do not count towards the total maximum period of permitted extensions.

See the Study Period Table:

www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/studyperiodtable.pdf

Maximum Degree Completion Periods

35. The maximum periods for completion of research degree programmes are the total of the prescribed period of study, any submission period, any interruptions of study, any extensions of study, ~~and any other concessions. The maximum period includes any concessions.~~ The Study Period Table sets out maximum degree completion periods. See the Study Period Table:

www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/studyperiodtable.pdf

Additional Regulations for Doctoral and MPhil Research Degrees

Supervision

[...]

37. Schools are responsible for ensuring that all supervisors who are members of University staff (including honorary staff), and staff at Associated Institutions, have attended a supervisor briefing completed mandatory supervisor training at the University ~~(for example, one delivered by the relevant College or School)~~ within the last five years. Schools are also responsible for ensuring that supervisors who are not University staff, honorary University staff, or staff at Associate Institutions, for example staff at other higher education institutions, have either attended a supervisor briefing at the University within the last five years, or undertaken an equivalent training / briefing elsewhere within the same timescale.

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[...]

Termination of supervision

43. In the event that the College considers that it is necessary to make changes to supervisory arrangements, and the College has not been able to provide alternative supervision despite having undertaken all reasonable endeavours, the College may request that the Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee consider terminating supervision of the student [as set out in the Discontinuation of Postgraduate Research Supervision procedure](#):
[\[Add link to procedure once published\]](#)

~~- Where the Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee is satisfied that it is necessary for the College to make changes to supervisory arrangements, and that no alternate supervision can be provided to the student, supervision of the student will be terminated, and the student required to withdraw from the University.~~

[...]

Request for Reinstatement [on Doctoral and MPhil degrees](#)

45. A student who has been excluded for lapse of time [or has withdrawn voluntarily before the end of their period of study](#) may ask the College to reinstate their registration at a later date to permit examination of a completed thesis. The College will decide whether or not a student should be reinstated, and factors such as [\(but not limited to\) the passage of time and its implications for the topic of study and the availability of appropriate supervision](#) will be taken into account. [Students are not eligible to be considered for reinstatement where they have been excluded from the University for any reason other than lapse of time.](#) The student must provide good reason for the previous failure to complete. [Students who require Student Visa sponsorship must contact the Student Immigration Service for advice before applying for reinstatement.](#) If reinstatement is approved:

- [Students who were previously excluded for lapse of time will be entitled to submit their thesis for examination, in accordance with the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees;](#)
- [Students who previously withdrew before the end of their submission period will be offered the time they had remaining on their programme to complete the thesis before submission. Students may apply for extension to study or interruption of study as normal. Their thesis once submitted will be examined in accordance with the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees.](#)

Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study

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~~, the student's thesis will be examined in accordance with the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees, subject to payment of a reinstatement and examination fee.~~

Vacation Leave for Research Students

46. Research Students are entitled to a maximum of eight weeks' vacation leave (i.e. 40 working days including public holidays) in each year of their programme a year without applying for an interruption of study. Time taken as vacation leave is included within the prescribed period of study. Students must seek approval for vacation leave from their supervisor and the School Postgraduate Office. Visa restrictions may also apply in the case of International students.

Grounds for the Award of Doctoral and MPhil Research Degrees

[...]

PhD Thesis Length - Word Count

48. The thesis must not exceed a maximum word count of 100,000. There is no minimum word count. The word count of the thesis includes the main text, preface material (e.g. table of contents, acknowledgements, list of abbreviations, list of illustrations), footnotes and references but does not include material in the appendices, bibliography, abstract or lay summary. In exceptional circumstances, on the recommendation of the supervisor, permission may be granted by the College to exceed the stated length on the ground that such extension is required for adequate treatment of the thesis topic.

[...]

Additional Regulations for Postgraduate Taught Degrees and MSc by Research, Postgraduate Diplomas and Postgraduate Certificates

Application for Associated Postgraduate Diploma or Masters

60. A candidate who already holds a postgraduate certificate or diploma from the University of Edinburgh may be permitted by the appropriate College to apply for candidature for the associated postgraduate diploma or masters degree, provided that not more than five years have elapsed between their first graduation and acceptance as a candidate for the subsequent award. Marks awarded for courses taken previously as part of the certificate or diploma will may be used in progression and award decisions relating to the new programme. Credit for courses taken previously which form part of the Degree Programme Table for the new programme does not count against the credit allowance for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study

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B College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Postgraduate Degree Regulations: Degree Specific Regulations

[...]

PhD- Submission by Portfolio in Art, Design and Landscape Architecture

68. The degree specific regulations, when a student is submitting for award of PhD by means of a portfolio of artefacts, artworks and other practice-based outputs, are:

- a. The portfolio of artefacts or artworks must comprise original work of a high creative level which is worthy of public exhibition and also an integral part of the contribution to knowledge made by the overall work of the candidate submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the PhD. It must show competence in the appropriate ancillary technical skills; must contain material which presents a body of work such as could reasonably be achieved on the basis of three years postgraduate study; must be satisfactory and intelligible in its presentation. There should also be a permanent record of the work; and
- b. The portfolio of artefacts and artworks will be accompanied by a thesis of not more than 50,000 words (including ~~bibliography and~~ footnotes but excluding appendices and bibliography).

[...]

Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee**21 March 2024****Student Appeal Regulations****Description of paper**

1. The paper proposes amendments to the Student Appeal Regulations, which govern the University's student appeal procedures. The paper includes a summary of the proposed amendments. Appendix 1 includes an updated version of the regulations, showing the amendments. Appendix 2 contains the updated Equality Impact Assessment.

Action requested/recommendation

2. APRC is asked to approve the proposed amendments to the Student Appeal Regulations.

Background and context

3. The Student Appeal Regulations govern the University student appeal procedures. The current version of the regulations came into effect in 2020. Since the last review of the appeal regulations, the volume of appeals submitted has grown significantly, with a 114% increase from 2019. Whilst the number of appeal case submissions has increased, this has not resulted in an increase in the proportion of upheld appeals or referrals to Full Appeal Committees. There has also been an increase in late appeal submissions alongside the complexity and submission of large appeal bundles having grown also.
4. The Student Appeals annual report collects the data on case submissions and trends, and it has been noted that there is a widespread misunderstanding of the role of the appeal process. Students regularly ask for outcomes that the appeal process does not provide e.g. remarking, increasing an assessment mark, changing a degree classification.
5. The Student Appeal Regulations were not required to be reviewed for another academic year, however, based on the increase in appeal submissions, and appeal queries from students, staff, and EUSA; and the number of appeals received with no valid grounds, a decision was made by Registry Services to bring the review forward to 2023/24. The aim of these amendments is to provide clarity, manage student expectations more effectively and allow the regulations to more accurately reflect the processes taking place. This should prevent unnecessary appeal submissions and allow students to make more informed applications with reasonable expectations set.

6. It is proposed that following approval of the Appeal regulations, further work will be undertaken in improving the Student Appeal Guidance and webpages to reflect the changes and provide more guidance to students.

Discussion

Consultation

7. Academic Services consulted relevant stakeholders regarding the proposed amendments to the regulations. Feedback received during the consultation has been incorporated in to the proposal in the paper. The consultation included the following individuals and groups:
- Edinburgh University Students' Association and the Advice Place
 - College Heads of Academic Administration
 - Conveners and Vice Conveners of Appeal Committees
 - APRC Convener
 - Academic Registrar
 - Senior Policy Advisor (Students)
 - Assistant Principal (Academic Standards and Quality Assurance)
 - College Academic Misconduct Group members
 - Legal Services Manager

Proposed amendments

8. A summary of the proposed amendments to the regulations are provided in Table 1. A version of the regulations showing the proposed changes is in Appendix 1. **APRC is asked to approved the proposed amendments to the Student Appeal Regulations.** Should APRC approve the proposed amendments, the regulations will come into effect on 1 August 2024. The amended regulations would apply to any appeals submitted on or after 1 August 2024, even where they relate to decisions taken before that date.

Table 1. Proposed amendments to the Student Appeal Regulations for 2024/25

Subject Matter	Section of Regulations	Amendment and rationale
Overall formatting changes to improve clarity, readability and accessibility of the regulations.	Various	<p>The overall formatting and layout of the appeal regulations has been changed to improve the readability with the aim to improve the understanding of the regulations. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall formatting changes, including the addition of a Contents list, changing the "Introduction" section to "Scope" and adding relevant headings for each section. • Many existing statements were moved to their relevant sections and out of the previous "introduction" section • The removal of references to "appellant" and changed to "student" due to being more understandable for all students

		may wish to consider an upheld academic misconduct penalty appeal and the scope of what these types of appeal can consider. These additions will help both in the understanding of the students of how their appeal may be considered but also will support the appeal caseworkers in explaining the process in their outcomes.
Expanding the information provided for “academic judgement”	3-5	The current regulation reference to academic judgement is very brief and explains that students cannot use the appeal regulations to challenge it. Guidance on academic judgement has been available external to the regulations to expand on it however, academic judgement remains misunderstood by students. This clarity and further explanation of academic judgement was felt to be useful in the regulations. The aim of these amendments and additions is to help students understand what is meant by academic judgement especially in reference to when processes and regulations have been followed. These sections also expand to reference professional judgement for relevant programmes to capture all aspects. With this information being more explicit in the appeal regulations, the aim is that students will understand what is meant by academic judgement further, set expectations and prevent invalid appeals being made.
Removal of the Full Appeal Committee route, clarification of the appeal committee role and updated appeal outcomes	49 (i) & (ii)	<p><i>Removal of the Full Appeal Committee’s ability to vary a decision</i></p> <p>The current regulations provide a possible outcome of a case being referred to an Full Appeal Committee. This option empowered the Full Appeal Committee to have the option to alter decisions- including academic decisions- by overturning a decision and specifying a different outcome. This is no longer considered an appropriate outcome for an appeal as the Appeal Committee does not have the requisite expertise or information to determine a different outcome in a case. Appeal Committee members are not considered subject matter experts in the relevant School or subject area, or on matters of student discipline, for example, and do not have access to all of the student’s information or School-level processes. The removal of this outcome confirms a wider University approach that the power to change academic decisions should rest solely with the Board of Examiners, or another decision-making Committee.</p>
	49 (i) & (ii)	In the event that an Appeal Committee felt that the Board or decision-making body in question was unable or unwilling to follow the University’s regulations or was being unreasonable in their decision-making related to a student, this would be raised as a management issue. The case would be upheld and referred back to the relevant decision-making body, in line with the Regulations, but the matter would also be escalated to the appropriate College/School Senior staff member to address

	<p>38 & 41</p>	<p><i>Change of the Appeal “sub-committee” to Student Appeal Committee</i></p> <p>Given the removal of the Full Appeal Committee option, it is appropriate to no longer refer to a “sub-committee” and these references will be removed throughout the regulations. It will now clear that cases are decision by the Student Appeal Committee or the Student Fitness to Practice Appal Committee. Updates has been made to the explain the make up and role of the Appeal Committees in line with these changes.</p> <p><i>Explanation of a third committee member in split decision</i></p> <p>We have clarified the regulations (37, 40, 49) where they previously implied that the caseworker, who supports the appeal process, was involved in the decision-making by the Committee. In practice, an appeal decision is made based on the decision of the two committee members considering the case, with the caseworker providing administrative support and regulatory advice. It is current practice where there is a split decision that a third independent committee member is asked for a judgement. These additions will provide the students with an explanation of this practice and make the process more transparent.</p>
<p>Clarifying and expanding on Student Responsibilities in the process and the scope of the Appeal committee</p>	<p>27</p> <p>28</p> <p>29</p>	<p>Section 27’s wording has been previously focused on dissertations and PhD submissions. The appeal regulation that students are ultimately solely responsible for the quality of their work is relevant to all summative assessments. Furthermore, the guidance of any teaching staff carries no guarantee of success. The expansion of this wording is to make it more clearly applicable to all students and to clarify their understanding of what an appeal ground may be. Many students also appeal based on what they have not been informed so the amendments of this wording to include the absence of comments is more accurate in how an appeal is considered.</p> <p>Section 28 has been added to highlight the student’s responsibility in submitting an appeal. Students wrongfully assume that the appeal team holds all University information and emails on them. This regulation addition will clarify the role of the committee and that any evidence must be submitted by the student and is not the responsibility of the appeal committee to gather for them.</p> <p>Section 29 has been added in response to the increase of students not engaging with the appeal process when additional</p>

		students to provide reasoning for non-engagement in their appeals rather than exclude this information.
Minor Amendments	Various	<p>The following minor amendments were made in response to other larger changes and to ensure that the wording of the regulations makes sense and also to reflect current practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 37, 40 & 49: Updated references to appeal staff titles, referred to as Academic Service staff members or appeal caseworker. The removal of references to representative and establishing acting as the University Secretary nominee • 45: Addition of requirement for evidence to be submitted is accessible, in English or translated. This is a current expectation that is to be reinforced in the regulations. • 46: Clarity that previous appeal submissions may be referred to or considered in future appeal cases. This is current practice and it would be useful to make students aware of this in the regulations. This practice is used to ensure appeals are factual and accurate and to prevent appeals being resubmitted. • 47: Amendment to add that an appeal does not alter a student's status or pause a decision. This is information given currently by the appeal team to students in their correspondence but it would be helpful if this is also in the regulations. This will set student's expectations and lessen queries surrounding the impact of submitting an appeal. • 48: Removal of the reporting of cases not accepted at preliminary screening. Cases that are not accepted after being acknowledged are noted as withdrawn however, cases that are screened before being acknowledged and are not accepted are not tracked as they are invalid or incomplete appeals. • 51: Addition of SPSO website link • 52: Addition of the responsibilities of reporting when an appeal is upheld. This is to provide more direction and clarity to the relevant decision making body on the records they should keep and the communication required when reconsidering an upheld appeal decision. • 36 & 39: Updates to note that Conveners may return to the appeal committee membership following their terms

Other enhancements to the Appeal Regulations

9. The review and consultation process has yielded helpful feedback regarding aspects that do not relate directly to the regulations but can be more appropriately addressed through guidance and other resources. Academic Services, with input from the Advice Place, intend to redevelop existing guidance, and perhaps create a set of FAQs for students to provide information on the process. In particular, it is noted that the use of real examples in FAQs would help set student expectations, inform students about the process and provide support during case consideration.
10. It has also been identified via the appeal regulation review and the annual report for appeals, that it would be useful to offer further guidance and support to Schools at a local level when fielding queries about appeals. The aim is to work with Schools to advise on supporting students and setting expectations on when an appeal should be submitted.

Resources implications

11. It is expected that the current trend of increased appeal submissions is to continue with or without the updated appeal regulations, which may in turn require more appeal caseworker resource, however, this will be monitored. The proposed amendments provide clarity to students on what they can and cannot appeal, including making mention of academic misconduct penalties. This is a decision students can currently appeal but it is not signposted in the regulations. Given the increase in academic misconduct investigations, the updated regulations may lead to further appeal submissions which require further resource but this will be monitored and reported if required.

Risk Management

12. The proposals involve removing from the Appeal Committee the power to vary decisions taken by other bodies, which exists under the current Regulations. We recognise the intended purpose of the Appeal Committee having this power, since it can allow the Committee to make a final decision in a case, and prevent the need for a further process to be undertaken by the original decision-making body. However, we feel that it is not appropriate for the Appeal Committee to exercise this power, since it does not have the necessary expertise to make a different decision from the original decision-making body. For example, where the Appeal Committee considers an academic appeal case, it is composed of members from outside of the student's School, and therefore does not have the requisite expertise in the subject area that the Board of Examiners would. It is relevant to note that the Appeal Committee has not exercised its power to vary a decision in the past 10 years.
13. It remains the case that where an appeal is upheld and referred back to the original decision-making body, the student has the right to submit a further appeal against the decision taken by that body when it reconvenes. This can

lead to a protracted process for students in very rare cases, but we regard this as acceptable in view of the above rationale. In the rare event that the Appeal Committee, in upholding a case, regards the original decision-making body as incompetent to reconsider the case for some reason, Academic Services can raise this as a management issue with the relevant authority (for example, the Head of School in the case of decisions by Boards of Examiners).

Equality & Diversity

14. Any equality and diversity implications of the proposed amendments are addressed in an updated Equality Impact Assessment attached as Appendix 2.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

15. Should APRC approve the proposed amendments to the Regulations, these will be finalised and the updated regulations come into effect on 1 August 2024 for the new academic year. Any appeal submissions made up to 31 July 2024 will be treated under the previous regulations. The appeal website will be updated with the current appeal regulations and the previous version of the regulations will be available until the close of the 2023/24 cases.
16. In addition to this, Academic Services will communicate the changes to the regulations in the following ways:
 - Include content regarding the changes in an email to relevant staff in Schools, Colleges and EUSA
 - Include content regarding the changes to the Appeal Committee members
 - Provide updated wording on appeals for the Academic Misconduct Procedure and ask relevant College staff to update any templates to reflect the updated Appeal Regulations

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Freedom of Information *Open*

Student Appeal Regulations



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Purpose of Policy

These are the University's Student Appeal Regulations and govern the University's student appeal procedures. The Regulations set the framework within which student appeals are handled.

Overview

The Student Appeal Regulations apply to student appeals against academic decisions; appeals against exclusion from studies; appeals against decisions of Student Fitness to Practise Committees; appeals against decisions under the Code of Student Conduct; and appeals against a decision taken by a University Support for Study Panel under the Support for Study Policy. The Student Appeal Regulations set out the specific grounds under which an appeal may be submitted. Students may not use an appeal to challenge academic judgment. The fact that a student believes that they deserve a different outcome cannot constitute by itself a ground for appeal.

Scope: Mandatory Regulations

These regulations apply to all students or recent students of the University who wish to submit an appeal as outlined in the overview above, and to all staff who deal with or respond to student appeals.

Contact Officer Amy Willis Academic Policy Officer amy.willis@ed.ac.uk

Document control

Dates	Approved:	Starts:	Equality impact assessment:	Amendments:	Next Review:
	05.20 <u>XXXXXX</u>	<u>01.08.20</u> <u>01.08.24</u>	22.04.15 <u>28.02.24</u>	<u>02.06.16</u> 26.06.19 01.08.24	2023/ 24 /28

Approving authority

Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC) on behalf of Senatus Academicus

Consultation undertaken

APRC, Student Appeal Committee, Edinburgh University Students' Association, Colleges

Section responsible for policy maintenance & review

Academic-Registry Services

Related policies, procedures, guidelines & regulations

Special Circumstances Policy, Boards of Examiners Guidance, Code of Student Conduct <https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/assessment>

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/discipline>

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/students/assessment/special-circumstances>

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/assessment/boards-examiners>

[Academic Misconduct Investigation Procedures](https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/students/conduct/academic-misconduct/academic-misconduct-procedure)

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/students/conduct/academic-misconduct/academic-misconduct-procedure>

College Fitness to Practise guidance:

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/arts-humanities-soc-sci/taught-students/student-conduct/fitness-to-practise>

Withdrawal and Exclusion from Studies Policy:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/students/code-of-practice/absences-concessions/exclusion>

Support for Study Policy: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/discipline/support-for-study>



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UK Quality Code

UK Quality Code – Concerns, Complaints and Appeals

<https://www.gaa.ac.uk/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/concerns-complaints-and-appeals>

Policies superseded by this policy

The 2020 version of the University Student Appeal Regulations

Alternative format

If you require this document in an alternative format please email Academic.Services@ed.ac.uk or ~~telephone 0131 650 2138~~.

Keywords

Academic Appeal, Appeal, Discipline, Conduct, Marks, Degree, Exclusion

DRAFT



Student Appeal Regulations

Introduction

The Student Appeal Regulations detail the scope, appeal grounds, process, deadlines and outcomes open to students who wish to request a reconsideration of a decision made by the University.

Contents

Section A: Scope

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Student Fitness to Practise Appeals

Conduct Appeals

Support for Study Appeals

Section C: Student Responsibility

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The Student Appeal Committee

The Student Fitness to Practise Appeal Committee

Section F: Submission of an Appeal

Section G: Consideration of an Appeal

Preliminary Screening

The Student Appeal Committee and Student Fitness to Practise Committee

Section H: Ombudsman and Reporting

SPSO

Reporting

Section A: Scope

1. An appeal is a request for reconsideration of a decision that has been taken in relation to the following:

- Academic decisions, e.g., degree awards and classification, course results, progression outcomes, academic misconduct mark penalties
- Exclusion from studies (except on the basis of non-matriculation)
- Outcomes under the Code of Student Conduct
- Decisions of Student Fitness to Practise Committees
- Outcomes under the Support for Study policy Stage 3

2. The following cannot be considered under these regulations:

- Decisions related to applications to study at the University of Edinburgh
- Decisions on degree transfers and course change requests
- Exclusion from studies due to non-matriculation
- Information included on transcripts
- Decisions related to fees or funding
- Concession request decisions, including authorised interruption of study requests
- Challenges to academic or professional judgment from a decision-making body or officer

The Student Appeal Regulations apply to student appeals against academic decisions; appeals against exclusion; appeals against decision of Fitness to Practise Panels; appeals against decisions under the



Student Appeal Regulations

~~Code of Student Conduct; and appeals against a decision taken by a University Support for Study Panel under the Support for Study Policy.~~

- ~~3. Decisions taken in relation to the areas listed under Regulation 1 are made in compliance with the relevant University policy, regulation, or procedure, and decisions are made by the responsible person or persons identified. This is considered the proper exercise of academic or professional judgment by the appropriate decision-making body or officer.~~
- ~~4. If a decision has been made in compliance with the relevant policy, regulation or procedure, a student may not appeal simply on the basis that they disagree with the decision. A student's disagreement or belief that they deserve a different outcome cannot constitute a ground for appeal. for each type~~
- ~~4.5. Students may not use an appeal to challenge academic judgment. The fact that a student believes that they deserve a different outcome cannot constitute a ground for appeal. Students cannot use the appeal regulations to challenge academic judgment when this judgment has been applied according to established policy, regulation or procedure. For academic appeals, it is accepted that the academic staff who mark students' assessed work make a judgment about the quality of the work against an agreed marking scheme and the final mark is taken to be a reasonable judgment by an academic expert.~~

~~An academic appeal cannot be lodged until the mark or result in question has been ratified by the relevant Board of Examiners.~~

- ~~2.6. An academic appeal can only be lodged when the decision has been ratified by the relevant Board of Examiners. For other decisions, an appeal can only be lodged when the decision in question is finalised by the relevant Committee or Panel and the outcome has been communicated to the student.~~
- ~~3.7. For the purposes of these regulations the term 'assessment' will be taken to include any summative written or practical examination, dissertation or final project, take home examination, continuously assessed coursework, electronic and online assessment, oral assessment, peer and self-assessment, written, practical or oral examination, continuously assessed coursework or dissertation which that counts towards the final assessment outcome or decision.~~
- ~~4.8. The consideration of an appeal does not include remarking academic assessments for academic appeals or re-investigating cases relating to exclusion from studies, Student Fitness to Practise, Support for Study Stage 3, Academic Misconduct or Code of Student Conduct cases.~~

Section B: Grounds for Appeal

Academic Appeals

- ~~9. Academic appeals are appeals against the decision of a Board of Examiners, Progression Board or Special Circumstances Committee, and decisions by the Extensions and Special Circumstances Team (ESC) taken under the Special Circumstances Policy: www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/staff/assessment/boards-examiners www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/special_circumstances.pdf~~
- ~~10. If an appeal against a penalty from an academic misconduct investigation is upheld, the Board of Examiners that ratified the penalty will consider whether the information in the upheld appeal requires the academic misconduct officer to also review the decision.~~
- ~~11. For academic decisions relating to postgraduate research students, the relevant Board of~~



Student Appeal Regulations

Examiners will be deemed to be the College committee which is responsible for overseeing postgraduate research studies within the relevant College.

~~5.12.~~ There are two grounds under which an academic appeal can be lodged. These are:

- Ground A: **Substantial information directly relevant** to the quality of performance in the assessment which for **good reason** was not available to the examiners when their decision was taken.
- Ground B: **Evidence** of irregular procedure or improper conduct ~~or lack of due diligence~~ in the conduct of an assessment or in the process of decision-making by the Board of Examiners or other relevant body/Officer. ~~or in the conduct of an assessment. For this purpose 'conduct of an assessment' includes the conduct of a meeting of the Board of Examiners or the relevant committee.~~

~~13.~~ Ignorance of the requirement set out in the Special Circumstances Policy to report timeously any special circumstances adversely affecting performance, or failure to report special circumstances because the student did not anticipate an unsatisfactory result in the assessment, can ~~never not~~ by themselves constitute ~~the a~~ "good reason" to fulfil the requirement described in Ground A.

~~14.~~ In line with the Academic Misconduct Investigation Procedure, if For appeals against mark penalties following an academic misconduct investigation, it is not within the remit of the academic misconduct officer to take account of special circumstances in reaching a decision. Therefore, an appeal submission made solely on this basis would not constitute a ground for appeal.

~~6.15.~~ For appeals against decisions taken by the Extensions and Special Circumstances (ESC) team, the term "examiners" in Ground A refers to members of the ESC team. Appeals under Ground B should relate to evidence of irregular procedure or improper conduct of the ESC team. The function of the ESC team is set out in the Special Circumstances Policy.

Appeals against Exclusion from Studies

~~7.16.~~ Appeals against exclusion from studies are appeals against the decisions of the Head of College, or ~~his or her~~their delegate, or other authorised officer acting under the Procedure for Withdrawal and Exclusion from Studies.
www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/withdrawal_exclusion_from_study.pdf

~~8.17.~~ For appeals against exclusion from studies, there are two grounds of appeal:

- Ground A: **Substantial information directly relevant** to the decision to exclude the student which **for good reason** was not available to the Head of College, or ~~his or her~~their delegate, or other authorised officer when their decision was taken.
- Ground B: ~~Alleged~~ Evidence of irregular procedure or improper conduct under the Procedure for Withdrawal and Exclusion from Studies.

Student Fitness to Practise Appeals

~~9.18.~~ Fitness to Practise Appeals are appeals against the decision of a College Student Fitness to Practise Committee.

~~10.19.~~ For Student Fitness to Practise Appeals, there are two grounds of appeal:

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- Ground A: **Substantial information directly relevant** to the student's case which for **good reason** was not available to the College Fitness to Practise Committee when its decision was taken.
- Ground B: **Alleged Evidence of irregular, incorrect** procedure or **improper** conduct of the College procedure for assessing Fitness to Practise. **This involves review of the way the student case was handled, not re-investigation of the case itself.**

Conduct Appeals

20. Conduct appeals are appeals against the decision of a Student Discipline Officer and the Student Discipline Committee.

Code of Student Conduct: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/discipline/code-discipline>

Academic Misconduct Procedure: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/discipline/academic-misconduct>

14-21. For conduct appeals, there are two grounds of appeal:

- Ground A: **Substantial information directly relevant** to the investigation of a student discipline case which for **good reason** was not available to the Student Discipline Officer, ~~School or College or~~ ~~or the~~ Student Discipline Committee when their decision was taken.
- Ground B: **Alleged Evidence of** irregular procedure or improper conduct of an investigation ~~and/or~~ disciplinary action. This includes conduct of a meeting of the Student Discipline Committee ~~or academic misconduct investigation.~~

22. ~~Where a student does not engage in the processes in place to investigate or consider their cases, or to make any decision about penalties, this alone will not constitute a "good reason" under Ground A. This includes:~~

- ~~Not attending any meeting, interview or hearing with or hearing with of a the School or College Academic Misconduct Officer, AM Conduct Investigator, Student Discipline Officer or Student Discipline Committee, where the student was given due notice to appear;~~

•
•

~~Not providing~~ written representations, ~~evidence or names of witnesses,~~ when invited to do so;

•
•

~~Not providing a statement in explanation or extenuation of misconduct; or in mitigation of any possible penalty, when invited to do so.~~

Support for Study Appeals

23. ~~Support for Study appeals are appeals against a decision of the University Support for Study Panel to require a student to take an authorised interruption of study under Stage 3 of the Support for Study Policy.~~

12-24. For Support for Study appeals, there are two grounds of appeal:

- Ground A: **Substantial information directly relevant** to the Support for Study ~~decision~~ case which for **good reason** was not available to the Support for Study Panel when their decision was taken.



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- Ground B: [Alleged Evidence of](#) irregular procedure or improper conduct of a case under the Support for Study Policy. This includes conduct of a hearing of the Support for Study Panel.

~~13.25.~~ Failure to attend a Support for Study Panel hearing, or to provide written representations when invited to do so, [this alone](#) will not constitute the good reason to fulfil the requirement described in Ground A.

Section C: Student Responsibility

~~14.26.~~ It is the student's responsibility to have read and be familiar with the content of any relevant University policies, procedures, regulations, codes of practice, and course and programme handbooks, including all sections relating to marking schemes, assessment and moderation of work. For postgraduate research students, this includes the University's *Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students*, which students are directed to upon acceptance or registration. Ignorance of the content of this information cannot constitute a ground for appeal.

~~27.~~ It is the student's responsibility to submit a piece of work which is capable of satisfying the relevant examiners. Students should be aware that they are ultimately solely responsible for the academic quality of [work they submit for assessment, including dissertations, final projects and theses](#); ~~their dissertation or thesis~~. Students should [also](#) be aware that approval [or the absence of criticism](#) by a Dissertation/[Project](#) supervisor, PhD supervisor or member of teaching [staff](#), and following the advice and guidance [of a supervisor](#) or [teaching member of teaching staff](#), carries no guarantee of success [at examination in an assessment](#). Any such [approving or guiding comments](#), [or their absence](#), cannot constitute a ground for appeal.

~~28.~~ [It is the student's responsibility to provide the](#) any relevant [evidence in support of their application to appeal](#); [Whilst Student Appeal Committees may request further information under these regulations, it is not the](#) responsibility of the Student [Appeal Committee to gather evidence on the student's behalf that the student wishes to rely upon in their appeal](#).

~~15.29.~~ [It is the student's responsibility to respond to any queries or requests for further information from the administrative caseworker or Registry Academic Services staff. Students who do not respond to contact from a caseworker or member of Registry Academic Services staff may have their appeal withdrawn and the case closed.](#)

Section D: Deadlines

~~16.30.~~ There are strict deadlines governing the submission of academic appeals. These are as follows:

For undergraduate students:

Final Year: within **30 working days** of being informed of the decision.

All others: within **10 working days** of being informed of the decision.

For postgraduate students:

All: within **30 working days** of being informed of the decision.

~~17.31.~~ Appeals against exclusion from studies must be submitted within **10 working days** of the decision being issued.

~~18.32.~~ Appeals against Student Fitness to Practise Committee decisions must be submitted within



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10 working days of the decision being issued.

19.33. Student conduct appeals must be submitted within **10 working days** of the decision being issued.

20.34. Support for Study appeals must be submitted within **10 working days** of the decision being issued.

21.35. Appeals which are received outside of the timescales stated above are regarded as late and will only be accepted for consideration if ~~a~~ exceptional circumstances are evidenced. The decision as to whether or not exceptional circumstances exist will be taken by ~~a sub-committee of~~ either the Student Appeal Committee or the Student Fitness to Practise Appeal Committee. Appeals which are two or more years late will not be accepted under any circumstances.

Section E: Appeal Committees

The Student Appeal Committee ~~and Sub-committees~~

22.36. Appeals are considered by the relevant Student Appeal Committee, and its sub-committees. This may be the Undergraduate or Postgraduate Student Appeal Committee. The Student Appeal Committee's remit will be to consider all appeals except -Fitness to Practice cases. Membership of the Student Appeal Committee is approved annually by the Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee on behalf of University Senate and includes members with expertise in undergraduate and postgraduate ~~expertisematters~~. Conveners of Student Appeal Committees may serve for a term of five academic years. Conveners may return to committee membership following their term. Membership of the Student Appeal Committee itself does not carry a maximum term of service.

37. A Student Appeal Committee will be quorate to reach decisions on appeal cases -will be quorate- with two members of the relevant Student Appeal Committee ~~and an-~~. They will be supported by an administrative caseworker, appointed by Academic Registry Services, acting as the University Secretary's Representativenominee.

23.38. In the event that a Student Appeal Committee are unable to reach an agreed decision, a third member may be asked to consider the case. In this circumstance, an outcome will be based on the majority decision.

~~A full hearing of the Student Appeal Committee will be quorate with the Convener, three members of the relevant Student Appeal Committee (who will not be from the same discipline as the appellant), a representative of the University Secretary, and the Secretary to the Student Appeal Committee.~~

The Student Fitness to Practise Appeal Committee ~~and sub-committees~~

24.39. Student Fitness to Practise Appeals are considered by staff who are members of the relevant professional discipline. These staff form the Student Fitness to Practise Appeal Committee, the membership of which is approved annually by the Curriculum and Student Progression CommitteeAcademic Policy and Regulations Committee on behalf of University Senate. Conveners of Student Fitness to Practise Appeal Committees may serve for a term of five academic years. Conveners may return to committee membership following their term. Membership of the Student Appeal Committee itself does not carry a maximum term of service. Members of the Fitness to Practise ~~sub-committees~~Committee for specific cases will never be the same individuals as those involved in the Fitness to Practise proceedings at the College stage.



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~~40. A sub-committee of the~~The Student Fitness to Practise Appeal Committee ~~will be quorate to reach decisions on appeal cases will be quorate~~ with two academic members of staff from the same professional discipline as the ~~appellant~~student. ~~They will be supported by, and the Secretary to the Student Fitness to Practise Appeal Committee~~an administrative caseworker, appointed by ~~Academic Registry~~ Services, acting as the ~~representative~~University Secretary's nominee of the ~~University Secretary~~. ~~There is no Convener at sub-committee stage.~~

~~25.41.~~ In the event of the Student Fitness to Practise Appeal Committee being unable to reach an agreed decision, an appropriate third committee member may be asked to consider the case. In this circumstance, an outcome will be based on the majority decision.

~~A full hearing of the Student Fitness to Practise Appeal Committee will have an academic Vice Principal, or Head of College as Convener. It will be quorate with a Convener, two members of the Student Fitness to Practise Appeal Committee, the Secretary to the Student Fitness to Practise Appeal Committee, the University Secretary or his/her nominated representative, and three eligible staff drawn from professional disciplines taught in the University. A full hearing of the Student Fitness to Practise Appeal Committee will ensure that the committee contains a professional majority and at least one member of staff from the same discipline as the appellant.~~

Section F: Submission of an Appeal

~~26.42.~~ Appeals must be written and submitted electronically to ~~the Registry Academic Services administrative caseworker~~ Secretary of the University's ~~Student Appeal Committee and Student Fitness to Practise Appeal Committee~~ using at academic.appeals@ed.ac.uk. Students must ensure that in submitting an appeal, they have completed and attached the relevant appeal forms; and will be deemed to have read and understood all accompanying [regulations and](#) guidance. Appeal forms and relevant guidance are available from the Academic Services website. <https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/students/appeals/submitting>

~~27.43.~~ Students Appellants must specify the ground or grounds under which they wish to have their appeal considered. They must also specify the reasons as to why they believe the ground or grounds apply.

~~28.44.~~ The written submission must contain all relevant arguments on the basis of which the appeal is being made, together with all supporting documentation the appellant student wishes to be taken into account. It will not be possible to introduce new circumstances, evidence or documentation into the appeal at a later date.

~~29.45.~~ Students must ensure that appeal information and documentation submitted is in a format that can be accessed by Registry Academic Services staff, is readable and, if evidence is not in English, translations should be included.

~~30.46.~~ Academic Registry Services, ~~Sub-committees~~, the Student Appeal Committee and the Student Fitness to Practise Appeal Committee may request further information, if this is required. This can be in the form of further information from the student, or further information from members of University staff. If appropriate, previous communications between a student and Registry Academic Services or relevant information included from previous appeal submissions may be considered.

~~31.47.~~ 44. Submission of an appeal does not alter a student's status, nor pause or prevent the



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application of any decision being appealed against. Therefore, the decision of a Board of Examiners, or other relevant Committee or Officer, remains unchanged while the appeal process is carried out. Any recent student appealing against exclusion from studies remains excluded until the outcome of any decision on appeal during the appeal process. In relation to Fitness to Practise appeals, any decision of the College Student Fitness to Practise Committee remains in force until the outcome of any decision on appeal during the appeal process. In relation to conduct appeals, any penalties imposed by the Student Discipline Officer, the Academic Misconduct Officer or the Student Discipline Committee will remain in force until the outcome of any decision on appeal during the appeal process.

Section G: Consideration of an Appeal

Preliminary Screening

~~32.48.~~ When an appeal is received, it is screened by staff in ~~Registry Academic~~ Services to establish whether or not the documentation has been submitted correctly, and whether the appeal is eligible for consideration under these regulations. If ~~Registry Academic~~ Services judge that the appeal is eligible for consideration under these regulations, and the submission is complete, then the appeal is submitted to ~~a sub-committee of~~ the Student Appeal Committee or the Student Fitness to Practise Appeal Committee for consideration. ~~A summary report of appeal submissions which were not accepted at preliminary screening is presented to the Appeals Committee annually. This will not include cases where an appellant was advised that their appeal was premature, e.g. because a result being appealed had not yet been ratified by the relevant Board of Examiners~~

~~Sub-Committee~~ The Student Appeal Committee and Student Fitness to Practise Committee Consideration

~~33.49.~~ ~~An administrative caseworker, appointed by member of staff from Academic Services, acting as the University Secretary's nominee, and two~~ Two members of the Student Appeal Committee (who must not be from the same School as the ~~appellant student,~~ or a member of ~~his or her~~ their supervisory team) are empowered as ~~a sub-committee of the~~ the Student Appeal Committee to decide whether ~~sufficient grounds have been established for an appeal case to be upheld or the case should be dismissed.~~ sufficient grounds have been established for there to be further consideration of the case. In ~~cases of~~ Fitness to Practise appeals, ~~a member of staff from Academic Services, acting in the same capacity as described above, and~~ two members of the Student Fitness to Practise Appeal Committee, are empowered ~~as a sub-committee~~ to decide whether sufficient grounds have been established ~~for there to be further consideration of the case for an appeal case to be upheld or the case should be dismissed.~~ Sub-committee Appeal Committee considerations ~~normally can~~ take place electronically by correspondence. ~~A Student Appeal Committee or Student Fitness to Practise Appeal Committee~~ A sub-committee of the Student Appeal Committee may make one of ~~two~~ three decisions [(i), (ii) ~~or~~ (iii)]. ~~A sub-committee of the Student Fitness to Practise Appeal Committee are limited to options (i) and (iii):~~

- (i) ~~The appeal is not upheld as N~~ no grounds have been established ~~for further consideration of the appeal, in which case,~~ and the case is dismissed; or
- (ii) ~~Clear grounds~~ The appeal is upheld as grounds have been established. ~~I and the sub-committee~~ the Appeal Committee concludes the appeal by upholding it; and instructing ~~the~~ instructs the relevant decision-making body or officer to re-consider the original decision, in light of the upheld information. The relevant decision-making body or officer must demonstrator record how that they have given specific consideration to the information presented in the upheld appeal in reconsidering their original decision. The decision-making



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body or officer is responsible for informing the student of any outcome following a reconsidered decision. or

34.50. The decisions of the Student Appeal Committee and, the Student Fitness to Practise Appeal Committee, are final. There will be no further opportunity for appeal against the decision within the University. ommittee.

~~Student Appeal Committee or Student Fitness to Practise Appeal Committee Consideration~~

~~If an appeal is to be heard by the Student Appeal Committee, the Secretary of the Student Appeal Committee or Fitness to Practise Appeal Committee will write to the appellant, providing at least five working days' notice of the date of the hearing. This written communication will also contain all documentation from which the relevant sub-committee judged that the appeal should be referred to a full hearing of the Student Appeal Committee or Fitness to Practise Appeal Committee. At this stage, the appellant will be asked to provide any additional comments they might wish to make on the documentation in advance of the hearing. These comments will be incorporated into the documentation that the Committee will consider. The appellant will be entitled to attend and to be accompanied by one other member of the University community (for example, an Edinburgh University Students' Association advisor). The appellant may present their case in person, or may nominate the member of the University community to do so on their behalf.~~

~~A hearing of the Student Appeal Committee Student or the Fitness to Practise Appeal Committee will operate in the following way:~~

~~The Convener will welcome all parties in attendance, and invite the appellant to make an opening statement;~~

~~Following this statement, the Committee will question the appellant;~~

~~Following questioning of the appellant, the Committee will question any other relevant individuals it has called to appear before the committee. For fitness to practise appeals, this will include the Convener of the College Fitness to Practise Committee;~~

~~After questioning has concluded, the Convener will invite any relevant individuals who have been called to appear before the committee to make any closing statements they might wish to make, each in turn;~~

~~Following hearing closing statements from relevant individuals, the Convener will invite the appellant to make a closing statement, should the appellant wish to do so;~~

~~At this point, the hearing will conclude and the Committee will begin its deliberations. The outcome of the deliberations will be one of the options described in paragraph 44;~~

~~Following the end of the hearing, the appellant will be informed electronically via email of the outcome of their appeal within 1 working day of the close of proceedings. A detailed report of proceedings which outlines the Committee's reasoning behind its decision will be provided to the appellant no later than five working days following the conclusion of the hearing.~~

~~The Student Appeal Committee or Student Fitness to Practise Appeal Committee may hold physical hearings or, in exceptional circumstances, virtual hearings. Whilst it is in appellants' interests to ensure that they are available to attend a hearing in person, this will not always be possible. Decisions about the nature of the hearings will be made by the relevant Convener and Secretary of the Committee with due~~



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~~consideration of fairness, accessibility and the ability of all involved to participate fully. The Committee may adjourn, continue, or postpone a hearing at its discretion. If the appellant does not appear on the date appointed and the Convener of the Committee is satisfied that the appellant has been given due notice to appear, the Committee may hear the appeal in the appellant's absence. However, the Committee may not draw any adverse inference from the appellant's failure to appear.~~

~~On hearing an appeal, there are three options available to the Student Appeal Committee [(i), (ii) or (iii)]. The options available to the Student Fitness to Practise Appeal Committee are limited to options (i) and (ii). has the authority to:~~

~~Instruct the relevant decision making body to re-convene in order to reconsider the appellants result(s) or outcome or fitness to practise decision, adopting any requirements or conditions specified by the Committee; or~~

~~confirm the original decision of the decision making body. In which case, no further action is taken in respect of the appeal and the case is concluded; or~~

~~vary the original decision of the decision making body. This is not an option in the case of joint academic and professional qualifications or for courses where a professional qualification is awarded as an outcome of the examination process. Where an appeal hearing relates to the professional (as opposed to the academic) aspect of a qualification, or to a conduct appeal, the authority of the Student Appeal Committee is limited to those options set out at (i) and (ii) above.~~

~~The decisions of the Student Appeal Committee, the Student Fitness to Practise Appeal Committee and any decisions of their sub-committees, are final. There will be no further opportunity for appeal against the decision within the University.~~

Section H: Ombudsman and Reporting

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)

35.51. Students who are dissatisfied with the way their appeal has been handled have the right to complain to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). The SPSO will consider the case and make a decision on whether to investigate. It is important to note that the SPSO can only investigate whether an appeal has been handled appropriately by the University; it does not look again at the substance of the original appeal case. The SPSO can only consider cases when consideration is complete at University level. Information on how to complain to the SPSO will be provided to the student on completion of the appeal. Full information on the SPSO and on how it handles complaints can be found at the SPSO website: <https://www.spsos.org.uk/>

Reporting

52. If an appeal is upheld and referred back to the relevant decision-making body, that body is expected to keep a record of the upheld appeal information being reconsidered and any decision that is communicated to the student regarding this.
to a

36.53. The Student Appeal Committee and Student Fitness to Practise Committee reports annually to the Senate Quality Assurance Committee, detailing the volume and nature of the appeals dealt with in the previous academic session, and highlighting any issues of concern or significance.

[insert approval date]



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Equality Impact Assessment

<p>A. Policy/Practice (name or brief description): Student Appeal Regulations and associated guidance</p>
<p>B. Reason for Equality Impact Assessment (Mark yes against the applicable reason):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertaking a review of an existing policy/practice
<p>C. Person responsible for the policy area or practice:</p> <p>Name: Lisa Dawson</p> <p>Job title: Academic Registrar</p> <p>School/service/unit: Registry Services</p>
<p>D. An Impact Assessment should be carried out if any of the following apply to the policy/practice, if it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • affects primary or high level functions of the University - Yes • is relevant to the promotion of equality (in terms of the Public Sector Equality Duty 'needs' as set out in the Policy and Guidance)? - No • It is one which interested parties could reasonably expect the University to have carried out an EqlA? - Yes
<p>E. Equality Groups</p> <p>To which equality groups is the policy/practice relevant and why? (add notes against the following applicable equality group/s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • age • disability • race (including ethnicity and nationality) • religion or belief • sex • sexual orientation • gender reassignment • pregnancy and maternity • marriage or civil partnership¹

¹ Note: only the duty to eliminate discrimination applies to marriage and civil partnership. There is no need to have regard to advancing equality or opportunity or fostering good relations in this respect.

The Student Appeal Regulations and associated guidance govern the University's appeal process and will apply to all students. Any member of the student population could be included in one of these equality groups.

Add notes against the following applicable statements:

- **On any available information about the needs of relevant equality groups:**

The scope of the Student Appeal Regulations includes decisions in relation to academic decisions, exclusion from studies, decisions of Student Fitness to Practise Committees, and outcomes of conduct investigations and the Support for Study policy. The Student Appeal Regulations apply equally to all students, but it can be reasonably expected that students who have been subject to review or investigation under any of the policies or regulations that come under the scope of appeals are more likely to submit an appeal. It is not however within the scope of this impact assessment to determine the impact on students of these associated policies and regulations.

The annual appeal report presents an analysis of the data on student appeals and is reviewed by the Senate Quality Assurance Committee. The report for 2022/23 indicates that:

- The proportion of male/female appellants is similar to the proportion of male/female students across the University. In 2021/22 there had been a higher proportion of male appellants. The data for 2022/23 shows a more equal gender distribution.
- 17.7% of appellants had a declared disability. This is a smaller percentage than in 2021/22, in which 25% of appellants had a declared disability. The most frequent categories of disability were mental health conditions, learning differences or multiple disability categories.
- Although the report does not include data on age of appellants, it does show that a higher proportion of PG students submit appeals, relative to UG students. Since PG students will, on average, be older than UG students, this suggests that students who are older are more likely to submit an appeal.

- **Any gaps in evidence/insufficient information to properly assess the policy, and how this be will be addressed:**

- It is possible for students to submit more than one appeal, which may slightly skew the data.
- The data for 2022/23 on appellants with a declared disability (17.7%) mentioned above cannot yet be considered in relation to the University population, as the EDMARC EDI Data Student Report for 2022/23 is not yet available on the University's website.
- The data for 2022/23 does not include the age of appellants, and limited inferences can be made from the data on appeals by level of study (UG/PGT/PGR). Age information is not gathered as part of the appeal process.
- The data on student appeals does not include information on the following characteristics:
 - race (including ethnicity and nationality)
 - religion or belief
 - sexual orientation
 - gender reassignment
 - pregnancy and maternity
 - marriage or civil partnership

This impact assessment considers that the policy as amended should not have a negative impact on any of the equality groups, and that the gaps in evidence do not preclude the fair assessment of the policy.

- **If application of this policy/practice leads to discrimination (direct or indirect), harassment, victimisation, less favourable treatment for particular equality groups:** There is no evidence to suggest that this is the case.
- **If the policy/practice contributes to advancing equality of opportunity²** All appeals are considered equally under the Student Appeal Regulations, regardless of who is making the appeal or the appeal category. Each individual appeal is handled in a way which appropriately considers any protected characteristics under the Equality Act, and considers whether or not other University policies and regulations have been correctly and fairly implemented.
- **If there is an opportunity in applying this policy/practice to foster good relations:** No
- **If the policy/practice create any barriers for any other groups?**

This impact assessment considers that the policy as amended does not introduce additional barriers for any student groups. Students can request adjustments or accessibility support in completing the form from the appeals team. The amendments to the policy aim to remove barriers by making the policy clearer, and therefore more accessible, by making the policy more comprehensive and by providing better governance mechanisms.

 1. Amendments to improve clarity and accessibility: This includes clarifying definitions, clearer use of language (e.g. replacing the term 'appellant' with 'student'), providing a list of decisions that are not open to appeal and clarifying students' responsibilities. It also includes the removal of unnecessary procedural complexity which did not bring any benefits to students (e.g. the outcome of 'partially upheld appeals' has been removed, and the two levels of full Appeal Committee and Appeal Sub-Committee have been simplified into a single Appeal Committee). These amendments have been made in response to students' lack of clarity or understanding of sections of the current regulations, as evidenced in appeal submissions and enquiries from students. This should have a positive impact on all students. Removal of any gendered language in the policy to ensure neutrality.
 2. Amendments to make the policy more comprehensive: Students will now be permitted to appeal Board of Examiners' decisions in relation to academic misconduct penalties. The current policy does not make it clear that these decisions are open to appeal. This should have a positive impact on all students, and in particular on any groups of students who are more likely to incur academic misconduct penalties, e.g. students for whom English is a second language.
 3. Amendments to provide better governance: The appeal regulations previously empowered the full Appeal Committee to alter academic decisions by overturning a decision following an upheld appeal and specifying a different outcome. This is no longer considered an appropriate outcome for an appeal as the Appeal Committee should not be able to override the authority of a Board of Examiners, or another relevant Committee, given that the Appeal

² This question does not apply to the protected characteristic of marriage or civil partnership

Committee does not have the academic expertise to make final decisions about students' academic outcomes.

- **How the communication of the policy/practice is made accessible to all groups, if relevant?**

Academic Services will communicate the new Student Appeal Regulations in its annual update of new policies, and the policy will be accompanied by updated guidance and webpages with frequently asked questions (FAQ). Academic Services aims to work with Schools (including the key roles of Student Advisers) and The Advice Place to increase knowledge and share guidance on the updated appeal regulations, process and remit and the action Schools can take to resolve issues using the Taught Assessment Regulations. This will involve engaging with the relevant staff networks and providing supporting communications.

The policy can also be made available in different formats.

- **How equality groups or communities are involved in the development, review and/or monitoring of the policy or practice?**

The amendments to the policy have been developed through a wide consultation process, including a meeting with the Students' Association and The Advice Place, as well as feedback collected from staff in Colleges and Schools, the Conveners and Vice-Conveners of the Student Appeal Committee, the College and School Academic Misconduct Officers, and Legal Services.

The Student Appeal Regulations and Student Appeal Committee membership are considered and approved by the Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC). APRC membership includes representation of the Students' Association, The Advice Place, the three Colleges and Senate.

The data and trends on student appeals are reviewed annually by the Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) via an annual report. SQAC membership includes representation of the Students' Association, The Advice Place, the three Colleges, Senate, and an external representative from within the Scottish Higher Education system.

- **Any potential or actual impact of applying the policy or practice, with regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and promote good relations:**

As detailed above, this impact assessment has identified no negative impact on any groups that would derive from the proposed amendments.

F. Equality Impact Assessment Outcome

Option 1: No change required – the assessment is that the policy/practice is/will be robust.

G. Action and Monitoring

1. **Specify the actions required for implementing findings of this EqIA and how the policy or practice will be monitored in relation to its equality impact (or note where this is specified above).**

No change in current practice required. As mentioned above, the data and trends on student appeals are reviewed annually by the Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) via an annual report.

2. When will the policy/practice next be reviewed? The expected date for the next review of the policy is 2027/28.

H. Publication of EqIA

Can this EqIA be published in full, now? Yes (once the policy is approved)

If No – please specify when it may be published or indicate restrictions that apply: n/a

I. Sign-off

EqIA undertaken by (name(s) and job title(s)): Cristina Matthews, Academic Policy Officer

Accepted by (name):

TBC

Date: TBC (once policy has been approved)

Retain a copy of this form for your own records and send a copy to equalitydiversity@ed.ac.uk

Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee**21 March 2024****Committee Priorities 2024/25****Description of paper**

1. The paper asks the Committee to discuss and agree proposed priorities for academic year 2024/25.

Action requested / recommendation

2. The Committee is asked to discuss and agree the proposed priorities for 2024/25, outlining areas of focus and objectives. The Discussion section of the paper outlines some proposed priorities, based on relevant University strategic priorities and existing business of the Committee. The Committee is invited to discuss these, and any other priorities members wish to propose.

Background and context

3. In semester two of each academic year, Senate Standing Committees identify priorities to focus on throughout the following academic year.
4. Registry Services have taken the following into consideration when proposing priorities across the Standing Committees:
 - Committee remits
 - Feedback from Senate and standing committees
 - University strategic priorities
 - External and regulatory requirements
 - Outcomes of quality processes, including external review
5. Member input (including from the constituencies they represent) is critical to shaping the proposed priorities and the associated areas of focus and objectives. Members are therefore invited to shape the draft priorities below or to suggest additional priorities to reach agreement on a set of proposed priorities which are relevant to the [committee remit](#) and the University's strategic priorities, and are achievable within resources. As such, members are asked to consider SMART criteria when discussing and agreeing the proposed priorities. Ideally, the objectives of the priorities should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.
6. The Standing Committees' proposed priorities will be reported to Senate in May 2024 for endorsement.

Discussion***DRAFT Committee priorities 2024/25***

Proposed priority	Curriculum Transformation Programme
Rationale and fit with remit	<p>The Curriculum Transformation Programme is a major University strategic priority which aligns to Strategy 2030. It is also relevant to the committee remit:</p> <p>2.1 Oversee the development, maintenance and implementation of an academic regulatory framework which effectively supports and underpins the University's educational activities.</p> <p>2.2 Ensure that the academic regulatory framework continues to evolve in order to meet organisational needs and is responsive to changes in University strategy, and in the internal and external environments.</p>
Area of focus and objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider and approve relevant policies to articulate the PGT programme archetypes (contingent on approval of the archetypes by Senate); • Consider regulatory implications of elements of the PGT curriculum, including progression points, awarding criteria, programme length, and Recognition of Prior Learning.
Regulatory/external requirement?	No

Proposed priority	Postgraduate Research students
Rationale and fit with remit	<p>This is the continuation of work initiated in 23/24 via an APRC sub-group. Further work is needed to ensure our regulations and policies provide the most appropriate routes to address situations where students' progress with their research is severely hampered by adverse personal circumstances. This is relevant to the committee remit:</p> <p>2.1 Oversee the development, maintenance and implementation of an academic regulatory framework which effectively supports and underpins the University's educational activities.</p> <p>2.6 Consider the implications of the Committee's work and its decisions in the context of external initiatives and compliance and legal frameworks, particularly in relation to equality and diversity.</p>
Area of focus and objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider regulatory options for handling cases where students' progress with their research is severely hampered over a prolonged period. • Ensure regulations and policies take account of adjustments which may be offered to students with disabilities. • Take steps to ensure the Annual Review process focuses on academic matters.
Regulatory/external requirement?	We have an anticipatory duty under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that our regulations and policies do not discriminate against students with disabilities, and other protected characteristics.

Proposed priority	Scheduled review of policies
Rationale and fit with remit	<p>APRC revised the schedule of reviews for policies in March 2023 to group these more thematically and address a backlog in reviews generated during the pandemic period. Maintenance of the framework of policies and regulations is central to APRC's remit:</p> <p>2.1 Oversee the development, maintenance and implementation of an academic regulatory framework which effectively supports and underpins the University's educational activities.</p>
Area of focus and objectives	<p>Policies scheduled for review during 2024/25 include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorised Interruption of Study Policy • Dual, Double, and Multiple Awards Policy • Handbook for External Examining of Research Degrees • Visiting and Non-Graduating Student Policy and Procedure • Withdrawal and Exclusion from Studies Procedure
Regulatory/external requirement?	Yes. Regular review of core practices as enshrined in policy is an expectation under the QAA UK Quality Code.

Resource implications

7. Standing Committees' work has implications not only for Registry Services, but also for the membership and stakeholders the Committee may need to consult and work with in relation to a particular priority. Resource implications should be outlined and considered on an ongoing basis as work on priorities progresses.

Risk management

8. Work on priorities is vital to the Committee fulfilling its remit. Failure to fulfil its remit raises potential risks associated with the University's framework of academic policy and regulations and the student experience.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

9. This paper does not respond to the climate emergency or contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Equality & diversity

10. Equality and diversity implications should be outlined and considered on an ongoing basis as work on priorities progresses.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

11. Registry Services will use the discussion at the meeting to finalise the proposed priorities. The proposed priorities will be reported to Senate in May for endorsement. Additionally, the Senate Committees' Newsletter provides information on standing committee business.

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