The University of Edinburgh
Senate Quality Assurance Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on
Thursday 22nd February 2024, 2-5pm
Hybrid meeting: Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House
and Microsoft Teams

1. Attendance

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

2. Minutes of meeting held on 7th December 2023

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 7th December 2023, following discussion and acceptance of some amendments that had been submitted prior to the meeting.

It was discussed how best to reflect views that members bring to the Committee on behalf of their constituents. There was not unanimous agreement on how best to capture this in the minutes, although it was agreed that a case-by-case approach considering the context of discussions would be helpful.

The note of e-business from December 2023 was also approved by the Committee.

3. Matters Arising

- **Reflection time to close meeting**

Following the December 2023 meeting, a member suggested that a few minutes be used at the end of each meeting to allow members to reflect on any issues or positives of the meeting, and an opportunity to raise concerns not addressed in the formal agenda of the meeting. The Convener proposed that this time be factored in to Committee meetings and members were supportive.

- **Student involvement in Deanery of Molecular, Genetic and Population Health Sciences (MolGenPop) IPR**

The Dean of Quality, CMVM commended MolGenPop on their employment of a student in a paid role for the duration of their IPR preparation and review. This demonstrated innovative good practice to bring in the student voice to the review process.

> **Action:** School Representative of CMVM to write reflection of IPR process for Teaching Matters blog in order to share good practice with other Schools and Colleges.

4. Annual Reports 2022-23

Academic Appeals (Paper C – closed)
This paper was presented by the Director of Academic Services. The committee were informed that the report reflects the sector wide trend of increased appeal cases. The number of late appeals is also increasing, and there is the expectation that 2023-24 appeals will surpass the volume of cases in previous years, partly due to the late release of marks following the marking and assessment boycott (MAB). However, the overall level of upheld appeals remains consistent.

It was highlighted that the increase in overall cases is due to the volume of appeals submitted by the PGT student population. It was acknowledged that this cohort is largely enrolled for just one year, and it may be that more targeted support to this cohort will set expectations from the beginning as to the correct use of the appeal process. Student Advisors were identified as a key role in ensuring that students have the correct advice and are properly informed and supported should they decide to submit an appeal. It was confirmed that Student Advisors will have participated in a briefing on the appeals process as part of their role, but there may be a need for further training on this topic.

The Committee also felt it would be beneficial to increase the overall staff awareness and guidance around Taught Assessment Regulation 64, which would assist with cases being resolved by Schools or Boards at an early stage. It was felt that Board of Examiner meetings would be an appropriate time and place for raising awareness of the TARs. It was suggested that programme handbooks may also need to be reviewed; digital copies are not used as much as printed copies used to be, but re-designing handbooks as a digital tool that is interactive and intended for online use may improve engagement.

Responding to questions from Committee members, the presenter confirmed that, in instances where an appeal is upheld on Ground B, the learnings relevant to the case are fed back to the School/Board of Examiners. It was also confirmed that there is no evidence of systematic issues in any Schools, and that local interventions and resolutions are working well. Cases which are resolved voluntarily by the School (rather than through the formal appeal process) are marked as withdrawn but still recorded in the overall case numbers.

The report identified areas in which enhancements can be made to the appeals process:
➢ Actions to help students better understand grounds for appeal.
➢ Increase staff awareness of the Taught Assessment Regulations (specifically TAR 64) and scope of appeals.
➢ Recruit more academic staff to sit on the appeals panel in order to reduce turnaround times.
➢ Updated Appeal Regulations to be submitted to APRC for approval before end of 2023-24 academic year.

The Committee discussed the areas for improvement and supported the proposed actions. The Committee considered whether EDI data should be included on the appeal form in order to better analyse how the service is used and by whom; it was felt that more discussion would be needed on this topic in order to come to an informed decision as to whether capturing EDI data would be appropriate.

Action: The Dean of Education Quality Assurance and Culture, CSE to approach colleagues within the College to support recruitment for appeals panel members.

Action: Academic Appeals team to explore whether proportional figure relative to the number of students in Schools can be included in further reports.

Student Discipline (Paper D – closed)
This paper was presented by the Head of Student Conduct from the Academic Services department. The Code of Student Conduct requires this report to be presented to SQAC, although the overall responsibility for the Code sits with University Court. Key points highlighted to the Committee included the increase in academic misconduct cases, breaches in student accommodation and the increase in cases reported to University of Edinburgh and to the police.

The Committee discussed EDI data and analysis in the context of the Student Discipline report. It was agreed that there would need to be clear reasons as to why the data is collected, and that would need to be clearly communicated to students. It was noted that academic research shows that race, ethnicity and English not spoken as first language are sources of disparity, but it was also acknowledged that there is a risk of profiling students based on their data.

In relation to cases of academic misconduct, the Committee discussed the value of a non-deficit and skills-based approach to managing academic misconduct. It was felt that a mainstream approach to educating students on academic integrity and expectations would be beneficial, especially for PGT students studying for just one year, or international students who have experience of studying elsewhere.

Action: Committee Convener to bring academic integrity discussion to CAMO meetings to help facilitate understanding and improve approaches to identifying and raising awareness of academic misconduct.

The Committee were informed that police involvement does have an impact on resolution time; the Student Conduct team are unable to investigate a case alongside an open police investigation. The implications of investigations, such as an interruption of studies or visa requirements, are managed by university policies or policies of external bodies such as the Home Office.

The Committee discussed the policy of ACE to fine students in response to a breach of conduct in their accommodation. The Committee requested further information on the use of the sum collected through fines, with some concern noted for the implications of fining students in the context of the cost-of-living crisis.

Action: Head of Student Conduct to enquire into value and use of the fines collected by ACE, and report back to Committee Secretary with an update.

Annual Review of Student Support Services (Paper F)
This paper was presented by the acting Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement, Academic Services. The report detailed the outcomes of the annual student services review, highlighting good practice and also noting the following themes for development:
i)   Size and shape and staff development
ii)   Partnership working and interconnectedness
iii)   User feedback and impact evaluation

The Committee considered the themes and in particular discussed career pathways for professional services staff, workload, the expanding student body and related demand on services, and the sense of over-surveying staff and students. It was agreed that improvements

to interconnectedness would enhance use and collection of data and reduce the risk of services working in isolation according to their own individual action plans.

The process of the annual review of student support services was also discussed. It was noted that a benefit of the process is the good practice event which brings together all services heads, some of whom operate in different directorates. This annual review is the only process which brings all student-facing services together. Any proposed changes to the review process following the feedback of involved parties will be presented to SQAC for consideration.

Members were invited share views on how best to amplify the themes arising from the report to the relevant areas of the University. It was suggested the Heads of Directorates and College Committees have a role to play, as well as the University Executive.

> **Action:** College Deans of Quality to share this paper with College Committees for comment, and feed back to Committee Secretary.
>
> **Action:** Academic Services to draft the summary report to be submitted to the University Executive for action.
>
> **Action:** Convener to liaise with Deputy Secretary, Students to explore how best to further issues and outcomes arising from the services review.

5. Student Support: Monitoring & Evaluation (Paper G)

The Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling spoke to this paper, which provided an update on the outcomes of evaluation of the Student Support Model (SSM) to date. The feedback has been sourced from Student Advisors; focus groups with other stakeholders are planned for the coming months, including with students who have experienced the previous Personal Tutor system and now the new SSM model.

The reflections to date have highlighted the following themes for the Student Support model:
1) Consistency and standardisation
2) Collaboration and trust
3) Workload and wellbeing

The Committee were updated on the ongoing work on the logic model evaluation, which is being developed by colleagues in SPS. Members were asked to be mindful of duplication of work, should they know of evaluation activity taking place within their own Schools and Colleges. Local evaluations are useful and can provide insight into why something works in one area and not another, and this activity is encouraged to feed into the wider, ongoing evaluation work.

Some particular concerns were raised during discussion of this item; expectations around cohort lead activity, the ratio of student advisors to students, contact between students and academic

staff, and inconsistency with the implementation of the model across Schools. The Committee were assured these concerns will be considered as part of the evaluation. There is ongoing work to understand the workload demands on student advisors, and these factors will be considered in line with the ratio. An update on the cohort lead role will be brought to the next meeting of the Committee.

6. Curriculum Transformation Project – PGT Framework (Paper H)

This item was presented by the Curriculum Transformation Project Lead, and SQAC were asked to comment on the proposal which is in its development phase. The Committee were informed that the programme framework is looking to align itself with existing quality assurance processes, and not require a new validation process. It is understood that approximately 80% of existing PGT programme fit within the proposed archetypes. Schools have been asked to explore the scale of work involved in revising the programmes which need development to align with the framework.

The presenter also highlighted progression hurdles to the Committee for discussion. The framework is looking for progression points to become more personal and reactive to student journeys. It was proposed that continuation points may be a better term for this step in the student journey. Programmes which need hurdles due to external accreditation requirements, for example, can be accommodated in the framework.

The Committee were supportive of the framework, but highlighted some areas which need further consideration. There was discussion of the impact of students staying enrolled for longer periods of time, as they build credits throughout their programme in the proposed "stackable" way. This extended period of time has implications for funding, recruitment and admissions, and the workload of academics and professional services staff who manage programmes. The Committee encouraged the project board to ensure that these pathways are financially viable, and to set out support for Schools who may need support to ensure their programmes are sustainable. The Committee also highlighted the potential workload involved of aligning programmes to the archetypes, or for programmes wishing to change between the modes.

> **Action:** Committee members to contact the CTP Lead by email with any additional points or further thoughts.
>
> **Action:** CTP Lead and Committee Secretary to liaise on arranging a SQAC CTP workshop with involvement from School Directors of Quality.

7. Quality Enhancement & Standards Review (QESR)

The QESR report, published by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) after its November review visit, had been shared with the Committee along with the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the QESR oversight group.

The Convener outlined that the group will work to respond to the recommendations and to co-ordinate the managerial response. The group will report into both SQAC and Senate Education Committee (SEC) and will provide regular updates. The Committee discussed the priorities of the

oversight group; assessment and feedback, with a focus on turnaround times, the Tutors & Demonstrators policy and implementation, and the development of the University-wide Learning & Teaching policy. These were identified as the critical priorities for the remainder of the academic year. The Committee highlighted that the quality of feedback is of vital importance, and that the QESR oversight group must give feedback quality the same attention as turnaround times.

> **Action:** Convener to share with the Committee the oversight group's file of recommendations, initial response, actions taken and actions planned.
>
> **Action:** Convener to add quality of feedback as an agenda item for the upcoming Assessment & Feedback Strategy Group meeting.

8. Mid-year update on progress against SQAC priorities

The committee noted the update on SQAC priorities. Discussion addressed the need to set priorities for 2024/25 and the best way to capture views of Senate members who wish to feed into the process. It was suggested that this could be facilitated through the SharePoint Senate members portal. It was noted that changes to external Quality frameworks may impact the priorities of the Committee.

9. Postgraduate Researcher Experience Survey College Reponses.

Due to time constraints, it was agreed to consider this item via e-business and for comments to be passed to the paper author.

> **Action:** Committee Secretary to circulate this item via e-business.

10. Internal Periodic Review: Reports & Responses

Due to time constraints, it was agreed that the IPR reports and responses would be addressed via e-business.

> **Action:** Committee Secretary to circulate this item via e-business.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 25th April, 2-5pm. This will be a hybrid meeting, taking place in the Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House and via Microsoft Teams.