H/02/27/02
CSPC: 22.09.16

Minutes of the Senatus Curriculum and Student Progression Committee (CSPC) held on Thursday 22 September 2016 at 2.00pm in Room 235, Joseph Black Chemistry Building, King's Buildings

Present:

Professor Alan Murray (Convener)	Assistant Principal, Academic Support
Professor Graeme Reid	Dean of Learning and Teaching (CSCE)
Mr Alan Brown	Associate Dean (Academic Progress) , CAHSS
Dr Theresa McKinven	Head of PG Section (CAHSS)
Ms Alex Laidlaw	Head of Academic Affairs (CSCE)
Dr Sheila Lodge	Head of Academic Administration (CMVM)
Professor Helen Cameron	Director, Centre for Medical Education (CMVM)
Dr Antony Maciocia	Dean of Students (CSCE)
Mr Patrick Garratt	Vice President Academic Affairs, EUSA
Dr Neil Lent	Institute for Academic Development (IAD)
Dr Adam Bunni	Head of Governance and Regulatory Team, Academic Services
Mr Barry Neilson	Director of Student Systems
Dr Ewen Macpherson	School of Engineering
Ms Anne-Marie Scott	IS Learning, Teaching and Web

In attendance:

Ms Ailsa Taylor (Secretary)	Academic Policy Officer, Academic Services
Mr Tom Ward	Director, Academic Services
Ms Charlotte Macdonald	Manager, The Advice Place
Ms Claire Thomson	Academic Adviser, The Advice Place

Apologies for absence:

Mr John Lowrey	Dean of Undergraduate Studies (CAHSS)
Professor John Stewart	Director of Teaching, Edinburgh Medical School: Biomedical Sciences
Professor Susan Rhind	Assistant Principal, Assessment and Feedback

1. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on Thursday 2 June 2016 were approved as an accurate record.

2. **Matters Arising**

Item 1 (MSW Social Work)

Approval was granted by Convener's Action on 15 June 2016 for an opt-out from the academic year for the MSW Social Work from 2016/17 onwards. A similar BSc (Hons) Social Work academic year opt-out had been approved by the Committee at the June 2016 CSPC

meeting. The opt-out allowed for a slightly earlier January start in 2017, in order to achieve the required number of placement days during the academic year. This opt-out would be in place from 2016/17 onwards until further notice, as it may be required again in future years in order to accommodate the required number of placement days.

Item 2 (Impact of industrial action)
Dr Adam Bunni reported on the impact of the industrial action initiated during Semester 2 2015/16, which overall was felt to be minimal. In the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, several External Examiners had resigned within one School. The Assessment Boycott Advisory Group approved the use of senior academic staff from other Colleges, to provide appropriate externality at Boards of Examiners meetings where External Examiners were unavailable due to the industrial action. Those who acted in this role had reported that they were content with the operation of the Board. Where External Examiners had not reviewed coursework, staff with appropriate expertise from other Schools or subject areas fulfilled this function. The Assessment Boycott Advisory Group were considering potential options in the event that further industrial action takes place in the autumn.

Item 3 (Zhejiang update)
Mr Tom Ward reported on the latest position regarding the Biomedical Sciences collaboration with Zhejiang and the jointly delivered programme in China. In the previous session, the Committee had reviewed the regulations and curriculum structures for the planned jointly delivered programme. Mr Ward had subsequently clarified most outstanding issues, although one specific issue remains. The Committee noted that the first students will be starting their studies on the programme soon. The Convener emphasised that due to the nature of the development, while the Committee should continue to be supportive it should also reflect on how the arrangements develop, particularly if they may set precedents for future activities.

3. CSPC Membership and Terms of Reference 2016/17 (CSPC 16/17 1 A)

Professor Graeme Reid was appointed as Vice-Convener of the Committee for 2016/17.

Subject to the following amendment, the CSPC membership list and Terms of Reference were approved as presented:

- Professor Alan Cumming was no longer on CSPC as he had been replaced by Dr Geoff Pearson as the new Dean of Students in CMVM.

Professor John Stewart had formally notified the Committee that he would be retiring from the University on 4 November 2016. Professor John Stewart occupied a co-opted position on the Committee, therefore there would be a further co-opted member vacancy.

> **ACTION: Ailsa Taylor to revise CSPC membership list on the website:**
> http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/committees/curriculum-student-progression/members
>
> **ACTION: Ailsa Taylor to publish CSPC Terms of Reference 2016/17 on the University website:**
> http://www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/AcademicServices/Committees/CSCP/CSPCRemit.pdf

4. Strategic issues regarding academic policy development, implementation and supporting business processes (CSPC 16/17 1 B)

Mr Tom Ward and Mr Barry Neilson presented this item. The paper highlighted key issues that the Service Excellence Programme had identified regarding the University approach to implementing academic policy and guidance (Student Administration and Support strand). It also reported on key findings from a recent benchmarking and mapping exercise regarding the University's approach to academic policy and regulation.

Mr Barry Neilson updated the Committee on Service Excellence Programme developments. The Programme was reviewing key professional service activity, focusing initially on HR and student administration and support. The Project Team had held around 20 workshops, engaging with 200-300 staff. The initial findings included:

- Multiplicity of lack of integration of systems, leading to additional workload or sub-optimal processes;

- Accessing information and services online could be challenging; in particular, processes that we required students to engage in could be confusing;

- Flexible implementation of policy leads to duplication of effort and variation of outcome.

The Project Team have accumulated evidence that suggests there is an opportunity to free up a significant amount of staff time. The team are currently working through the options identification phase which looks and the potential opportunities to enhance what we do and how we operate and individual business cases for these options will be developed.

Mr Tom Ward updated the Committee on recent work with regard to simplifying the University's regulations. Benchmarking with other institutions indicated that our University level academic policies and regulations were in line with the sector in terms of the issues they cover and the volume of documentation. Further work was done to explore at what level decisions were being made within the University, i.e. School, College, University. The majority of decisions relating to study were made at Board level within Schools. This posed questions about whether the depth of levels was required in all cases. There were also areas where flexible, devolved implementation of policy was leading to divergence in policy. Developing local processes took up staff time, and could lead to variation in treatment of students, which may not always be justifiable.

The Committee discussed the issues raised by the paper and considered ways in which the University could approach policy development and implementation in the future. The following observations were made:

- Consistency of treatment towards students was of vital importance. Any necessary variation needed to be explained to students very carefully.

- Colleges had observed that some Schools preferred the Colleges to lead on engagement with individual students when more difficult decisions needed to be conveyed e.g. in relation to exclusion for lack of satisfactory academic progress.

- Decision making could be further mapped to see which categories of decision making had the biggest impact upon students.

- Getting "buy-in" to regulations and policies was very difficult to achieve, and consultation across the University was key to this.

- The paper referred to inconsistency between Schools/Colleges in relation to policy and practice, but there was also inconsistency within some Schools themselves in relation to policy and practice which could add complexity.

- There were financial considerations that were highlighted by the Service Excellence Programme in relation to our current operations. Decisions taken by the Committee in relation to assessment and progression, and Tier 4 students, for example, had real-time cost implications for the University.

- Some disciplines had external drivers (e.g. professional requirements in Engineering, Education, Social Work) which the Schools and Colleges needed to take into account.

- It was sometimes difficult to differentiate whether an "opt-out" of University regulation or policy was being requested for a discipline specific reason, or simply because of firmly held views.

- It was noted that there is an intrinsic tension between the drive for concise regulations and absolute consistency of treatment between students in different Schools with apparently similar circumstances.

5. Collaborative activities – arrangements for certificates and transcripts for dual/multiple awards (CSPC 16/17 1 C)

Mr Tom Ward presented this paper which asked the Committee to discuss one particular aspect of the University's policy on dual, double and multiple awards. The policy had been approved in September 2014, and the Committee had agreed to a set of recommendations at the time, which had included:

"The University of Edinburgh's degree certificate should include a form of words explaining that the degree is awarded for a jointly-delivered programme of study with another institution (named), for which the graduate has also been eligible for a separate degree from the other institution, stating the location of the partner and of the location of study. The transcript and HEAR should also include this form of words."

The Committee noted that recent Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) guidance indicated that should include a form of works on "the certificate and/or transcript or record of achievement", and that feedback from two of the University's dual awards developments in China suggested there may be challenges in reconciling the current University policy of having the relevant wording on the degree certificate due to Chinese Ministry of Education requirements.

The Committee approved the proposed wording regarding the dual / multiple nature of the award:

"Awarded by the University of Edinburgh as part of a programme delivered with XYZ. The recipient of this award may also have received an award from XYZ".

The Committee also confirmed that - as a minimum - the wording must be on transcripts. However, members of the Committee suggested that the University should undertake further investigation regarding the exact policy of the Ministry of Education for China before the Committee made a final decision regarding whether the University should or should not also include such wording on the degree certificates. Mr Tom Ward was to explore this matter further and come back to the Committee with further information so that a decision could be taken.

> **Action: Mr Tom Ward to explore Chinese Ministry of Education requirements further regarding degree certificate wording and report back to the Committee at a future meeting.**

6. Elevated Hurdles for Honours Progression (Verbal Update)

Dr Adam Bunni gave a verbal update on this item, which had been raised at the recent Resits and Academic Failure task group meeting, and at a recent meeting with the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Science and College of Science and Engineering about progression. There seemed to be a growing appetite across the University to tackle the issue of elevated hurdles for honours progression in cases where there was no real pedagogical rationale for them. It was understood that elevated hurdles could put good students in progression limbo, led to inconsistent practice across the University (and also caused downstream issues with systems). Following discussion, Committee members jointly expressed concerns about the impact of elevated hurdles across the University, and asked Dr Bunni to investigate this matter further (for example with colleagues in Student Systems) and report back to the Committee.

> **Action: Dr Adam Bunni to investigate further and report back to the Committee at a future date.**

7. Board of Examiners Handbook (CSPC 16/17 1 D)

Mr Tom Ward introduced this item. The draft Handbook served to simplify a number of existing documents by combining them into a single "how to" guide for members of Boards of Examiners, which complemented the Taught Assessment Regulations.

The following clarifications were provided by Committee members:

- The Regulations Expert on the Board of Examiners had an "advisory" role.
- There was no requirement to continue with current practice whereby Schools send Colleges copies of minutes of the Board of Examiner meetings (as indicated by Taught Assessment Regulation 62.2 in 2016/17. The Committee would seek to formally revise this particular regulation in 2017/18.
- It was the Head of School (or delegated nominee) who was responsible for appointing the Convener and members of the Special Circumstances Committee.

The Board of Examiners Handbook paper was approved in principle, subject to any edits to the draft that were to be sent to Mr Tom Ward by Committee members by 29 September 2016. The revised Handbook would then be finalised and published with immediate effect.

It was also noted that the approach taken in this work could be a useful template for improving and simplifying other areas of regulation and policy – whereby an initial rationalisation is follow by a later, more fundamental review.

Action: Committee members were asked to provide any further comments on this item to Mr Tom Ward on tom.ward@ed.ac.uk **within a week (by 29 September 2016).**

Action: Mr Tom Ward to finalise the Board of Examiners Handbook after 29 September 2016 and arrange for publication with immediate effect.

8. **The future of Degree Programme Specifications in the light of Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) guidelines on consumer protection law (CSPC 16/17 1 E)**

This paper highlighted issues regarding the University's compliance with CMA requirements for the provision of programme information, particularly in relation to the Degree Programme Specifications (DPS). The Committee discussed this item and agreed to pursue option 5.1.3 further:

5.1.3 Expand on the Degree Finder entries so that they can meet the CMA 'material information' requirements in full, and cease publishing DPSs (while continuing to require Schools to have DPSs – based on a revised standard University template – for all programmes for internal purposes).

It was further agreed that the next stage would be to have more detailed discussions regarding the proposals with a wider range of stakeholders (including the Service Excellence Programme) and to estimate the technical and practical resource implications of implementation, prior to making a decision on the way forward. This scoping was expected to be primarily a technical / systems analysis in the first instance, and would not commence until the Service Excellence Programme had finished its current phase of work (to be advised by Mr Barry Neilson), in case it also came up with any recommendations in this area. Mr Tom Ward would contact Niall Bradley in Communications and Marketing to let him know of CSPC's decision to investigate expanded Degree Finder entries further.

Action: Mr Tom Ward to contact Niall Bradley in Communications and Marketing after the meeting so that investigation of the possibility of expanded Degree Finder entries could begin (once the Service Excellence Programme had finished its current phase of work).

9. **Programme and Course Approval and Management Policy (CSPC 16/17 1 F)**

The proposed amended Programme and Course Approval and Management Policy was approved as presented, subject to some minor edits that were to be emailed to Mr Tom Ward by the following day (23 September 2016). The policy would then be sent out to Colleges next week, and was for immediate implementation. Some of the changes to the policy were fairly significant and were designed to:

- consolidate information on programme and course approval and management into one policy, in line with the simplification agenda;
- formalise good practice in relation to student recruitment;
- assist the University to comply with Consumer and Markets Authority (CMA) guidelines.

Action: Committee members were asked to provide any further minor edits to this item to Mr Tom Ward on tom.ward@ed.ac.uk **by the following day (23 September 2016), so that the finalised document could be circulated to Colleges w.b. 26 September 2016.**

10. Thematic Review of Mental Health Services: Support for Study Policy (CSPC 16/17 1 G)

Professor Alan Murray presented this paper, which asked the Committee to consider a recommendation that had been remitted by the Thematic Review of Mental Health Services. The Mental Health Services Review Team had recommended that the Support for Study Policy was reviewed, as the current policy lacked the option to require the students to interrupt their studies where the Support for Study panel deemed it appropriate. CSPC had been asked to make an initial response on this to the Quality Assurance Committee by Friday 23 September 2016. CSPC would then be required to make a further year on report to the Quality Assurance Committee in September 2017.

During the initial development of the current Support for Study policy, this particular issue had been discussed across the University, but there had been conflicting views, and the required interruption of studies element was finally discounted and removed from the draft prior to final submission to CSPC in April 2015. CSPC members were now being asked to re-consider this option.

Following detailed discussion, it was agreed to establish a short-life task group to explore this issue further. The group would also consider the interaction between the Support for Study policy and the Code of Student Conduct, and whether to remove specific references to potential disciplinary action from within the Support for Study policy itself. Professor Alan Murray would chair the group and would contact Committee representatives and Advice Place colleagues to seek their involvement in the group. The task group would then report back to the Committee at a future date, to enable the Committee to report back to the Quality Assurance Committee.

> **Action: Professor Murray to establish a short-life task group to consider whether the Support for Study policy was to be revised further, and report back to a future meeting of CSPC.**

11. Review of the Academic Year (CSPC 16/17 1 H)

Mr Tom Ward presented this paper which reported on the outcomes of the recent review of the academic year. The Learning and Teaching Committee had established a task group to review the structure, and there had been widespread consultation across the University but the main message that came from the consultation was that the current model, whilst not perfect, was the best available and preferable to the alternate proposals. CSPC members were now asked to consider a number of recommendations that had been remitted by the Learning and Teaching Committee.

Mr Alan Brown raised a query about the possibility of starting semester 2 a week later. It was noted that the Committee was not in a position to review this suggestion since the University had concluded that the University should retain the current year structure.

It was agreed that the Committee would:

- continue to be responsible for considering requests to opt-outs from the academic year (valid reasons would generally relate to external factors, such as professional practice requirements);

- continue to encourage Schools to avoid teaching on the final two days of semester 1 where it was appropriate to do so, in order to maximise the amount of time for student revision;
- continue to encourage Schools to move towards examining semester 1 courses in semester 1, with a particular focus on pre-honours courses;
- consider any impact of the current variation in Online Distance Learning (ODL) programme structures upon the University's ambitions in relation to online learning. Mr Tom Ward agreed to investigate this point further with two Assistant Principals and particularly with colleagues in the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine and revert back to the Committee at a future date.

> **Action: Mr Tom Ward to investigate the impact of the variation in ODL programme structures further with two Assistant Principals and colleagues in the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine and revert back to the Committee at a future date.**

12. Resits and Academic Failure Task Group (Verbal Update)

Dr Adam Bunni gave a verbal update on this item. The recently established Resits and Academic Failure Task Group of CSPC had met in early September 2016.

The Task Group was presented with two options for a revised approach to regulation around resits and academic failure for non-honours students: offering four attempts as an absolute entitlement; or offering two attempts as an entitlement, with a discretionary allowance of up to a further two attempts offered by the College/School. The group had dismissed the option of offering four attempts as an absolute entitlement, but was currently giving further consideration to the option of offering two attempts as an entitlement, with up to a further two attempts to be offered at the discretion of the College/School.

Dr Bunni was currently working on a consultation document which would be shared with College Undergraduate Learning and Teaching Committees. Feedback would be gathered and shared with the Task Group, who would then bring some proposals to CSPC.

> **Action: Dr Adam Bunni to share resit proposals with College Undergraduate Learning and Teaching Committees and gather feedback. Proposals to be brought back to a future meeting of CSPC for further consideration.**

13. Degree Programme Specifications: removal of reference to Innovative Learning Week (CSPC 16/17 1 I)

The Committee noted the action taken over the summer 2016 in relation to removing reference to Innovative Learning Week from Degree Programme Specifications in order to ensure compliance with Competition and Markets Authority guidelines.

14. Student Discipline Committee Membership and Student Discipline Committee Officers 2016/17 (CSPC 16/17 1 J)

Subject to the following amendments, membership of the Student Discipline Committee 2016/17 and Student Discipline Officers 2016/17 were approved as presented:

Student Discipline Officers 2016/17:
- Professor Richard Coyne was no longer the Dean of Postgraduate Studies - Research in the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS).

- Dr Gale MacLeod was no longer the Dean of Postgraduate Studies - Taught in CAHSS.
- Professor Neil Mulholland was now the Dean of Postgraduate Studies - Taught/Research in CAHSS.
- Professor Jeff Haywood was no longer a designated Vice-Principal on the Student Discipline Officer list following his retirement.

Action: Ailsa Taylor to publish Student Discipline Committee membership and Student Discipline Officers for 2016/17 on Academic Services website.

Student Discipline Committee:
http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/discipline/discipline-committee
Student Discipline Officers:
http://www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/AcademicServices/Discipline/StudentDisciplineOfficers.pdf

15. Students' Association Priorities 2016/17 (CSPC 16/17 1 K)

Mr Patrick Garratt updated the Committee on Students' Association priorities for 2016/17.

16. Knowledge Strategy Committee Report (CSPC 16/17 1 L)

This report was received by the Committee for information.

17. Any Other Business

There was no further business.

Ailsa Taylor, Academic Policy Officer, 28 September 2016