

The University of Edinburgh  
Senatus Quality Assurance Committee

**Meeting to be held on Thursday 25 April 2019 at 2pm  
in the Torridon Room, Charles Stewart House**

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The University of Edinburgh  
Senate Quality Assurance Committee

**Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 27 February 2019  
at 10am in the Raeburn Room, Old College**

**Present:**

Professor Tina Harrison (Convener)	Assistant Principal, Academic Standards and Quality Assurance
Dr Shereen Benjamin	Associate Dean (Quality Assurance) College of Arts, Humanities and Social Science
Megan Brown	Schools Engagement Officer, Edinburgh University Students' Association
Brian Connolly	Secretary to Senatus Quality Assurance Committee, Academic Services
Dr Gail Duursma	School Representative (Engineering), College of Science and Engineering
Dr Jeni Harden	School Representative (School of Molecular, Genetic and Population Health Sciences), College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine
Dr Katherine Inglis	School Representative (Literatures, Languages and Cultures), College of Arts, Humanities and Social Science
Nichola Kett	Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team, Academic Services
Dr Linda Kirstein	Dean of Education Quality Assurance and Culture, College of Science and Engineering
Sarah McAllister	Head of Operations & Projects & Assistant Director, Institute for Academic Development
Diva Mukherji	Vice President (Education), Students' Association
Dr Claire Phillips	Director of Quality Assurance, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine

**Present:**

Linda Hannah	Administrative Assistant, Academic Services
Dr Antony Maciocia	Dean of Postgraduate Research, College of Science and Engineering

**Apologies:**

Lisa Dawson	Director of Student Systems and Administration
Brian Green	Deputy Associate Principal (Learning & Teaching), University of Strathclyde
Tom Ward	Director, Academic Services

## 1. Welcome and Apologies

The Convenor welcomed Dr Antony Maciocia, Dean of Postgraduate Research in the College of Science and Engineering (to speak to agenda items 4 and 5) and Linda Hannah, Academic Services (to observe as part of staff development).

## 2. Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 6 December 2018

The Committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting.

## 3. Matters Arising

- **School Directors of Quality Strategic Development Sessions**

The Committee noted that the School Directors of Quality Strategic Development Sessions would be held on Wednesday 6 March 2019 and Thursday 4 April 2019.

- **Service Excellence: Programme and Course Information Management Project**

The Committee received a brief update on the Programme and Course Information Management (PCIM) project, within the Service Excellence Programme.

**Action:** Committee Secretary to circulate a detailed update to the Committee.

### For Discussion

## 4. Quality Assurance and Enhancement for Postgraduate Research

The Committee discussed quality assurance arrangements for postgraduate research (PGR) in the context of the evolving PGR landscape, the impending review of the Senate Committees and the Enhancement-led Institutional Review. It was noted that whilst there is a diversity in local approaches and practice, there is also much commonality across the University. The Committee agreed to set up a group meeting to explore the issues in relation to the quality assurance of PGR and report back to a future meeting.

**Action:** Academic Services to set up a group meeting to explore the issues in relation to the quality assurance of PGR. The group will include the College Deans of Quality, and representatives from the Students' Association and the Institute for Academic Development (IAD).

## 5. Enhancement-led Institutional Review

### 5.1 2015 Review - Theme Reports

The Committee discussed reports from four of the six areas for development from the University's Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR) held in Semester 1 2015.

In regard to the Assessment and Feedback report, the Committee discussed the relationship between the targeted allocation of resources and positive student satisfaction results. It was noted that the 2015 ELIR indicated that where resources had been targeted, for example Online Distance Learning (ODL), this had enabled staff to dedicate more time to interact with students which in turn had resulted in very positive student feedback on all aspects of the student experience, including assessment and feedback. The Committee noted the difference between this traditional ODL model of delivery and Distance Learning At Scale (DLAS) which has a more automated approach to delivery. Concerns were noted that moves to increase DLAS provision may have an adverse impact on student satisfaction scores.

The Committee agreed that this would be the final round of reports for the 2015 review in recognition of the fact that activities had either been completed or would continue to be progressed and reported on via other mechanisms (such as implementation plans for the Learning and Teaching Strategy, the Student Partnership Agreement, and the Student Experience Plan).

## 5.2 2020 Review – Update and Contextualised Themes

The Committee discussed the preparations for the 2020 ELIR.

The Committee noted that a key development of the ELIR process since the 2015 review has been the introduction Contextualised Themes which the reviewed institution must identify for the review team to focus on ahead of the review. The themes should be existing or planned activities linked to strategic priorities and should therefore help ensure that the University gets the greatest value from the review process.

Early consultations with stakeholders on potential contextualised themes have been held and the following themes have been proposed:

- **Teaching and Academic Careers** - this would include all the academic development work provided by IAD, plus the recent work of the Teaching and Academic Careers Task Group.
- **Student Voice and Community** - including the work the Students' Association on representation and the work around student surveys, mid-course feedback and strengthening of other student voice mechanisms, but also including planned work and future directions under the new Student Experience Plan (SEP).
- **Student Support** - this will include an (expected) update on developments with student support following the focus on Personal Tutors in the last ELIR, but will refocus around the new plans under the SEP for student support as well as including work around widening participation and considering student support more broadly than academic support.
- **Student Skills and Employability** - including all work related to supporting the development of students' skills and attributes for employability.

The Committee noted concern that the 'Student Support' theme may be too unwieldy, however it was also noted that suggestions to narrow its scope to Widening Participation (WP) students may be too restrictive. The Committee therefore agreed that WP should be added as a fifth theme in order to signal the University's good intentions on this issue.

**Action:** Academic Services to add Widening Participation as the fifth Contextual Theme of the 2020 ELIR.

## 6. College Annual Quality Reports 2017-18

The Committee considered the annual College Quality Reports for 2017-18. The Committee discussed the reports, with particular attention to section 3, 'Themes for SQAC forward planning'.

### **Widening Participation**

The Committee noted that across all three Colleges the course fail rate/percentage of withdrawals for students from WP backgrounds remains higher than the University average.

**Action:** Colleges to identify actions to address the relatively higher fail rate/percentage of withdrawals for students from WP backgrounds.

### **Reporting and Feedback**

The Committee agreed that to ensure the communication loop is closed on University level actions in future an action response report will be circulated to College offices. College representatives will also ensure that the outcomes of the Committee's discussions are made available to and considered by the relevant College committee(s). The Committee also agreed that the timing and structure of the report should be reviewed.

**Action:** Academic Services to consult with the Colleges on the timing of the annual College reports and report back to a future Committee meeting.

### 6.1 College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

The College Dean of Quality thanked Alastair Duthie (Academic Administrator, Enhancement and Quality) for helping compile the report. The Convenor commended the College on an excellent report with clear targets.

The following was noted:

- **Quality Assurance Data**  
The College reported that the data sources available for strategic planning and quality assurance purposes are too disparate and housed within complex and inaccessible systems. It was noted that data discrepancies between the Student Data Dashboards and Business Intelligence Suite had lowered confidence in these resources within the College. The College requested that one definitive system be developed to provide basic but accurate data on student numbers and other key performance indicators at course, programme, Subject Area, School and College level. The Committee noted that Academic Services is working with Student Systems to enhance data sources for quality assurance and enhancement processes.
- **School and Programme Quality System (SPQS)**  
The College requested support from Information Services and Student Systems to expand on the success of SPQS across the institution. It was noted that the system

has been used for two years in CAHSS and was piloted in the College of Science and Engineering (CSE) last year. Support is requested to maintain this system for both Colleges and for a full institutional roll-out to support annual quality reporting. Furthermore, it was noted that a Power BI Tool was currently in development for the thematic analysis of all reports, which will support the upcoming Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR). The Committee noted that a project to address these concerns is being taken forward by the CAHSS Business Intelligence Team.

- **Course Enhancement Questionnaires (CEQs)**

The College requested that continued support be provided for centrally managed course-level feedback mechanisms. It was noted that a number of major concerns about the format, flexibility and delivery of CEQs and the sharing of their results were raised with the Director of Student Systems and Administration. The Committee noted that a working group to facilitate enhancement work in this area has been established. The College and individual Schools will actively contribute to the work of this group.

## 6.2 College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine

The College Dean of Quality thanked Victoria Bennett (Quality Officer) for helping compile the report.

The following was noted:

- **Reporting and Feedback**

The College requested intra-year updates on progress with items identified as University issues in School/Deanery QA reports not only those within the remit of SQAC but also those forwarded to other areas of the University. It was noted that the Committee had received a report (at the electronic meeting conducted between 18 May 2018 to 25 May 2018) providing updates on University level actions in response to College issues.

**Action:** Committee Secretary to ensure that the action update report (responding to the College Reports) is circulated annually to the College Offices.

- **University Initiatives**

The College reported that whilst welcoming University enhancement initiatives, the pace and extent of changes can be very time consuming and detrimental to staff (both academic and professional) seeking to maintain the quality of student experience, learning and teaching in Deaneries, Schools and other local areas.

**Action:** Committee Secretary to request a response from Deputy Secretary Student Experience.

- **Increasing Admissions**

The College reported that the increasing number of students (and push to increase further) is putting notable pressure on staff (academic and professional) in regard to teaching, feedback, admin but also provision of Personal Tutors.

**Action:** Committee Secretary to request a response from University Senior Management to College concerns.

- **Timetabling**

The College reported that errors in course timetables has had a significant impact on the student and staff experience, particularly in regard to a notable number of inappropriate rooms and locations.

**Action:** Committee Secretary to request a response from the Head of the Timetabling and Examination Services to College concerns.

### 6.3 College of Science & Engineering

Dean of Education Quality Assurance and Culture thanked Heather Tracey (Deputy Head of Academic Affairs) for helping compile the report.

The following was noted:

- **Estates and Space**

The College reported ongoing challenges regarding the availability of high quality teaching space and social spaces for students. The removal of 24 hour access to study space at King's Buildings was noted as a particular issue.

**Action:** Committee Secretary to request a response from Space Strategy Group to College concerns.

- **Quality Assurance Data**

The College reported that whilst the Student Data Dashboard was positively received, but also noted the need to ensure that data provided centrally to support the quality assurance process (such as the Assessment Hub and PGR data) was useful and fit-for purpose. The Committee noted that Academic Services is working with Student Systems to enhance data sources for quality assurance and enhancement processes.

- **Course Enhancement Questionnaires (CEQs)**

The College reiterated concerns in regard to low CEQ response rates, and potential gender bias, and the detrimental impact this may have on confidence in the accuracy of the results. The Committee again noted that a working group to facilitate enhancement work in this area has been established. The College and individual Schools will actively contribute to the work of this group.

## 7. External Examiner Reporting System

### 7.1 Postgraduate Taught Reports - Thematic Analysis 2017-18

The Committee considered an analysis of data from the External Examiner Reporting System (EERS) covering postgraduate taught programmes for the academic year 2017-18. The report noted a high number of commendations across the University and a low number of issues that required attention. Of the commendations, the main theme commended across all three Colleges was Good Practice and Innovation mainly related to the range, quality and diversity of teaching, learning and assessment. Of the issues raised, the main

theme was the Provision of Information to examiners, mainly related to meeting date changes and miscommunication on date changes.

**Action:** College representatives to ensure that the outcomes of the Committee's discussions are made available to and considered by the relevant College committee(s).

## 7.2 Total Reports 2017-18

The Committee considered the summary of the total number of undergraduate and postgraduate taught reports submitted through the External Examiner Reporting System.

**Action:** Academic Services to include a discussion on how to increase External Examiner report submission rates on the agenda of the next Deans of Quality meeting.

## 8. Student Support Services Annual Review (SSSAR): Annual Reporting Template Updates

The Committee considered proposed minor amendments to the Service Report and Reader Report templates for annual reporting. The changes included incorporating areas for further consideration identified for all services in the 2017-18 reporting cycle (reported to the Committee in December 2018) and emphasis that reporting should focus on the student experience. The Committee noted that Academic Services had reformatted both templates to provide clarity for services and readers on reporting expectations but that no changes were proposed to the reporting process or timescale.

The Committee agreed that the template should include a request to reflect on how the service is contributing to and/or aligning with University strategies for Learning, Teaching and Student Experience. It was noted that this was implicit but an explicit gathering of information about this would be useful e.g. for planning rounds and ELIR. The Committee discussed options for report readers and agreed that peer review was the most appropriate.

**Action:** Convenor and Deputy Secretary Student Experience to consider whether the current practice of allocating report reader responsibility offered the most benefit.

The Committee noted a comment received from one of the Colleges which suggested that there may be benefit in the Director of Student Wellbeing bringing together reports from his area in a summary.

**Action:** Director of Wellbeing to consider the most appropriate approach to take the reports forward.

The Committee **approved** the proposed amendments to the reporting templates for implementation in the next reporting cycle.

## 9. Mid-year update on progress against SQAC priorities

The Committee discussed the mid-year update on progress towards the Committee's priorities agreed at Senate in May 2018.

### For Information and Formal Business

## 10. Thematic Review of Student Support

### 10.1 Mature Students and Student Parents and Carers 2017-18

The Committee noted the update on the recommendations of the review. It was noted that in most instances this will involve further consultative and developmental work during the 2018-19 academic session within the work-plan for the "Edinburgh Cares" project led by the Director of Wellbeing. An update will be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.

### 10.2 Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Students 2018-19

The Committee noted the progress update. The review panel is currently consulting with students and will report initial findings to SQAC at the meeting to be held on 23 May 2019. These findings will then be discussed with key staff stakeholders from across the University. The final report, identifying areas of good practice and areas for enhancement, will then be submitted to the Committee at the first meeting of the 2019-20 academic session.

## 11. Internal Review Reports and Responses

The Committee approved the following final report for the Teaching Programme Review of Classics and **noted** the commendations and recommendations.

The Committee noted the year-on responses for the Postgraduate Programme Reviews of Chemistry, Clinical Sciences, and Engineering and confirmed that it was content with progress.

**Action:** Committee Secretary to circulate the year-on responses for the Teaching Programme Reviews of English Literature and Physics and Astronomy. The Committee to confirm that it is content with progress.

## 12. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

## 13. **Date of Next Meeting:** Thursday 25 April 2019 at 2pm in the Torridon Room, Charles Stewart House

## **Strategic Discussion of Trends in Undergraduate Degree Classification Outcomes**

### **Executive Summary**

This paper identifies subject areas where patterns in degree classification outcomes diverge substantially from either the institution average or disciplinary comparators.

This paper should be read in conjunction with Paper SQAC 18/19 4B (Undergraduate Degree Classification Analysis), which provides data regarding degree classification outcomes broken down by School and subject area, benchmarked against the Russell Group.

### **How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?**

The paper is relevant to the University's aim to "provide the highest-quality research-led teaching and learning", and the strategic objective of 'Leadership in learning'.

### **Action requested**

For Discussion.

### **How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?**

The approach to implementation and communication depends on the outcome of the discussion and any agreed actions.

### **Resource / Risk / Compliance**

#### **1. Resource implications (including staffing)**

Not applicable – the proposed actions in the paper would have minimal resource implications.

#### **2. Risk assessment**

The paper aims to assist the University to manage risks associated with the perception of grade inflation.

#### **3. Equality and Diversity**

The paper does not highlight any specific equality and diversity issues. Since the paper does not propose a change to a policy or practice, there is no need for an Equality Impact Assessment.

#### **4. Freedom of information**

Closed (Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs)

### **Key words**

Degree Classification Outcomes

### **Originator of the paper**

Brian Connolly (Academic Policy Officer)

The University of Edinburgh

Senate Quality Assurance Committee

25 April 2019

**External Examiners for Taught Programmes:  
Policy review stage 2**

**Executive Summary**

The Committee approved the External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy in May 2015. Academic Services has reviewed the policy in consultation with Colleges, for consistency with the revised UK Quality Code and with UK employment and data protection law. The review has simplified the policy to be more user-friendly and removed redundant or replicated content. The attached draft highlights the proposed changes.

The policy review included, the External Examiners for Taught Programmes Handbook, the external examiner appointment letter template, external examiner nomination forms and reporting form. No changes are indicated to the External Examiner report form as the questions remain appropriate and change would lead to loss of trend data in the External Examiner Reporting System.

Ongoing UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment (UKSCQA) consultation on external examiner training may indicate future changes. However, the outcomes from this consultation will not be available in time for inclusion in this phase of the policy review.

Service Excellence will be looking at External Examiner processes as part of the review of Boards of Examiners and further policy changes may be indicated in future as a result.

**How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?**

The paper is consistent with the University strategic plan objective of leadership in learning and the Committee priority of an ongoing programme of policy reviews.

**Action requested**

Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) to consider the proposed changes for approval. In particular, the Committee is asked to consider actions in relation to key changes 1, 2, 3 and 4 on pages 3 and 4; the proposal on the External Examiner Handbook on page 5 and the proposal on reporting deadlines on pages 6 and 7.

Academic Services will circulate the policy, with changes approved by QAC, to Curriculum and Student Progression Committee for comment. Academic Services will submit a final draft, incorporating any further proposed amendments, to QAC's May 2019 meeting.

**How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?**

Committee members to disseminate information via appropriate College committees and communication channels. Academic Services will communicate the policy updates in the annual policies and regulations communication in June 2019.

**Resource / Risk / Compliance**

**1. Resource implications (including staffing)**

Resource implications have been identified in the proposals for a five year retention schedule for reports in the External Examiner Reporting System and for setting individual School/Deanery reporting deadlines. This would involve additional support task and development work for the Student Systems Operations team. Any additional support or development work would be expected to be met from within existing resources and a request would need to be submitted to Student Systems.

**2. Risk assessment**

The External Examiner system is a key mechanism for ensuring that the University's provision is of a high standard. The proposed policy changes are intended to mitigate the risks associated with inconsistent operation of the External Examiner system. There may be risks associated with any change to the reporting deadline as discussed on pages 6 and 7. Risks associated with the proposal to remove exam paper approval by External Examiners are discussed on page 4.

**3. Equality and Diversity**

The changes are designed to harmonise rather than substantively change procedures. There is no reason to think that these proposed changes will have any equality and diversity implications. Academic Services will update the current [Equality Impact Assessment](#) (published in 2015) once QAC has agreed the final policy document.

**4. Freedom of information**

The paper is **open**

**Originator of the paper**

Susan Hunter, Academic Services  
17 April 2019

## External Examiners for Taught Programmes:

### Policy review stage 2

#### Review

Academic Services developed the original policy document when the External Examiner system and processes were still being implemented. We have revised the policy for clarity, to be more user-friendly and to remove content that is no longer relevant now that Schools and Colleges have embedded external examining processes. The policy review takes account of changes to the UK Quality Code and UK legislation, including data protection law.

In reviewing the policy, Academic Services consulted with Colleges, Legal Services, Human Resources, Records Management, the Data Protection Officer, Student Systems and Service Excellence Programme.

### Proposed changes to the External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy

The revised policy document is attached as Appendix 1. The majority of changes are non-substantive and seek to simplify and clarify the policy rather than change existing procedures. Key changes are highlighted below, including those where specific Committee approval is required for process changes.

#### Key Changes for 2019/20

1. **External Examiner Reporting System:** a five year retention schedule is proposed for External Examiner reports held in the system. Currently, the most recent five years are available to view however all reports in the system are held indefinitely and can be accessed through the BI Suite. A retention schedule was not a requirement of the project when it was originally delivered and would involve an additional support task for the Student Systems Operations team. Retention schedules set out the amount of time the University needs to keep records and helps with compliance with freedom of information law.

**Action: QAC approval required to submit request to Student Systems for five year retention schedule.**

- Conflicts of Interest:** new clause added to provide for Senate Quality Assurance Committee to approve exceptional appointments (see 25) and clarified for consistency with UK Quality Code. Exceptions may include disciplines where there is a limited pool of expertise to draw on. The Advice and Guidance on the UK Quality Code Core practice states that “providers ensure that appropriate criteria are applied in the engagement of external experts, paying due attention to the relevant expertise of each and the avoidance of conflicts of interest.”

An alternative approach would be to include a statement in the “Application” section that where there is doubt, Colleges or Schools should contact the Secretary to QAC, or contact officer for the policy for advice, rather than state a process for concessions. Approval for such concessions would be QAC’s responsibility and the Committee would need to agree to being the exception approving authority.

**Action: QAC to consider whether a new policy clause is required for dealing with exceptional appointment in relation to conflicts of interest and to approve the Committee’s responsibility as the exception approving authority.**

- Exam paper approval:** removing the need for External Examiners to approve exam papers, since this no longer seems necessary. Many courses involve assessment which is predominantly or entirely coursework. External Examiners do not review, for example coursework essay questions before they are set. However, there is a risk of errors in exam papers not being identified before students sit their exams. Therefore, a mechanism should be in place to ensure that all exam papers are reviewed by a second person to check for errors. But it would seem more appropriate that this function should be fulfilled by someone in the School rather than by the External Examiner.

**Action: QAC to consider whether to remove the requirement for External Examiners to approve examination papers, provided that mechanisms are in place to check for errors in papers.**

- Programme External Examiners:** the policy introduced the Programme External Examiner role in August 2016. The policy review has sought to clarify their role as distinct to Course External Examiners. No issues have been raised in relation to implementation of this role and Colleges report that the Programme External Examiner role is working well. Academic Services believe that Programme External Examiners also fulfil an increasingly important quality assurance role.

**Action: QAC to confirm that the Programme External Examiner role performs a useful purpose.**

5. **Appointment:** clarification for consistency with UK Quality Code, updated links to right to work information and clarification that Senate Quality Assurance Committee approves exceptional appointments.
6. **Participation in Assessment:** clarification of responsibilities of Course and Programme External Examiners. Specific reference to the role of External Examiners in borderline cases has been removed: considering borderline cases in line with the provisions of the Taught Assessment Regulations is a general responsibility of a Board of Examiners, but the External Examiner has no specific responsibility in this area. We are aware of circumstances in which External Examiners have interpreted the existing reference to borderlines in the policy as an indication that they can or ought to make a ruling on borderline cases, which is not appropriate to their role. We have also sought to clarify that Programme External Examiners may not challenge course results which have been ratified by a previous Board of Examiners.
7. **Data Protection:** updated to include information on how the University treats External Examiners' personal details and what the University's expectations are of External Examiners handling confidential information (for example exam scripts).
8. **External Examiner Roles:** clarified for consistency with UK Quality Code and to clarify responsibilities for Course and Programme External Examiners.
9. **Attendance and participation in Boards of Examiners meeting:** clarification for consistency with Taught Assessment Regulations on requirements for External Examiners to participate in all relevant meetings, and expectations on attendance. Academic Services are proposing to clarify in the Taught Assessment Regulations for 2019/20 the meaning of "attend" and "participate" in the context of meetings of Boards of Examiners.
10. Addition of a contents section.

## Proposed changes to associated documents and system

The review raised the following proposals in relation to documents associated with the policy and the External Examiner Reporting System (EERS).

### [Proposal to archive External Examiners for Taught Programmes Handbook](#)

As the External Examiners for Taught Programmes Handbook replicates the policy content, Academic Services proposes to archive the Handbook and develop a web resource of information relevant to External Examiners. The web resource will include information on the role, expectations on data protection, the External Examiner Reporting System, how to raise serious concerns and point to where to find further information and advice on fees and expenses and relevant regulations and policies. Data protection content from the Handbook has been incorporated in the revised policy.

### **Action: QAC approval required for archiving handbook**

### [Minor changes to appointment letters](#)

The Committee approved the University standard template for External Examiner appointment letters in 2017/18. On advice from Legal Services, Academic Services has made minor changes to the appointment and one year extension templates for consistency with data protection regulations. These are the inclusion of a link to the University's Data Protection Policy and a statement that External Examiners are asked not to identify students or staff by name in their reports.

[External Examiners for Taught Programmes – appointment letter](#)

[External Examiners for Taught Programmes – one year extension appointment letter](#)

### [Reporting deadlines](#)

The Committee considered stage 1 of the policy review in 2017/18, which added a clause on the process for External Examiners who wish to resign and agreed standard template appointment letters. Following consideration of stage 1 of the policy review, Committee members proposed two changes to reporting deadlines:

1. That, given the deadline for submission of School QA Reports at the end of August, External Examiner report submissions should be moved back to earlier in the Summer, and
2. That the deadline should be set by the School or Deanery as appropriate to the course or programme.

### [Proposal 1 implications](#)

The current reporting deadlines are 31 July for undergraduate and 30 November for postgraduate taught. The External Examiner Reporting System (EERS) processing

is driven by the reference data; that is one deadline date for undergraduate reports and one deadline date for postgraduate taught reports, one annual report creation date for undergraduate reports and one annual report creation date for postgraduate taught reports. It would be a simple operation for Student System to change the dates and retain one undergraduate deadline and one postgraduate taught deadline without need for development work.

However, the existing deadlines are approximately one month after final programme boards (excluding resit Boards). Therefore, it would only be conceivable to bring the deadlines forward by one or two weeks. There may be risks involved in having earlier dates as it would reduce the amount of time for some External Examiners to prepare and submit their reports. This would be likely to increase the number of late reports, which is already significant. The shorter timeframe afforded to External Examiners to complete their reports may have a negative impact on the goodwill of External Examiners. Colleges are not universally supportive of this proposal.

#### Proposal 2 implications

Schools and Deaneries can set individual submission dates and communicate these to External Examiners without any system implications (assuming dates are set before the system deadlines). However, the system would still generate reminder emails driven by the system reference data and therefore the School or Deanery would have to manage this outside of the system. This would be likely to increase the amount of work for School staff in monitoring and administering reports managed outside of the system. It may also cause confusion for External Examiners receiving reminders from the School in addition to automatically generated system reminders. To provide automated system support for individual submission dates would necessitate a piece of development work and resources from Student Systems. Colleges are not universally supportive of this proposal.

**Action: QAC to consider the value of changing reporting deadlines**

Susan Hunter  
Academic Services  
17 April 2019



# External Examiners For Taught Programmes Policy

## Purpose of Policy

The Policy sets out the role, powers and responsibilities the University assigns to its External Examiners for undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes. The Policy sets out the roles and responsibilities of Schools, Colleges and at the Institutional level for External Examiner processes.

## Overview

The policy replaces: (i) Code of Practice for External Examiners of Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes and (ii) Guidance to Schools/Colleges regarding the Freedom of Information and Data Protection implications of the University's Code of Practice on External Examining

## Scope: Mandatory Policy

This policy applies to External Examiners, staff who are engaged in assessment, processes involving External Examiners appointed for undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes or courses and those involved in development of Course or Programme Handbooks. The policy must be applied, unless an opt out has been awarded-approved by Quality Assurance Committee or as otherwise stated in the policy, on the basis of a case proposed by a College. The boxed "Application of the policy" provides guidance and must be applied, unless the College has approved an exemption on the basis of a case proposed by a School. The approving body records concessions and exemptions are recorded by the approving body.

Contact Officer Susan Hunter Academic Policy Officer [Susan.Hunter5@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Susan.Hunter5@ed.ac.uk)

## Document control

Dates	Approved: 18.04.2017	Starts: 28.05.2015	Equality impact assessment: 28.05.2015	Amendments: April 2017 Sept 2017 Sept 2018 <a href="#">April 2019</a>	Next Review: <del>2018/2019</del> <a href="#">2021/22</a>
Approving authority	Quality Assurance Committee				
Consultation undertaken	Working Group of Quality Assurance Committee				
Section responsible for policy maintenance & review	Academic Services				
Related policies, procedures, guidelines & regulations	Taught Assessment Regulations <a href="http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/policies-regulations/regulations/assessment">www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/policies-regulations/regulations/assessment</a> Guidance on policy, principle and operation of Boards of Examiners: <a href="http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/staff/assessment/boards-examiners">www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/staff/assessment/boards-examiners</a> External Examiner Handbook: <a href="http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/externalexaminerhandbook.pdf">www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/externalexaminerhandbook.pdf</a>				
UK Quality Code	UK Quality Code, <a href="#">Chapter B7: External Examining External Expertise</a>				
Policies superseded by this policy	Code of Practice for External Examiners of Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes, <a href="#">all previous versions of this policy</a>				
Alternative format	If you require this document in an alternative format please email <a href="mailto:Academic.Services@ed.ac.uk">Academic.Services@ed.ac.uk</a> or telephone 0131 651 4490.				
Keywords	External Examiner, Board of Examiners				

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# External Examiners For Taught Programmes Policy

## External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy

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### Introduction

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1. The University's Taught Assessment Regulations govern the conduct of assessment and examinations in the University is governed by the University's Taught Assessment Regulations and by decisions taken, from time to time, by Curriculum and Student Progression Committee. This policy sets out the role, powers and responsibilities the University assigns to its External Examiners for undergraduate and taught postgraduate

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# External Examiners For Taught Programmes Policy

~~programmes. This policy aligns with the University's Taught Assessment Regulations, which are agreed annually by the Curriculum and Student Progression Committee. Nothing in this policy supersedes the University's Taught Assessment Regulations. See: [www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/taughtassessmentregulations.pdf](http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/taughtassessmentregulations.pdf)~~

~~All sections of the policy apply to External Examiners appointed to a course(s) or taught programme(s), referred to as Course External Examiners and Programme External Examiners respectively, unless otherwise stated.~~

## General

~~2. The conduct of assessment and examinations in the University is governed by the University's Taught Assessment Regulations and by decisions taken, from time to time, by Curriculum and Student Progression Committee. This policy sets out the role, powers and responsibilities the University assigns to its External Examiners for undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes. It is intended primarily for the information of University staff involved in examinations and Boards of Examiners. The Handbook for External Examiners of Taught Programmes provides External Examiners with guidance on their roles, powers and responsibilities: [www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/externalexaminerhandbook.pdf](http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/externalexaminerhandbook.pdf)~~

~~3. Additional guidance on assessment procedures may be found in the University's Taught Assessment Regulations: [www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/taughtassessmentregulations.pdf](http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/taughtassessmentregulations.pdf)~~

~~4. Policy, principle and operational guidance regarding Boards of Examiners is available at: [www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/staff/assessment/boards-examiners](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/staff/assessment/boards-examiners)~~

~~5. All sections of the policy apply to External Examiners appointed to a course(s) or taught programme(s) referred to as Course External Examiners and Programme External Examiners respectively, unless otherwise stated.~~

~~6. Student Administration exercises general oversight of examination procedures on behalf of the University and the detailed arrangement for examinations, including the provision of examination accommodation. See: [www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-administration](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-administration)~~

~~7. Student Systems exercise general oversight of the receipt and notification of results on behalf of the University. See: [www.studentsystems.ed.ac.uk/](http://www.studentsystems.ed.ac.uk/)~~

~~8. Several different University and College committees have an involvement in areas covered by this Policy. Senatus Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) monitors the appointment of External Examiners by Colleges. QAC also ensures that appropriate action has been taken in regard to External Examiners' reports by way of the annual monitoring, review and reporting process. QAC ensures that quality assurance and policies and projects are informed by the thematic annual analysis of the External Examiner reports. The relevant College~~

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# External Examiners For Taught Programmes Policy

~~undergraduate and postgraduate committees ensure that External Examiners' appointments are consistent with the assessment regulations and this Code.~~

~~9. This policy aligns with the UK quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B7: External Examining (October 2011):~~

~~10. [www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/quality-code-B7.pdf](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/quality-code-B7.pdf).~~

## Purposes and Functions of External Examiners' Roles

~~2. The External Examiner system forms a key part of the University's quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms. External Examiners help to ensure provide independent and impartial assurance of:~~

- ~~• Consistent assessment standards, processes and student achievements which are comparable with other institutions~~
- ~~• the integrity and rigour of assessment~~
- ~~• fair, reliable and transparent assessment and degree classification~~

~~External Examiners also~~

- ~~• identify good practice and enhancements and~~
- ~~• contribute to programme and course design.~~

~~11. that degrees awarded by the University are comparable in standard to those of other equivalent departments in UK universities, although their content may differ. They also ensure that the assessment process is operated equitably and fairly in respect of the treatment and classification of students, and in line with the University's policies and regulations. External Examiners also advise on the quality and enhancement of learning, teaching and assessment.~~

~~12.3. In order to achieve these purposes, External Examiners need to be able to:~~

- ~~a) participate in assessment procedures (see related sections 1635-37); and~~
- ~~b) comment and give advice on assessment procedures and standards and jointly agree, as members of the Board of Examiners, the detailed assessment, award and final degree results.~~

~~4. External Examiners have the right to see any assessment material pertinent to the role and may comment about any aspect of a course or programme for which they are appointed as External Examiner.~~

~~b)~~

~~13. An important requirement of the External Examiner's role is the provision of an annual report based on what the External Examiner has observed of the University's assessment processes and students' assessed work.~~

### Application

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# External Examiners For Taught Programmes Policy

~~41.1 External Examiners are invited to provide feedback on good practice and opportunities to enhance the quality of programmes and/or courses, where appropriate. External Examiners are invited to offer a view of how standards compare with the same or similar awards at other Universities of which they have experience. External Examiners are also invited to comment on course content, balance and structure and on degree programme curricula. See sections 60, 61 and 62 which set out the expectations for External Examiners on completing External Examiner Reports.~~

5. Schools will not ask an External Examiner to assess directly the work of individual students unless this is explicitly stated in the External Examiner's terms of appointment. Where External Examiners are expected to advise on individual cases, the final decision will be made by the Board of Examiners, with consideration of the External Examiner's views.

6. Schools will determine which Programme or Course External Examiners may be required to have oversight of the decision process of the Undergraduate Progression Board.

~~14. — 7. Colleges or Schools may also choose to invite External Examiners to see and comment on reports and feedback related to curriculum review and quality of educational provision.~~

## Application

~~12.1 This may be on an informal basis, or as part of the external advice on review and development of courses and/or programmes.~~

~~45-8. Schools may ask External Examiners may be asked to comment on the wider quality and enhancement aspects of a programme or course, such as its design, curriculum, mode of delivery and assessment methods.~~

~~16.8. External Examiners have the right to see any assessment material pertinent to the role and may comment about any aspect of a course or programme for which they are appointed as External Examiner.~~

~~17. External Examiners are encouraged to make use of opportunities to communicate with the School informally about the teaching of the course, assessment issues and overall performance of the students.~~

~~18. — The External Examiner's role is primarily that of a moderator of the assessment process and an External Examiner will not be asked to assess directly the work of individual students unless this is explicitly stated in the External Examiner's terms of appointment. Where External Examiners are expected to advise on individual cases, the final decision will still be made by the Board of Examiners, with the views of the respective examiners made known to the Board of Examiners.~~

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# External Examiners For Taught Programmes Policy

~~19. External Examiners may be required to have oversight of the decision process of the Undergraduate Progression Board. This responsibility is usually exercised by a Programme External Examiner. Schools will specify which Course or Programme External Examiner has responsibility for progression decisions and specific Progression Boards. This responsibility is usually exercised by a Programme External Examiner.~~

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~~20.8. In fulfilling these functions, the University expects that the External Examiner has agreed with their own institution / employer the time commitment required for the role.~~

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9. External Examiners are required to provide an annual report based on what they have observed of the University's assessment processes and students' assessed work.

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9.1 External Examiners should also comment on course content, balance and structure and on degree programme curricula. See sections 60, 61 and 62 which set out the expectations for External Examiners on completing External Examiner Reports.

## Role of Course External Examiners

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~~21.10. Each course must have an External Examiner appointed to it. The College appoints a Course External Examiner to each course, known as a Course External Examiner. They/ The Course External Examiner are/is expected:~~

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- a) to assess and comment on whether the course enables students to achieve the defined learning outcomes and whether the assessment is appropriate in this regard;
- b) to consider the level of achievement of candidates on the course, in relation to standards elsewhere in the sector for the same kind of course within similar degree programmes;
- c) to review and approve ~~if appropriate, all examination papers and~~ assessment criteria for the courses examined;
- d) to scrutinise a representative sample of all assessed work across each of the courses examined in order to judge whether marks are fairly and consistently applied to students across the courses, and whether markers are applying the marking scheme consistently and using the full range of marks where justified;
- e) to participate as a member of the relevant Board of Examiner meetings and to agree jointly ~~as a member of the Board of Examiners,~~ the decisions of the Board of Examiners; and
- f) to be satisfied that the business of the Board of Examiners is correctly and robustly carried out, in line with the University's policies and regulations.

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## Application



# External Examiners For Taught Programmes Policy

~~9499.1~~ External Examiners appointed to a course or courses will be treated as Course External Examiners. The College can appoint Aa Course External Examiner can be appointed for multiple courses, where this is deemed appropriate. Colleges may appoint Aa Programme External Examiner may be appointed as a Programme External Examiner for a programme and also be appointed to act as a Course External Examiner for one or more courses.

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## Role of Programme External Examiner

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~~11.~~ There must be The College appoints at least one Programme External Examiner to each programme that leads to a higher education award. at least one Programme External Examiner appointed who has responsibility for oversight of each programme that leads to a higher education award. (This section of the policy will not come into effect until August 2016 to allow for full appointment of Programme External Examiners).

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~~22.12.~~ For combined degree programmes, the "owning" School will be is responsible for recommending appointing Programme External Examiners for appointment by the College.

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~~11220.1~~ External Examiners appointed to a programme will be treated as a Programme External Examiners. Colleges can appoint Aa single Programme External Examiner can be appointed for multiple programmes, including their exit awards, where this is deemed appropriate.

~~1220.2~~ A Programme External Examiner may be appointed to a programme and also be appointed act as a Course External Examiner for one or more courses. Where there are no Course External Examiners are appointed, the Programme External Examiner will be deemed to also be act as the Course External Examiner for the courses within the programme.

~~20.3~~ For undergraduate programmes, it is likely that the Programme External Examiner will also be examining a course or courses on the programme and oversight of the programme will be an additional role. For postgraduate programmes, a Programme External Examiner may be appointed as a Course External Examiner for courses within the programme(s).



# External Examiners For Taught Programmes Policy

23.13. ~~The College appoints~~ Programme External Examiners ~~are appointed~~ to give oversight of a whole programme. ~~Programme External Examiners~~ They are expected:

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- a) to assess and comment on whether the programme design enables students to achieve the defined learning outcomes for the programme;
- b) to affirm that the programme ~~overall~~ meets recognised national standards for the final award;
- c) to consider the application of the scheme of award for classification of honours to ensure ~~this-it~~ is correctly and fairly applied to all students on the programme;
- d) to participate as a member of the relevant Board of Examiner meetings and to agree jointly, ~~as a member of the Board of Examiners, with~~ the decisions of the Board of Examiners; and
- e) to be satisfied that the business of the Board of Examiners is correctly and robustly carried out, in line with the University's policies and regulations.

## Application

13224.1 Programme External Examiners do not necessarily need to have knowledge of all the subject areas covered by the programme in order to perform the role of Programme External Examiner. ~~This is because The~~ Programme External Examiner's role ~~are appointed-is~~ to have oversight of the academic standards for the programme(s) and/or award(s) for which they are appointed. The University's Taught Assessment Regulations provide further information about the operation of the Board of Examiners can be found in the University's Taught Assessment Regulations: [www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/taughtassessmentregulations.pdf](http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/taughtassessmentregulations.pdf)

24. ~~For combined degree programmes, the "owning" school will be responsible for appointing Programme External Examiners.~~

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## Appointment

14. ~~Colleges, on behalf of the University, are responsible for The appointment of appointing External Examiners is the responsibility of Colleges on behalf of the University and they Colleges must have robust and documented mechanisms for approval of appointments in place.~~

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15. ~~Schools make the nominations to the Colleges after consultation with the staff members teaching the course or programme and having ascertained that the proposed individual is willing to accept the nomination as External Examiner.~~

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# External Examiners For Taught Programmes Policy

~~16526.1~~ Schools and Colleges may operate different nomination and appointment processes depending on their respective quality assurance structures. Nominations are made in the name of the relevant Head of School and appointments are approved in the name of the Head of College. The information contained in the External Examiner nomination form should affirm to the College that the person nominated has the necessary authority and experience and meets the other requirements set out in relation to qualifications / expertise, conflicts of interest and terms of office below.

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## Selection —general points

~~25.16.~~ Schools and Colleges select External Examiners should be selected from amongst suitably qualified people who meet the ~~person specification~~ qualifications and expertise outlined in this policy (See sections ~~290~~ and ~~3021~~). ~~Prior to appointment~~, Schools and Colleges must also consider any potential conflicts of interest ~~prior to appointment~~ (See section ~~3422~~).

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~~26.17.~~ The number of External Examiners for any particular degree programme or course should be sufficient to cover the range of studies therein. More than one External Examiner may be needed where there is a large number of students, the course or programme covers a wide range of studies, and/or a large volume of academic work contributes to the course or programme.

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~~24.4~~ Schools should use their judgement and should avoid both over-recruitment of External Examiners and excessive over-loading of individual External Examiners.

~~18.1~~ It recognised that ~~in~~ specialised subjects where the pool of expertise is small, it may be necessary to appoint a single External Examiner to more than one Board of Examiners simultaneously. Schools should exercise judgement in whether an individual External Examiner is ~~being~~ allocated a manageable workload.

~~27.8.~~ The appointment of External Examiners is the responsibility of Colleges on behalf of the University and they must have robust and documented mechanisms for approval of appointments in place.

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~~28.~~ Schools make the nominations to the Colleges after consultation with the staff members teaching the course or programme and having ascertained that the proposed individual is willing to accept the nomination as External Examiner.

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# External Examiners For Taught Programmes Policy

~~26.1 Schools and Colleges may operate different nomination and appointment processes depending on their respective quality assurance structures. Nominations are made in the name of the relevant Head of School and appointments are approved in the name of the Head of College. The information contained in the External Examiner nomination form should affirm to the College that the person nominated has the necessary authority and experience and meets the other requirements set out in relation to qualifications / expertise, conflicts of interest and terms of office below.~~

~~29-18.~~ External Examiners should normally be resident in the United Kingdom.

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~~1927.1~~ If the proposed External Examiner is resident abroad, and planning to undertake work in the UK, the School ~~should~~ must take account of UK visa and immigration requirements, travel costs and, where appropriate, check that the College is prepared to pay the cost of travel to Edinburgh before proposing the appointment.

~~1927.2~~ Where an External Examiner from outside the UK is appointed, the School should confirm that the individual has the required knowledge of the UK ~~HE~~ Higher Education system.

~~1927.3~~ Human Resources' website provides information on Eligibility-Right to Work in the UK and information and guidance for recruiters on immigration and visa requirements. See: <https://www.edweb.ed.ac.uk/human-resources/recruitment/recruiters-guide/appointment/rtw-checks> [EASE log in required] [www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/human-resources/recruitment/eligibility-immigration/recruiters-guidance](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/human-resources/recruitment/eligibility-immigration/recruiters-guidance).

~~30-19.~~ Schools must take account of any professional validation by external organisation or professional bodies if these are required in the discipline. In some areas of professional disciplines, External Examiners are subject to validation by external organisations and professional bodies.

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# External Examiners For Taught Programmes Policy

## Qualifications and Expertise

~~34.20.~~ In order to ensure that External Examiners are competent to undertake the responsibilities expected of them, only individuals who can show appropriate evidence of the following will be appointed:

a) appropriate knowledge and understanding of the UK HE Sector's agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards, including the relevant subject benchmarks, the national qualifications frameworks and UK Quality Code for Higher Education (See <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code> ~~www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code~~), along with ~~knowledge sufficient experience~~ of quality assurance and enhancement processes;

b) ~~a high degree of competence and experience in the fields covered and the necessary academic experience and subject knowledge to be able to identify good practice and recommend enhancements;~~

~~b)c)~~ sufficient standing and experience to be able to command authority and ~~the~~ respect of academic peers and, where relevant, professional peers;

~~e)d)~~ relevant academic and/or professional qualifications to at least the level of the qualification being externally examined, and/or extensive practitioner experience where appropriate. External Examiners from outside the HE system, for example from industry or the professions, may be appropriate in certain circumstances;

~~e)e)~~ competence and experience relating to designing and operating a variety of assessment tasks appropriate to the subject and operating assessment procedures;

~~e)f)~~ awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula;

~~f)g)~~ familiarity with the standard ~~to be~~ expected of students to achieve the award that is to be assessed;

~~g)h)~~ fluency in English and, where programmes are delivered or assessed in languages other than English, fluency in the relevant language(s); and

i) competence and experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience.

~~h)~~

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~~2029.1~~ In addition to the above, Schools may wish to develop their own School-specific guidance on the requisite qualifications and experience for External Examiners, as appropriate to their own specific disciplines.

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# External Examiners For Taught Programmes Policy



THE UNIVERSITY  
of EDINBURGH

Policy

~~32.—21.~~ In exceptional circumstances, ~~the Senate Quality Assurance Committee may approve the appointment of~~ an External Examiner ~~may be appointed~~ who does not meet the criteria with respect to standing and/or experience. ~~A Requests for~~ appointments of External Examiners in these circumstances must be ~~approved by the Senatus Curriculum and Student Progression Committee on the basis of supported by a~~ a College recommendation. Such an appointment ~~should never be made as will not be approved for~~ a sole Programme External Examiner for a specific degree programme.

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# External Examiners For Taught Programmes Policy

## Application

2130.1 These exceptional circumstances may arise where an External Examiner is appointed from industry or where the nominee has no previous experience as an External Examiner. Where an External Examiner who is not an academic is appointed for a particular course, the School will need to ensure that a mechanism for assuring academic standards is maintained, for example, by having another External Examiner who is an academic on the Board of Examiners.

2130.2 Where an External Examiner has no previous experience as an External Examiner for any institution, a more experienced External Examiner will be appointed to act as mentor to work with the first-time External Examiner to provide guidance and to ensure that the Examiner fulfils the requirements of their role. Schools must consider whether first-time External Examiners have additional information and development needs when compared with experienced examiners.

## Conflicts of Interest

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22. 22. External Examiners must be wholly impartial and independent of the University, its staff, governing body and relevant partners. Individuals in any of the following categories will not be appointed as External Examiners:

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- a) Members of the University Court, University Committee members or employees of the University.
- b) Anyone with a current or previous personal, family or legal relationship with a student being assessed. (See also 25)
- c) Anyone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the programme of study or any of the courses in question.
- d) Anyone significantly involved in recent or current substantive collaborative research activities with a member of staff closely involved in the delivery, management or assessment of the programme(s) or course(s) in question. Significant involvement in this context means directly involved with a close knowledge of one another's work.
- e) Former staff or students of the institution, unless a period of five years has elapsed and all students taught by or with the individual have completed their programme(s) of study.
- f) Anyone whose appointment would create a reciprocal external examining arrangement involving eognate-equivalent programmes at another higher education institution.
- g) Anyone whose appointment immediately follows the appointment of an External Examiner from the same department in the same higher education institution.



# External Examiners For Taught Programmes Policy

- h) Any nominee who has a colleague from the same department of the same institution already acting on the Board of Examiners to which the nominee is to be appointed.
- i) Any nominee who has an honorary position at the University or has held an honorary position at the University within the last five years.

## Application

2234.1 This is a non-exhaustive list. Schools and Colleges are asked to use their judgement when ascertaining whether a conflict of interest exists.

2234.2 With regard to section 292 (f), staff who perform External Examiner duties in other Universities should keep their School informed in order to ensure that reciprocal arrangements involving eognate-equivalent programmes do not occur.

2234.3 Schools should avoid a situation where a member of ~~the~~ University staff and a member of staff of another HEI-Higher Education Institution are both simultaneously sitting on the same Board of Examiners at both institutions. Schools should attempt to select examiners from the full pool of experts available rather than continually re-appointing from a small, familiar group, to maintain objectivity.

23. The External Examiner must keep the School informed of any changes in circumstances that may give rise to a conflict of interest. The School should inform the College when a conflict of interest arises.

24. In exceptional circumstances, the Senate Quality Assurance Committee may approve the appointment of an External Examiner where a conflict of interests has been identified. Requests for appointments of External Examiners in these circumstances must be supported by a College recommendation. Such an appointment will not be approved for a sole Programme External Examiner for a specific degree programme.

## Application

24.1 Exceptional circumstances may arise when a limited pool of expertise is available in a specific discipline or subject area.

## Disclosure of intimate relationships

25. The University requires any member of staff, including External Examiners, to disclose an intimate relationship with any University of Edinburgh student (see Policy on Disclosure of Intimate Relationships).

## Terms of office

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# External Examiners For Taught Programmes Policy

~~34.~~ 26. The duration of an External Examiner's appointment will be for four years. An exceptional extension of one year may be permitted, if necessary.

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~~35.~~ 27. Where an External Examiner retires from his or her institution during their four year External Examiner term, their appointment with the University as an External Examiner will cease at the end of the relevant academic session. An exceptional extension of one year to ensure continuity may be approved.

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~~36.~~ 28. An External Examiner who has completed their term of appointment is not eligible for a new appointment until five years have elapsed.

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29. In view of the time commitment required to fulfil the duties of an External Examiner, it is recommended that an individual should hold no more than one other External Examiner appointment for courses or taught programmes during their period of employment as an External Examiner in the University.

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a. ~~In fulfilling these functions,~~ The University expects that the External Examiner has agreed with their own institution / employer the time commitment required for the role.

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~~37.~~

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## Application

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~~35.1~~ It recognised that in specialised subjects where the pool of expertise is small, it may be necessary to appoint a single External Examiner to more than one Board of Examiners simultaneously. Schools should exercise judgement in whether an individual External Examiner is being allocated a manageable workload.

~~38.~~ 30. It is recommended that the period of office for all undergraduate and taught postgraduate External Examiners begins on ~~the~~ 1<sup>st</sup> August, finishes on ~~the~~ 31<sup>st</sup> October for all undergraduate External Examiners, and on 30<sup>th</sup> November for all postgraduate taught External Examiners.

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## Appointment and Induction

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~~39.~~ 31. Once the relevant College has approved an External Examiner's nomination, the ~~School~~ College, or School where the College has delegated this responsibility, will communicate with the External Examiner notifying them of their appointment.

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# External Examiners For Taught Programmes Policy

## Application

~~31.7.1~~ ~~The notification of appointment to the External Examiner is the responsibility of the Colleges. This responsibility can be delegated by the Colleges to the Schools.~~ The appointment notification should include:

a) a formal letter of appointment and details of the External Examiner contract, including a statement on the External Examiner's duties. This should include the courses or programmes they are appointed for, deadline for return of the External Examiner report and a statement that the External Examiner will operate within this policy and within the University's other regulations and policies;

~~b) the External Examiner Handbook;~~

b) guidance on the payment of fees and expenses, including relevant forms. The School or College will provide an explanation of how the External Examiner's fee is calculated or the amount if a fee is set. It should be explained that the fee will be subject to the External Examiner's satisfactory fulfilment of their duties and will be paid on the receipt of the External Examiner's final report. The School / College will also provide information on the University's Expenses Policy: and

~~c) the process for raising serious concerns about academic standards. (See sections 62-63)~~

~~c)~~

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~~40-~~ 32. Schools will brief External Examiners as appropriate so as to enable External Examiners to fulfil their duties, including giving due attention to the needs of first-time External Examiners.

## Application

~~32.1~~ This information should include links to:

- relevant sections of the University's Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study,
- course and programme handbooks, ~~programme handbooks~~,
- objectives of the courses,
- curricula and teaching methods,
- methods of assessment and marking scales or grade schemes,
- the schedule for aggregation of marks of the various components in the overall assessment and
- any arrangements for credit on aggregate or reassessment of parts of the programme.

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The School must also ensure that the External Examiner is briefed on their oversight role, where they have one, for an Undergraduate Progression Board.



# External Examiners For Taught Programmes Policy

44- 33. At the beginning of the academic session, the School should provide the following information to the External Examiner:

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- a) information on dates of meetings;
- b) details of the Board of Examiners' composition;
- c) detailed arrangements for other examining activities such as attendance at orals or practicals; and
- d) any other material the School considers necessary for the External Examiner to fulfil their role effectively.

## Application

39.1 The External Examiner Reporting System will ensure that the following documentation is available (via hyperlink) on the External Examiner Dashboard:

- the University's External Examiner Handbook
- the University's External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy
- the University's Taught Assessment Regulations
- Chapter B7 of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

39.2 The External Examiner Dashboard on the External Examiner Reporting System informs the External Examiner of the report return deadline.

## Termination of Appointment

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42- 34. The University can terminate an External Examiner's appointment at any time where the External Examiner is deemed not to have ~~not~~ fulfilled their obligations or if a conflict of interest arises which cannot be satisfactorily resolved. External Examiners who wish to resign before the end of their normal term of office must give three months' notice in writing to the appointing College.

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## Application

3440.1 Schools are expected to review the work of External Examiners and make recommendations for termination to the College for contractual non-compliance should this become necessary. The College is responsible for monitoring the External Examiners' compliance with their contracts. Schools and Colleges must make reasonable efforts to resolve issues of non-compliance through discussions with the External Examiner concerned. In rare cases where these matters cannot be resolved, termination of the appointment may be carried out by the Head of College on the basis



# External Examiners For Taught Programmes Policy

of advice from Human Resources. The reasons for the termination of the appointment along with efforts to resolve the issues, should be fully documented.

~~40.2 The External Examiner must keep the School informed of any changes in circumstances that may give rise to a conflict of interest so that appropriate action can be taken. The School should inform the College and seek advice where appropriate.~~

## Participation of External Examiners in Assessment and Examination Procedures

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~~43. 35.~~ External Examiners are full members of the Board(s) of Examiners. All External Examiners have the right to attend meetings of all relevant Boards of Examiners.

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### Application

~~41.1 See the University's Taught Assessment Regulations which set out the rules which must be followed in taught student assessment, including the operation of the Board of Examiners meetings: [www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/taughtassessmentregulations.pdf](http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/taughtassessmentregulations.pdf)~~

~~44. 36.~~ In order to be quorate, at least one External Examiner must participate in and approve the decisions of the Board of Examiners.

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### Application

~~42.1 An External Examiner's approval of the decisions of the Board of Examiners indicates that they are satisfied with the conduct of the assessment process. See the University's Taught Assessment Regulations which set out the quoracy requirements for Board of Examiner meetings and the operation of the Board of Examiners meetings: [www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/taughtassessmentregulations.pdf](http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/taughtassessmentregulations.pdf)~~

~~45. 37.~~ External Examiners ~~should~~ must attend participate in all Board of Examiners meetings relevant to their appointment. External Examiners are expected to attend in person at least one Board of Examiners meeting each academic year.

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### Application

~~37.43.1~~ If an External Examiner is not able to attend at least one Board of Examiners meeting in a year, ~~his or her~~ their non-attendance must be reported to the College. The Taught Assessment Regulations define "attendance" and "participation".

~~If an External Examiner cannot attend a Board of Examiners meeting due to illness, travel disruption or similar unavoidable events, he or she should contact the School as soon as possible. Special arrangements can be put in place when an External Examiner cannot attend a meeting in person which may include, where practically possible,~~



# External Examiners For Taught Programmes Policy

~~participation by live video link or telephone. Such arrangements must be recorded in the minutes of the Board of Examiners.~~

~~43.2 — Where an electronic link is used in this way it must be live and in real time for the External Examiner to be considered as participating in the meeting. Where this arrangement is employed, the External Examiner must be provided with all the preparatory documentation for the Board in advance of the meeting. Where an External Examiner is too ill to participate, even remotely, during the academic year, the School will seek a replacement External Examiner, to be appointed through the usual School/College process.~~

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## Course External Examiners

~~46. — 38. The External Examiner's role is primarily that of a moderator of the assessment process. In some disciplines, an External Examiner may need to assess students directly in some parts of the assessment (e.g. for example orals) and this should be explicitly stated in the External Examiner's contract. In all other cases, the External Examiner must never be asked to mark, grade or otherwise assess directly the work of individual students.~~

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~~41. Course External Examiners consider borderline cases which relate to the decisions of the Board of Examiners on pass/fail boundaries. External Examiners will not be asked to determine the outcome of borderline cases.~~

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~~47. External Examiner(s) must review and approve draft examination papers. Draft examination papers should be accompanied by model answers, where applicable and appropriate, or solutions and the marking schemes to be applied.~~

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### Application

~~45.1 — It is expected that Course External Examiners will carry out this function.~~

~~48. 39. Schools will provide Course External Examiners will be provided with a sample of summative students' assessed work for each component of summative assessment on the course (e.g. for example, examination scripts or student coursework) to review.~~

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### Application

~~3946.1 The samples must provide the External Examiners with enough evidence to determine that internal marking and classifications are is of an appropriate standard and are is consistent. External Examiners should see samples of summative assessments from the top, middle and bottom of the range. The principles governing the selection of~~



# External Examiners For Taught Programmes Policy

these samples must be agreed in advance and communicated to the External Examiner.

~~46.2 External Examiners should also consider borderline cases which relate to the decisions of the Board of Examiners on pass/fail boundaries, progression, or in the case of final year candidates, the classification or award of a degree. An External Examiner has the right to see any summative assessment on request.~~

~~426.3 Where a School determines 50% or more of the summative assessment by coursework, orals, online tests, peer or self assessment, the External Examiner must receive or view samples of work and be provided with sufficient information about these assessments. See the regulation on "Availability of assessment" in the University's Taught Assessment Regulations: [www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/taughtassessmentregulations.pdf](http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/taughtassessmentregulations.pdf)~~

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~~46.2 External Examiners should also consider borderline cases which relate to the decisions of the Board of Examiners on pass/fail boundaries, progression, or in the case of final year candidates, the classification or award of a degree. An External Examiner has the right to see any summative assessment on request.~~

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~~49. 40. Schools may ask External Examiners to jointly invigilate Examinations that contain practical, oral or performance elements of exams are invigilated by with members of academic staff and may be conducted jointly with an External Examiner. Schools must inform students about how they will be orally assessed oral assessment arrangements and whether this these will involve an External Examiner.~~

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## Application

~~470.1 Where External Examiners directly conduct oral examinations, they should Schools must provide have the necessary information about the oral assessment to allow them to judge the student's performance in the orals. Where the External Examiner does not directly examine the student, he or she they have the right to view oral examinations and presentations (either in person or by audio-visual means) where practicable and proportionate. See the regulation on "Oral assessment" in the University's Taught Assessment Regulations: [www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/taughtassessmentregulations.pdf](http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/taughtassessmentregulations.pdf)~~

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~~50. 41. External Examiners should have the same amount of involvement in both the content and process of practical examinations as they have for written papers and coursework.~~

~~51.42. Some Arts disciplines require assessment by live performance or exhibition. Participation by External Examiners in these forms of assessment must meet current standards and practices of the sector and relevant professional bodies, including, where appropriate the creation of retainable documentation of the performance and/or exhibition.~~

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# External Examiners For Taught Programmes Policy

## Programme External Examiners

~~43.~~ The Programme External Examiner approves jointly, as a member of the Board, the decisions of the Board of Examiners regarding students' programme outcomes, including award and classification. The Programme External Examiner confirms that these decisions are taken in line with University regulations and published criteria.

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~~44.~~ Programme Boards of Examiners determine programme outcomes based on course marks which have already been ratified by a Board of Examiners. Members of the Programme Board, including the Programme External Examiner, are not entitled to challenge ratified course marks.

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~~52-45.~~ Programme External Examiners may be required to have oversight of the decision process of an Undergraduate Progression Board. This oversight may be done remotely; the External Examiner does not need to be physically present.

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### Application

~~4550.1~~ The Undergraduate Progression Boards Policy sets out the responsibilities of External Examiners who have oversight of the decision process of the Undergraduate Board and how they should be supported effectively so they can fulfil their role.

~~4550.2~~ See Undergraduate Progression Boards Policy: [www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/ug\\_progression\\_boards.pdf](http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/ug_progression_boards.pdf)

~~Programme External Examiners consider borderline cases which relate to decisions of the Board of Examiners on progression, or in the case of final year candidates, the classification or award of a degree. External Examiners will not be asked to determine the outcome of borderline cases.~~

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## External Examiner Reports

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### Submission

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~~53-46.~~ External Examiners are required to submit a report annually to the Principal of the University via the External Examiner Reporting System.

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~~54-47.~~ External Examiners are also required to provide an additional reflective overview at the end of their periods of office.

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### Application

~~52.1~~ This reflective overview is included as a section in the (EERS) External Examiner report and will be filled out by External Examiners who are in their final year.



# External Examiners For Taught Programmes Policy

~~55. 48.~~ The deadlines for submission of the External Examiner reports are 31 July for undergraduate and 30 November for postgraduate taught. External Examiners may submit their annual reports at any time prior to the deadline. ~~Deadlines are set by Senatus Quality Assurance Committee.~~

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~~56. 49.~~ External Examiners are expected to provide informative comment on the extent to which:

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- a) the University is maintaining threshold academic standards set for its awards in accordance with the frameworks for higher education qualifications and applicable subject benchmark statements;
- b) the assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the course(s) or programme(s) and is conducted in line with the Universities policies and regulations;
- c) the academic standards and the achievements of the students are comparable with those of other UK higher education institutions of which the External Examiner has experience.

~~57. 50.~~ External Examiners are expected to provide informative comment on quality assurance and quality enhancement and are asked to do the following:

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- a) confirm that sufficient evidence was received to enable the role to be fulfilled and if evidence was insufficient, give details;
- b) state whether issues raised in the previous report(s) have been, or are being, addressed to their satisfaction;
- c) address any issues as specifically required by any relevant professional body and highlight areas of good practice and innovation; and
- d) recommend, where appropriate, opportunities to enhance the quality of the learning opportunities provided to students.

~~58. 51.~~ External Examiners are expected to provide informative comment on teaching, course and programme structures and content including:

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- a) good practice and innovation relating to learning, teaching and assessment; and
- b) opportunities to enhance the quality of the learning opportunities provided to students.

## Actions in response to External Examiners' Reports

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~~59. 52.~~ Schools are responsible for ensuring that they have robust mechanisms in place for handling External Examiner reports and for taking appropriate action where required in response to those reports.

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# External Examiners For Taught Programmes Policy

## Application

57.1 Schools are expected to use data contained in the External Examiner Reporting System to identify themes and issues from individual External Examiner reports that require action.

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53. A senior person responsible for teaching and quality assurance matters (the Academic Response Co-ordinator), designated by the Head of School, will take responsibility for responding to each External Examiner report. It is expected that Schools will respond to External Examiner reports will be responded to within six weeks so that information contained in the reports can be acted upon promptly in order to maximise its use to Schools and students. This response should will demonstrate that the University has given full and serious consideration to the comments made and indicates the what actions that will be taken or not taken as a result of the comments.

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54. It is the College's responsibility to oversee the operation of School processes in Schools of for responding to External Examiners' reports. Each College is also responsible for handling issues or suggestions arising from External Examiners' reports that pertain to the College, so that Colleges can take appropriate action is taken where required at the College level.

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55. The College is responsible for identifying issues or suggestions that have institutional level implications and raising these matters in appropriate forums at an institutional level.

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56. It is the College's responsibility to ensure that issues raised in a particular report, that are judged to be particularly serious or important, are copied notified to the Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance acting on behalf of the Principal. This is only likely to occur in exceptional cases where institutional action is necessary

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## Application

61.1 This is only likely to occur in exceptional cases where institutional action is necessary or where serious quality assurance issues which affect more than one degree programme or School have been identified.

57. Certain External Examiners are appointed subject to validation by external organisations. If appropriate, Schools may choose to send the reports of these of External Examiners who are subject to validation by external organisations, to the relevant organisation, provided they are accompanied by information setting the Examiner's comments into context and noting any action that will be taken as a result of the report.

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# External Examiners For Taught Programmes Policy

## Analysis of Themes arising from External Examiner Reports

~~65. The University is committed to using External Examiner reports and responses widely to enhance the student experience.~~

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### Application

~~63.1 Business Information reports will facilitate thematic analysis of reports and responses.~~

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~~66. 58. External Examiner reports provide invaluable independent feedback to the University at programme and course level, and sometimes also at institutional level. Colleges and the University's Senatus Quality Assurance Committee use information from External Examiner reports to identify common themes in order to help shape their strategic approach to quality assurance and quality enhancement, and to enhance the student experience.~~

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## Details of External Examiners

~~67. The names, positions and institutions of External Examiners must be included in the relevant course/programme handbook and made available to students. Where an External Examiner is appointed to fulfill a role on behalf of a professional body, this will be stated.~~

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### Application

~~65.1 This information will also be made available to relevant staff in the University, and, where relevant, to external bodies such as the Quality Assurance Agency.~~

~~65.2 Students must be informed in the course/programme handbook that they must not make direct contact with External Examiners, and that other routes exist for queries about the assessment process.~~

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## Participation of students

~~68.12. Students have the right to view External Examiners' reports. Schools are responsible for making External Examiner reports available to students on request.~~

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### Application

~~66.1 See sections 72 and 73 for further guidance on freedom of information and data protection matters. Schools should record the frequency of requests.~~

~~69. 59. Schools will make themes extracted from External Examiner reports, and the Schools' summarised response to these themes, available to student representatives.~~

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### Application



# External Examiners For Taught Programmes Policy

~~65~~7.1 In partnership with Edinburgh University Students' Association, QAC has agreed that the Student Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) is the best forum for should consideration of themes arising from External Examiners reports and summarised responses ~~of from~~ Schools/Subject areas. Each School should decide which SSLC is most appropriate for the consideration of the summary reports.

~~59~~67.2 In order to streamline material being presented to SSLCs, Schools are encouraged to summarise points from External Examiner reports and group them into themes, together with the response from the School/Subject area/Programme and highlight areas of good practice.

~~59~~67.3 Each School should decide which SSLC is most appropriate to their structure for the consideration of the summary reports.

67.4 Following consideration of the themes at the SSLC, comments and suggestions from the meeting will be collated and reported to relevant School Committees or member of staff. Depending on recommendations, ongoing actions would be reported to SSLC meetings later in the academic year and ultimately through subsequent External Examiner reports.

60. Students have the right to view External Examiners' reports. Schools are responsible for making External Examiner reports available to students on request.

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## Application

~~60~~6.1 See sections ~~72 and 73~~64 - 71 for further guidance on freedom of information and data protection matters. Schools should record the frequency of requests.

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## Expenses and Fees

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~~70.~~ 61. Colleges are responsible for determining how to set External Examiner fees, and for arranging for the payment of fees and expenses. In some circumstances, Colleges may devolve responsibility for paying fees and expenses to Schools. Payment of expenses must be in line with the University's Expenses Policy.

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## Application

618.1 Payment of the External Examiner's fee is made annually by the Finance Office after receipt of a completed report from the External Examiner, and on the basis of payment instruction from Colleges or Schools.

## Causes for Serious Concern



# External Examiners For Taught Programmes Policy

74. 62. External Examiners have the right to raise any matter of serious concern with the Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance, who acts on behalf of the Principal, if necessary, by means of a separate confidential report. The Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance will respond in writing, outlining any actions to be taken as a result.

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72. 63. Where an External Examiner has a serious concern relating to **systematic systemic** failings in the academic standards of a programme or programmes, and has exhausted all procedures internal to the University, including the submission of a confidential report to the Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance, he/she/they may invoke the QAA's concerns scheme or inform the relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body.

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## Data Protection

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### Personal information of External Examiners

64. In order to administer the processes of appointing, managing, and paying fees to External Examiners, Schools and Colleges hold personal data regarding External Examiners in line with the University's Data Protection Policy.

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### Use of data by External Examiners

65. External Examiners have access to confidential information and must ensure that personal data are always held securely and are not disclosed to any unauthorised third party either accidentally, negligently or intentionally.

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66. External Examiners must not identify students or staff in their reports. It should be noted that even if a student or member of staff is not named it may be possible to identify them, for example using a student's exam number or matriculation number, or a member of staff's job title.

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67. Where an External Examiner identifies an individual, the individual has the right under the data protection law to make a subject access request.

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### Details of External Examiners

68. The names, positions and institutions of External Examiners must be included in the relevant course/programme handbook and made available to students. Where an External Examiner is appointed to fulfil a role on behalf of a professional body, this will be stated.

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### Application



# External Examiners For Taught Programmes Policy

- 68.1 This information will also be made available to relevant staff in the University, and, where relevant, to external bodies such as the Quality Assurance Agency.
- 68.2 Schools must inform students, in the course/programme handbook, that students must not make direct contact with External Examiners, and that other routes exist for queries about the assessment process.
- 68.3 The University holds information on appointed External Examiners for no longer than is necessary. The Human Resources (HR) privacy notice and retention schedule give details of categories of information and how long the University holds the information.

## External Examiner Reports

~~73.~~ ~~69.~~ The University does not publish External Examiner reports ~~are not published by the University.~~ However, External Examiner Reports are disclosable upon receipt of a request for copies of the reports in accordance with the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

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- 6974.1 Schools are responsible for making External Examiners' reports available to students and the public on request. There is no requirement to publish External Examiners' reports. ~~Schools must take care should be taken~~ to redact from the report ~~where it contains any information that could about~~ identifiable other students.
- 6974.2 If the School is unsure about any aspect of a request made under ~~the Freedom of Information Act or the Data Protection Act~~ law, they should contact ~~your~~ their local practitioner or the Records Management Section. Requests for the disclosure of any restricted reports made directly, ~~and~~ separately to the Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance, will be judged on a case by case basis in line with the University's freedom of information obligations.
- 697.3 External Examiner reports are accessible to those who have access to the EERS system and Business Information Suite. This means that a significant number of staff in the University are able to access External Examiner reports and Schools' responses. The External Examiner Reporting System includes a mechanism for reporting a data breach. System guides contain further information on using this tool.

~~External Examiners must not identify students or staff in their reports. It should be noted that even if a student or member of staff is not named it may be possible to identify them, for example using a student's exam number or matriculation number, or a member of staff's job title. The External Examiner Handbook informs External Examiners not to identify students or staff by name in their reports. It should be noted that, where~~

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~~74. Where an External Examiner identifies a student an individual, the student individual will have the right under the Data Protection Act 1998 data protection law to make a subject~~

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# External Examiners For Taught Programmes Policy

access request. Even if a student is not named it may be possible to identify the student, for e.g. via a student's exam number or matriculation number.

## Application

~~6072.1 External Examiner reports are accessible to those who have access to the EERS system and Business Information Suite. This means that a significant number of staff in the University are able to access External Examiner reports and Schools' responses. The External Examiner Reporting System includes a mechanism for reporting a data breach. System guides contain further information on using this tool can be found in systems guides.~~

~~70. External Examiner reports are held in the system for five years from submission.~~

~~External Examiners have access to confidential information and must ensure that personal data are always held securely and are not disclosed to any unauthorised third party either accidentally, negligently or intentionally.~~

~~71. Data protection advice is available from the local Data Protection Champion and the University Data Protection Officer. Information Security advice is available from the Information Security Division of IS. Advice on disclosure of information is available from the University's Records Management Section.~~

~~19 September 2017-XX September 2019~~

~~Additional guidance on assessment procedures may be found in the University's Taught Assessment Regulations: [www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/taughtassessmentregulations.pdf](http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/taughtassessmentregulations.pdf)~~

~~Policy, principle and operational guidance regarding Boards of Examiners is available at: [www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/staff/assessment/boards-examiners](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/staff/assessment/boards-examiners)~~

~~All sections of the policy apply to External Examiners appointed to a course(s) or taught programme(s) referred to as Course External Examiners and Programme External Examiners respectively, unless otherwise stated.~~

~~Student Administration exercises general oversight of examination procedures on behalf of the University and the detailed arrangement for examinations, including the provision of examination accommodation. See: [www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-administration](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-administration).~~

~~Student Systems exercise general oversight of the receipt and notification of results on behalf of the University. See: [www.studentsystems.ed.ac.uk/](http://www.studentsystems.ed.ac.uk/)~~

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The University of Edinburgh

Senate Quality Assurance Committee

25 April 2019

**Review of the Structure of the Senate Committees:  
Initial Proposals for Consultation**

**Executive Summary**

The Principal has agreed that the University should review the structure of the four Senate Committees:

- Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC)
- Researcher Experience Committee (REC)
- Curriculum and Student Progression Committee (CSPC)
- Quality Assurance Committee (QAC)

A task group convened by the Senior Vice-Principal is managing this review.

Further information on the scope of the review and membership of the task group is available at the following URL (see Paper B):

[www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/201901esagendaandpapers.pdf](http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/201901esagendaandpapers.pdf)

This paper sets out the Task Group's initial proposals for changes to the structure and membership of the Senate Committees.

An update on the most recent discussion of the Task Group, on 12 April 2019, which includes updated proposals, is attached as an Annex.

**How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?**

Effective academic governance supports the University in delivering all its strategic plans and priorities.

**Action requested**

For discussion.

**How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?**

The paper sets out the task group's plans for consulting on the proposals for changes to the Committee structures. Academic Services will take responsibility for coordinating the implementation of any approved changes.

**Resource / Risk / Compliance**

**1. Resource implications (including staffing)**

Academic Services will support the review. The operation of the Senate committee structure has resource implications both for the secretariat (provided by Academic Services) and for the members of the Committees. Were the review to lead to an increase or decrease in the number of committees, this would have a commensurate impact on resources.

**2. Risk assessment**

Effective academic governance assists the University in managing risk associated with its academic activities.

**3. Equality and Diversity**

The task group will consider equality and diversity issues when developing its recommendations.

**4. Freedom of information**

Open

**Originator of the paper**

Tom Ward and Theresa Sheppard, Academic Services  
17 April 2019

**University of Edinburgh**  
**Review of the Structure of the Senate Committees**  
**Initial proposals for consultation**

## 1 Summary

The Principal has agreed that the University should review the structure of the Senate Committees. A task group convened by the Senior Vice-Principal is managing this review.

This paper sets out the task group's initial proposals for changes to the structure and membership of the Senate Committees.

The options\* are as follows:

<b>Senate Learning and Teaching Committee (see 4.1)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Status quo - no change to current Learning and Teaching Committee remit and membership</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create more formal links with <b>Heads of Schools</b> (or their designated representatives) by setting up stakeholder engagement meetings on a regular basis, which would feed in to Learning and Teaching Committee discussion.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Invite both <b>Senate and Court</b> to work more closely together to oversee aspects of the broader student experience (while the Learning and Teaching Committee continues to focus on learning, teaching, assessment and student support) for example via joint annual meetings, a committee or multiple groups.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Transfer the Researcher Experience Committee's responsibilities for strategic postgraduate research student matters into Learning and Teaching Committee</li></ul>
<b>Senate Researcher Experience Committee (and broader research matters) (see 4.2)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Status quo - no change to current Researcher Experience Committee remit and membership (other than clarifying who will convene the Committee on an ongoing basis), and modest changes to Curriculum and Student Progression Committee's membership so that it has greater depth of expertise on Postgraduate Research matters to assist it to fulfil its existing role on Postgraduate Research policy and regulations</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Merge Researcher Experience Committee's responsibilities for strategic Postgraduate Research matters into Learning and Teaching Committee, and</li></ul>

incorporate responsibility for Early Career Researcher matters into <b><u>Research Policy Group</u></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Extend <b><u>Research Policy Group's</u></b> remit to incorporate both Postgraduate Research and Early Career Researcher matters, and change <b><u>Research Policy Group's</u></b> reporting lines so it reports to Senate (while retaining strong links to the <b><u>University Executive</u></b>)</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Clarify the roles of Researcher Experience Committee and other relevant Committees (e.g. <b><u>Student Recruitment Strategy Group</u></b> and <b><u>Fee Strategy Group</u></b>) in relation to the governance of Postgraduate Research scholarships</li></ul>
<b>Senate Quality Assurance Committee (see 4.3)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>No specific proposals for changes to Quality Assurance Committee's remit and membership.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Explore ways to strengthen the links between Quality Assurance Committee and the Learning and Teaching Committee, so that the University's quality review processes inform strategic discussion of learning and teaching issues.</li></ul>
<b>Senate Curriculum and Student Progression Committee (see 4.4)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Amend Curriculum and Student Progression Committee membership so that it has greater depth of expertise on Postgraduate Research matters to assist it to fulfil its existing role on Postgraduate Research policy and regulations</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Change Curriculum and Student Progression Committee name to 'Academic Regulations and Policy Committee'</li></ul>
<b>Other issues for consultation (see 4.5)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Formalise the requirement for the Committees to review their remit and membership each year to ensure they have expertise across all relevant aspects of the University's increasingly diverse portfolio of taught and Postgraduate Research provisions</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Review the role of the Student Disability Committee and (if it continues to operate) establish clearer reporting lines to the University formal governance structures</li></ul>

\* Note that in some cases the options presented for each Committee are not mutually exclusive.

The options above represent the initial proposals made by the Task Group. The Task Group's latest proposals are attached as an Annex.

## 2 Background

Senate has delegated most of its powers to its committees – and, beyond holding strategic discussions on specific issues, its decision-making role is limited to a small number of formal issues – for example, approving the award of Honorary degrees and the appointment of Emeritus Professors, and commenting on Court resolutions. The University's academic governance therefore relies heavily on Senate's committees.

Senate established its current committee structure in 2009-10, following a review of academic governance. Its four standing committees are:

- Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC)
- Researcher Experience Committee (REC)
- Quality Assurance Committee (QAC)
- Curriculum and Student Progression Committee (CSPC)

The remit and membership of these committees are available at:

[www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/committees](http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/committees)

It is timely for the University to review these committee structures:

- It is now ten years since the University established these committee structures, and over that period the University's portfolio of taught and research programmes, the size and shape of its student population, and the external policy and regulatory environment, have all changed considerably.
- During that period, the University has also changed some other aspects of its committee structures (e.g. the establishment of University Executive), and Colleges will have made some changes to their committee structures – it is therefore appropriate to ensure the Senate committee structures continue to align with other committee structures.
- In order to fulfil the requirements of the Scottish Code for Good Higher Education Governance, the University has commissioned a consultant (Dr Jennifer Barnes) to undertake an externally-facilitated review of the effectiveness of Senate and its Committees. This review is considering a range of issues, including: the operation and effectiveness of Senate; the effectiveness of the communication between Senate, its committees and their stakeholders across the University; and how Senate can encourage discussion and debate, and provide effective governance. Dr Barnes has now concluded her review and is writing up her report with a view to reporting to Senate 29 May 2019 meeting. The task group will take account of any recommendations she may make which have implications for the Senate Committee structures.

- In 2020, the University will introduce major changes to the composition of Senate in order to comply with the 2016 Scottish Higher Education (Governance) Act. As a result, Senate's membership will reduce (from c.800 to c. 300 members), and the membership will become predominantly elected. These changes in the composition could contribute to changes to the format and role of Senate, which would in turn have implications for the Senate Committees.

### 3 Task group approach and timescales

The task group scope and membership is set out in the Annex. The task group plans the following approach:

February 2019	Task group held first meeting to develop some initial proposals for changes to Committee structures and membership (taking account of approaches at comparator institutions, and emerging findings from the externally-facilitated review of Senate)
March / April 2019	Initial proposals to the Senate Committees for consultation
April / early May 2019	Broader consultation with stakeholders (e.g. University Executive, Research Policy Group, Heads of Schools and Colleges, Students' Association) regarding the proposals
Senate 29 May 2019	Present final proposals for committees structures and membership
Summer 2019	Task group to develop detailed Terms of References for revised committee structure
September 2019	E-Senate to approve detail of Terms of Reference for revised Committee structure
Start of 2019-20	Implement revised committee structures

### 4 Initial proposals for changes to the Senate committee structures

#### 4.1 Senate Learning and Teaching Committee

##### 4.1.1 *Governance of the broader student experience.*

It is becoming increasingly important for the University to have effective strategies and policies for aspects of the 'student experience' beyond the more traditional Senate focus on learning, teaching, assessment and academic support. At present, while LTC's terms of reference focus on those more traditional Senate functions, it has nonetheless provided direction and approved policy on broader issues, for example student mental health. There may be a case for formalising LTC's role in relation to the broader student experience.

While some comparator institutions do have Senate committees covering the broader student experience, extending LTC's remit would raise some challenges:

- How to define the demarcation lines between Senate and its Committees, and other University committees, in relation to the 'student experience';
- The Committee's membership would need to include expertise on relevant issues (implying a substantial expansion of membership to an already-large committee); and
- The Committee's typical meeting agendas are already long and demanding, and it may be necessary for the Committee to meet more frequently in order to manage a broader remit.

Since many student experience issues (e.g. transport) have direct resource implications, the Committee's effectiveness would be constrained unless it had an appropriate level of accountability for resources (which it does not have at present). One potential way of addressing this issue would be to establish a joint Court / Senate Committee which could include leaders for key functions (e.g. Estates) who would have authority over resources.

#### **4.1.2 Effective implementation of decisions**

Effective and consistent implementation of policies and strategies approved by Senate Committees often relies on action (and, sometimes, reallocation of resources) at School level. This can be a particular issue for LTC, since it is responsible for the more strategic aspects of the Senate Committees' work (the implementation of which can lead to particularly extensive change at School level). Extending the membership of LTC to include some or all Heads of Schools (or their designated representatives) would assist LTC to take account more explicitly of School-level resourcing issues when determining policy and strategy, and to increase School management buy-in for Senate Committee decision-making. It could however diminish the role of Colleges and their Deans in overseeing and supporting their Schools to implement institutional policy and strategy. In addition, when consulted about the proposed changes, LTC indicated that the Committee may become too large to be effective if all 20 Heads of Schools are members, along with key College and professional services staff, and student representatives; it might instead be useful to set up stakeholder engagement meetings with Heads of Schools which would then feed in to LTC discussion

#### **4.1.3 Alignment of different levels of study**

Since 2009-10, Senate has structured its committees so that LTC considers UG and PGT matters together, and REC considers PGR matters separately, whereas previously Senate separated Undergraduate and Postgraduate matters into different committees. While Colleges currently have different approaches to UG and PGT matters (Science and Engineering consider UG and PGT matters in one Committee, whereas the other Colleges consider them in separate committees), the task group has not identified any case for returning to the pre-2009 position and dividing up UG and PGT matters into different Senate committees. The task group is however

consulting on possible options for overseeing PGR matters, one of which might be to incorporate strategic PGR matters into LTC (see 4.2 below).

Options for consultation:

- Status quo - no change to current LTC remit and membership;
- Create more formal links with **Heads of Schools** (or their designated representatives) by setting up stakeholder engagement meetings on a regular basis, which would feed in to Learning and Teaching Committee discussion.
- Invite both **Senate and Court** to work more closely together to oversee aspects of the broader student experience (while the Learning and Teaching Committee continues to focus on learning, teaching, assessment and student support) for example via joint annual meetings, a committee or multiple groups.
- Transfer REC's responsibilities for strategic PGR student matters into LTC.

#### **4.2 Senate Researcher Experience Committee (and broader research matters)**

##### **4.2.1 Location of governance for PGR and Early Career Researcher matters**

At present, REC is responsible for postgraduate research degree training, higher degrees and training provision for other early career researchers. Research Policy Group (established in 2008, at the same time as the current Senate Committee structure), discusses University research policy issues, helps manage cross-College activities and promote interdisciplinary research, plays a key role in formulating the University's strategy and policy for REF 2021, and oversees good research practice and stewardship of University wide research policies that relate to research ethics and integrity. See: [www.ed.ac.uk/governance-strategic-planning/research/rpg](http://www.ed.ac.uk/governance-strategic-planning/research/rpg)

In recent years, REC's ability to deliver its remit has been constrained by changes in academic leadership. However, it is also not clear whether the way that the Committee's responsibilities are configured is assisting it to fulfil its remit.

There are persuasive arguments for locating governance of PGR matters alongside with taught student governance, and Early Career Researcher matters alongside research policy, like some comparator institutions:

- In addition to the University's MSc by research programmes (which combine taught and research elements), an increasing number of PhD programmes (e.g. Integrated PhD programmes) combine taught and research elements. This makes it problematic to handle taught and research student provision entirely separately in policy development and governance terms.

- Many academic policies and regulations apply equally to both taught and research students, with only a relatively small number of documents specific to PGR. Of the policies and guidelines managed by Academic Services, roughly twice as many are applicable to both PGR and taught students as are solely about PGR matters.
- It is not clear whether broader 'student experience' issues (such as student mental health and wellbeing) are so distinct for PGR students from taught students that the University should handle them separately in governance terms.
- Early career researchers are key contributors to the University's research capability, as reflected by the University's strategic investments in Chancellors' Fellows, and in the external funding that the University is able to secure for ECRs. Considering ECRs alongside the University's broader research priorities may assist the University to develop a more strategic framework for their development.

However, given the much larger volume of taught students and programmes / courses, there would be a risk of diminishing the focus on PGR issues by locating them in the same committee as taught student matters.

Alternatively, the University could consider incorporating both PGR and Early Career Research into the committee responsible for Research policy, which would enable the University to take an integrated perspective on its research activities the staff and students contributing to them.

When consulted about the proposed changes, both REC and LTC were broadly supportive of merging responsibilities for strategic PGR matters with LTC, provided a clear structure is in place that ensures Early Career Research matters will be given appropriate oversight.

#### **4.2.2 *Senate responsibilities for governance of research matters***

At present, Research Policy Group's formal reporting line is to the University Executive. During the externally facilitated review of Senate (see Section 2, above), some colleagues have suggested that there may be merits in Research Policy Group having a formal reporting line to Senate. This model appears common at comparator institutions, and would be consistent with Senate's formal responsibilities (set out in the 1889 Universities (Scotland) Act), which incorporate 'promoting' the University's research.

#### **4.2.3 *Responsibility for policy and regulation on PGR matters***

At present, the Curriculum and Student Progression Committee has responsibility for approving policy and regulation for PGR as well as taught student matters. In practice, this means that REC advises on changes to policy and regulation on PGR matters and then passes them to CSPC for approval. CSPC has a co-opted

member with expertise on PGR matters to provide a link between discussions at REC and CSPC.

While this overlap in functions is suboptimal, there would be significant practical issues to separating out policy and regulation for PGR students from that for taught students because many policies and regulations apply equally to both taught and research students and programmes. For example, of the policies and guidelines managed by Academic Services, roughly twice as many are applicable both to PGR and taught students as are solely about PGR matters. In part, this reflects the existence of the MSc by Research and Integrated PhD provision that incorporates taught and research elements (see above).

#### **4.2.4 Responsibility in relation to the development of PGR scholarships**

Some PGR scholarships (unlike scholarships for taught programmes) are accompanied with conditions or entitlements which affect students' programmes of study. For example, the Enlightenment Scholarships involve students undertaking a programme of teaching development or broader professional development alongside undertaking their research and producing their thesis. As a result, REC has inputted into the development of some PGR scholarships. The recent development and implementation of the Enlightenment Scholarships suggests that there may not be sufficient clarity regarding the respective roles of the Senate Researcher Experience Committee, and other University committees (e.g. Fee Strategy Group, FSG, and Student Recruitment Strategy Group, SRSG) in relationship to the development and oversight of PGR Scholarships.

Options for consultation:

- Status quo - no change to current REC remit and membership (other than clarifying who will convene the Committee on an ongoing basis), and modest changes to CSPC's membership so that it has greater depth of expertise on PGR matters to assist it to fulfil its existing role on PGR policy and regulations;
- Merge REC's responsibilities for strategic PGR matters into LTC, and incorporate responsibility for Early Career Researcher matters into Research Policy Group;
- Extend RPG's remit to incorporate both PGR and Early Career Researcher matters, and change Research Policy Group's reporting lines so it reports to Senate (while retaining strong links to the University Executive);
- Clarify the roles of REC and other relevant Committees (e.g. SRSG and FSG) in relation to the governance of PGR scholarships.

#### **4.3 Senate Quality Assurance Committee**

It remains necessary for the University to have a committee to provide governance for the quality assurance issues that it is responsible for (e.g. the University's framework of annual and period quality review, and the University's preparation for and responding to Enhancement-led Institutional Reviews). QAC also has a key role in sharing good practices identified via the quality review processes, and feeding key insights from quality review processes into institutional strategic planning. While some institutions (e.g. Bristol) combine this quality assurance work with policy and regulatory work, this is unlikely to be workable at Edinburgh without significant change since both QAC and CSPC already have very full agendas.

Options for consultation:

- No specific proposals for changes to QAC's remit and membership.
- Explore ways to strengthen the links between QAC and the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee, so that the University's quality review processes inform strategic discussion of learning and teaching issues.

#### **4.4 Senate Curriculum and Student Progression Committee**

The University needs to develop and maintain a framework of academic policy and regulation for its taught and research student activities. While it needs to be informed by strategy, the work involved in developing this framework requires careful scrutiny and discussion by stakeholders who have a detailed understanding of how policy and regulation impacts on individual students and courses/programmes. There is therefore a good case for continuing with the current arrangements, in which responsibility for approving policy and regulation is separate from broader strategic discussions on learning and teaching (the responsibility of LTC). The Committee's name does not articulate its core responsibilities (which relate to policy, regulatory and curriculum frameworks) sufficiently clearly however.

Options for consultation:

- Amend CPSC's membership so that it has greater depth of expertise on PGR matters to assist it to fulfil its existing role on PGR policy and regulations (see 4.2);
- Change CSPC's name to 'Academic Regulations and Policy Committee'.

#### **4.5 Other issues for consultation**

##### **4.5.1 Governance of an increasingly diverse portfolio**

The composition of the Senate Committees is based primarily on staff representing organisational units (e.g. representatives from Colleges and relevant support services). This will tend to lead to the Committee membership having expertise in relation to the most common forms of provision and students (e.g. on campus UG

and PGT). However, the University's provision is becoming increasingly diverse, for example with Online and Distance Learning provision, collaborations with other institutions, Executive Education, and Continuing Professional Development becoming significant parts of the University's portfolio. It is important that the Senate Committees take account of the distinctive features of these different types of provision and learners, for example when developing policy. At present, Conveners of Committees can add expertise on an ad hoc basis by co-opting additional members. However, it may be helpful to take a more structured view on the types of expertise required on each Committee.

Options for consultation:

- Formalise the requirement for the Committees to review their remit and membership each year to ensure they have expertise across all relevant aspects of the University's increasingly diverse portfolio of taught and PGR provisions.

#### **4.5.2 Student Disability Committee**

While the Student Disability Committee's formal reporting line is to the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee (having previously had a formal reporting line to the Senate Quality Assurance Committee), in practice it is not currently reporting to LTC.

Options for consultation:

- Review the role of the SDC and (if it continues to operate) establish clearer reporting lines to the University formal governance structures.

#### **4.5.3 Assessment and Feedback Enhancement Sub-Group**

In 2016-17 the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) establish an Assessment and Feedback Enhancement Sub-Group to advise the Assistant Principal (Assessment and Feedback), and to advise and guide the Leading Enhancement in Assessment and Feedback (LEAF) project, and to act as a forum for discussing broader assessment and feedback activities. This is an opportune time for LTC to review the role of the Sub-Group, since the Assistant Principal (Assessment and Feedback) has concluded her period of office, and the LEAF project no longer requires the same level of guidance.

Options for consultation:

- Review the role of the Assessment and Feedback Enhancement Sub-Group

#### **4.5.4 Governance of collaborations with other institutions**

When introducing joint taught or research student programmes with other institutions, it is necessary to go through normal academic approval processes, and

also to undertake some additional due diligence activities, prior to development and sign-off of a Memorandum of Agreement. Since collaborations with other institutions can involve academic ways of working that differ from normal University practices, and can have significant risk profiles, the University needs to have effective academic governance in place to provide direction regarding the types of academic collaboration that the University should consider undertaking, and to support and scrutinise proposals for specific collaborations. There are however limitations to the University's current academic governance structures regarding collaborations (both with UK and EU / international institutions).

While the Senate Curriculum and Student Progression Committee (CSPC) has responsibility for considering non-standard academic arrangements for collaborations (e.g. assessment regulations different to the normal University arrangements, dual award arrangements), in practice this means that CSPC only considers very specific elements of proposals rather than taking a broader view on the academic merits of the proposals. The University also has an International Ventures Group (reporting to University Executive) to provide advice and guidance on certain types of strategic collaboration (not only taught and PGR collaborations, but also research and commercial collaborations). However, IVG does not currently have any remit over academic or student experience matters.

Since taught and research student collaborations with other institutions can have significant non-academic implications (e.g. HR, legal, financial), it is important to take account of both academic and corporate dimensions when developing governance structures. The Deputy Secretary (Strategic Planning) is developing potential options for enhancing oversight and support structures. If these have implications for the Senate Committees, the task group will take account of them when submitting its proposals to Senate in May 2019.

In addition to considering the formal governance for joint taught or research student programmes, it would also be helpful to clarify the Senate Committees' role in relation to the governance of student exchange arrangements.

Options for consultation:

- No specific proposals at present

#### **4.5.4 Learning and Teaching Policy Group (LTPG)**

The Senior Vice-Principal established LTPG in 2015-16. It has operated as an advisory body with a particular role in coordinating and prioritising the work of the four Senate standing committees and the Vice- and Assistant-Principals with responsibilities for learning and teaching, and in connecting Heads of Colleges' and Heads of Schools' priorities with institutional strategic priorities on learning and teaching. Since the number of Assistant Principals with responsibilities for learning and teaching is likely to reduce, it would be appropriate for the new Vice-Principal (Students), once appointed and in post, to review the future of LTPG.

Options for consultation:

- No specific options

## **5      *Practical issues regarding the Committees' Terms of Reference (ToRs)***

Since Senate established the four Standing Committees in 2008, Senate has agreed some minor changes to the committees' ToRs (e.g. to amend a detailed point regarding a Committee's membership), but has not reviewed the ToRs more generally. The ToRs's statements of purpose and remit are a bit opaque for some of the committees. In addition, the ToRs do not address some operational issues, for example defining a quorum for the committees or explaining how the committees would make decisions in the absence of full consensus (for example, arrangements for voting). The task group will review and revise the Committees' ToRs during summer 2019, once Senate has agreed any changes to the overall structure and membership of its Committees.

ANNEX

## **Review of the Structure of the Senate Committees: Updated Proposals for Consultation**

The task group managing the review of the structure of the Senate Committees is in the process of consulting stakeholders on a range of options.

At its second meeting, on 12 April 2019, it discussed feedback to date from stakeholders (largely from current Senate Committees, but also the Convener of the Research Policy Group and the Deputy Secretary (Strategic Planning)). The key points to date from stakeholders and task group members are:

- **Governance of postgraduate research student (PGR) and early career researcher (ECR) matters.** Broad, though not universal, support for dissolving the Senate Research Experience Committee (REC) and transferring its responsibilities for PGR student matters to an expanded Senate Learning and Teaching Committee, and its responsibilities for ECR to Research Policy Group. Stakeholders generally accept that in its current format REC is not providing a sufficiently effective forum for addressing strategic PGR and ECR issues, and that there are good strategic reasons for aligning PGR with taught students, and ECR with broader research issues. Some stakeholders have however emphasised the importance of giving PGR student issues sufficient prominence and attention if considered in the same forum as taught student issues.
- **Reporting lines for research matters.** Mixed views regarding the merits of giving RPG a formal reporting line to Senate. Some stakeholders have emphasised that strategic and management decisions regarding research are primarily a matter for the Executive (rather than Senate) and that dual reporting could lead to unnecessary inefficiency and complexity. In contrast, other stakeholders argue not that not only does the Higher Education legislation give Senate a role in relation to research, but giving Senate a clear role in relation to both teaching *and* research may assist the University to maximise the synergies between them. Related to this, Dr Barnes' report into the effectiveness of Senate recommends that the University "consider how the Senate might have a role as the 'supreme academic body' in acknowledging the exceptional research activity of the university and supporting Research."
- **Governance of broader student experience matters.** While there could be merits in establishing a formal Committee (potentially reporting either to Senate or both Senate and Court) to provide a strategic forum for discussing broader student experience committee issues (ie issues beyond educational matters such as teaching, learning, supervision, assessment and student support), it would be more appropriate to consider appropriate models for governing the broader student experience once the Vice-Principal (Students) is in place and can feed into discussions, and once the University has finalised and made progress on implementing its Student Experience Action plan.

Taking account of feedback to date, the group has identified the following as its favoured options for addressing the main issues in the review. It will meet again on 6 May 2019 to consider any further feedback from stakeholders and to decide what recommendations to make to the 29 May 2019 meeting of Senate.

**Senate Learning and Teaching Committee** – setting the strategic direction on taught and research student matters

- **Extend its remit to include strategic postgraduate research student matters**, in addition to learning, teaching, assessment and student support for taught students.
  - To reflect this extension of remit, change the committee's name to 'Education Committee', and extend the membership to include one senior member of staff with responsibility for research student matters from each College.
  - Draw the Terms of Reference for the Education Committee sufficiently narrowly (for example, making it explicit that it does not have a role in relation to the broader student experience) to ensure there would be sufficient space on the agenda to focus on PGR as well as taught student matters.
- **Do not extend its remit to include the broader student experience at this stage** – the University Executive's sub-committee overseeing the development and implementation of the Student Experience Action Plan should fulfil this role in the shorter-term. Meanwhile, the Senate Quality Assurance Committee will continue to have a role in overseeing the effectiveness of student-facing support services.
- **Amend the membership to include two Heads of Schools** (at present, while there are two Heads of Schools on the Committee, they are co-opted and there is no requirement to continue to have them).

**Senate Researcher Experience Committee**

- Dissolve REC, transferring its responsibilities for strategic postgraduate research student matters to LTC, and its responsibilities for early career researchers to Research Policy Group.

**Senate Curriculum and Student Progression Committee** – developing the University's policy and regulatory framework for taught and research student provision

- **Change name to 'Academic Policy and Regulations Committee'** to articulate its core responsibilities more clearly.
- **Amend its membership to include one senior member of staff with responsibility for research student matters from each College**, to assist it to fulfil its role on PGR policy and regulations (to reflect REC would no longer provide expert advice on PGR regulatory and policy matters).

**Senate Quality Assurance Committee** – responsibility for developing and overseeing the operation of the University's quality assurance framework for taught and research student provision

- No substantive changes.

**Research Policy Group** – research policy and strategy, including strategy for the Research Excellence Framework, and training provision for early career researchers

- **Extend its remit to incorporate responsibility for Early Career Researcher matters.**  
Review whether to supplement the Group's membership to reflect this extension in remit.
- **Consider whether RPG** should have a reporting line to Senate rather than (or as well as), as currently, reporting to the University Executive.

Tom Ward  
12 April 2019

The University of Edinburgh  
Senatus Quality Assurance Committee

25 April 2019

## **Senate Committee Planning 2019-20**

### **Executive Summary**

In Semester One 2018-19 the Committee had an opportunity to identify:

- Student experience, learning and teaching issues that Schools / Colleges / support groups should take account of in the planning round; and
- Major institutional projects that the Committee would like to make a case for, which would require significant support from support services which could not be accommodated within existing resources.

In previous sessions, during Spring the Committee would have an opportunity to identify its full set of priorities for the coming session. This session, for reasons set out in the paper, the Senior Vice-Principal asks the Committees to limit their Spring 2019 planning to identifying projects currently underway that will require further work in 2019-20, relatively modest projects to address urgent 'hygiene' issues, and activities necessary in order to respond to external factors. Academic Services would then coordinate more substantive planning work for 2019-20 during summer 2019.

### **How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?**

Aligns with University Strategic Objective of Leadership in Learning, and with the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy.

### **Action requested**

The Committee is invited to identify its priorities for the coming session, taking account of the parameters that the Senior Vice-Principal has set.

### **How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?**

Academic Services will submit the plans to Senate's 29 May 2019 meeting, and will communicate them more widely using the Senate Committees' Newsletter. College representatives on the Committee are encouraged to discuss the plans with their Schools.

### **Resource / Risk / Compliance**

#### **1. Resource implications (including staffing)**

Yes. The paper will assist the University to use its resources strategically. Any priorities identified by the Committee must be possible to implement within existing resources, since it is too late in the planning round for 2019-20 to make a case for new projects.

**2. Risk assessment**

No. Since the paper aims to generate ideas rather than to recommend a specific course of action, it is not necessary to undertake a risk analysis.

**3. Equality and Diversity**

No. Since the paper aims to generate ideas rather than to recommend a specific course of action, it is not necessary to undertake an equality and diversity assessment.

**4. Freedom of information**

For inclusion in open business

Tom Ward, Director of Academic Services, 26 February 2019

## **Senate Committee Planning 2019-20**

### **1 Background - 2018-19 plans**

At its meeting on 30 May 2018, Senate endorsed the Senate Committees' plans for 2018-9, see Paper C at:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/20180530agendaandpapers.pdf>

### **2 Input into overall 2019-20 planning cycle**

In Semester One 2018-19, the Committee had the opportunity to identify:

- Student experience, learning and teaching issues that Schools / Colleges / support groups should take account of in the planning round; and
- Major institutional projects that the Committee would like to make a case for, which would require significant support from support services which could not be accommodated within existing resources.

### **3 Identifying Committee priorities for 2019-20**

In previous years, during Semester Two the Senate Committees each had an opportunity to identify their full set of priorities for the coming session. Each Committee would then submit its plans to the last Senate meeting of the year for approval.

This session, the context for setting the Committee's plans for the coming session is unusual for the following reasons:

- The University is in the process of appointing a new Vice-Principal (Students) – once in post they will have a key role in determining the Senate Committees' priorities.
- The University is in the process of developing a Student Experience Plan, which will set out a range of key priorities regarding teaching, curriculum and student support (as well as actions in relation to the broader student experience).
- The University is in the process of reviewing Senate's Committee structures, and has also arranged a broader externally-facilitated review of Senate – both of which are due to report to Senate on 29 May 2019.
- The Student Administration and Support strand of the Service Excellence Programme (SEP) will be presenting business cases for strands of work across a

wide range of areas that have policy implications for the Senate committees (eg academic lifecycle, examination board operations, programme and course information management, PGR lifecycle) to its Board in April 2019. In addition, SEP and the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee are initiating a major review of academic and pastoral support. It would not be sensible for the Senate Committees to plan actions that could overlap with the areas that SEP is considering, until the SEP Board decides which business cases to support.

- At present, Student Systems have relatively little capacity to support additional analysis and development activities. It would therefore not be sensible for the Senate Committees to plan additional actions contingent on Systems analysis and development work.
- This year's planning round is more complex than usual.

Taken together, these circumstances make it difficult for the Senate Committees to plan for 2019-20 at this point, and suggest that it would be more appropriate to wait until summer 2019 before planning the main Committee priorities for 2019-20.

The Senior Vice-Principal therefore asks the Senate Committees at this point in the session to limit their planning for 2019-20 to identifying:

- Projects currently underway that will require further work in 2019-20;
- Relatively modest projects to address urgent 'hygiene' issues (eg to address problems with the operation of particular regulations); and
- Activities necessary in order to respond to external factors.

Annex A proposes a set of priorities for the four committees. **The Committee is invited to discuss these priorities.**

## Annex – proposed Senate committee activities for 2019-20

### Proposed activities cutting across the four Committees

Activity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to work with Students' Association to promote and implement the Student Partnership Agreement</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finish implementing the changes in Senate's composition associated with the HE Governance (Scotland) Act 2016, including holding elections to the newly-constituted Senate in March / April 2020</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement any agreed changes to the operation of Senate and to its Committee structures following the externally-facilitated review of Senate, and the review of the structure of the Senate committees</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student Administration and Support strand of Service Excellence Programme – likely to raise various new strands of activity for Senate Committees, for example regarding academic policy and regulations</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to take steps towards aligning with the new UK Quality Code, with a view to full alignment prior the University's next ELIR</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep a watching brief on the development of Teaching Excellence Framework</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policies and Codes – Ongoing programme of review of policies</li> </ul>

### Learning and Teaching Committee

Activity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oversee continued implementation of University Learning and Teaching Strategy</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In partnership with the Service Excellence Programme's Student Administration and Support board, oversee and guide the review of student support</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oversee the implementation of recommendations from the 2018-19 task group on inclusion, equality and diversity in the curriculum</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor the implementation of the new institutional policy to support the University's Lecture Recording service</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure continued progress to enhance support for Careers, Employability and the development of graduate attributes</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to monitor implementation of the Student Mental Health Strategy</li> </ul>

- Continue to strengthen the University's understanding of retention and continuation rates for different undergraduate student groups, and to focus on enabling students from all groups to succeed

### Researcher Experience Committee

#### Activity

- Excellence in Doctoral Training and Career Development programme - evaluate the effectiveness of School / College briefings for supervisors, assess the impact of changes to requirements supervisor training and support planned for 2019-20, and explore the development of online training to supplement School / College briefings for supervisors.
- Enhance support for Early Career Researchers (make more visible, enhance and structure provision, strengthen partnerships)

### Curriculum and Student Progression Committee

#### Activity

- Work with the Service Excellence Programme to oversee the implementation of any significant policy changes associated with the current programme of work (e.g. Special Circumstances and Coursework Extensions, Programme and Course Information Management)
- Guide the University's response to any policy issues raised by the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment's report on degree classification outcomes
- Oversee the implementation of changes in policy regarding resubmission of PGT dissertations and associated dissertation supervision support, and PGT assessment/progression arrangements
- Oversee the implementation of changes to the Code of Student Conduct following the review in 2018-19, and conduct a light-touch review of the impact of the amendments
- Oversee the implementation of any agreed changes to the Support for Study Policy following the review in 2018-19

### Quality Assurance Committee

#### Activity

- Continue to evaluate the impact of the new programme-based approach to the Class Representation System
- Oversee institutional activities in response to the University's 2015 Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) and contribute to preparations for the 2020 ELIR

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Oversee implementation of mid-course feedback to taught postgraduate courses (subject to the outcome of the review during 2018-19)</li></ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue to monitor the effectiveness of the operation of the Personal Tutor system</li></ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue to support Schools to reflect on their patterns of degree classification outcomes</li></ul>   |

The The University of Edinburgh  
Senatus Quality Assurance Committee

25 April 2019

## **SRUC Accreditation Committee 2017/18**

### **Executive Summary**

The College of Science and Engineering manages accreditation arrangements with Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) on behalf of the University. An Accreditation Committee meets in February each year to consider/confirm continuing accreditation.

This paper summarises the business of the 2018/19 SRUC Accreditation Committee. The Accreditation Committee is due to meet again in February 2020.

The University also partners with SRUC in the delivery of joint MSc and PhD programmes; it should be noted that this paper refers only to **undergraduate** SRUC degree programmes accredited and awarded by the University of Edinburgh.

### **How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?**

Aligns with the University's strategic objective of Leadership in Learning.

### **Action requested**

SQAC is invited to note and comment on the contents of the paper.

### **How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?**

As this paper is an update to provide information there are no actions to be implemented or communicated.

### **Resource / Risk / Compliance**

#### **1. Resource implications (including staffing)**

Accrediting SRUC degree programmes has resource implications for the College of Science and Engineering, which enters student records into EUCLID and manages the annual SRUC Accreditation Committee; the College invoices SRUC annually for these services. There are also resource implications for Student Administration, which manually produces degree certificates for accredited programmes and for the support services to which SRUC students on accredited programmes are currently entitled access.

#### **2. Risk assessment**

In order to preserve the University's reputation, it is essential to ensure that degrees accredited by the University of Edinburgh meet the same high standards of academic quality and student experience that we would expect from our own programmes. The annual SRUC Accreditation Committee provides a framework to assure the University that the SRUC degree programmes we accredit continue to meet these expectations.

**3. Equality and Diversity**

As this paper reports on past activity, there are no Equality and Diversity considerations and an EqIA is not necessary at this time. Advice will be taken on whether an EqIA is necessary in relation to any future amendments to the MoA.

**4. Freedom of information**

Open

**Originator of the paper**

Claire Vallance, Head of Academic Affairs / Dr Linda Kirstein, Dean QA  
College of Science and Engineering

## SRUC Accreditation Committee 2017/18: Report to Senate Quality Assurance Committee Summary of Minutes

Minutes of the Accreditation Committee meeting held on 22nd February 2017 were APPROVED as a correct record.

Dr Gordon McDougall had been confirmed as the nominee to the RUC Academic Board and noted that he would be retiring from his role as Dean of Quality Assurance in August.

An update was provided on the installation of lecture capture technology across the University of Edinburgh estate and that an opt-out policy would be in place from the next semester.

### **Conveners Business**

#### Memorandum of Agreement

It was felt that a review of the Memorandum of Agreement would be appropriate at this time. Some issues had arisen around data management and the storage of data in EUCLID. The membership of the Accreditation Committee should also be considered in light of staff changes. The University of Edinburgh would begin the process, liaising with SRUC colleagues, to highlight any areas of development. It was hoped that this review would be completed ahead of ELIR in March 2019.

### **SRUC Annual Report for 2016/17**

The Committee approved the annual Report and noted the following:

#### Student Numbers

It was confirmed that the final year cohort was 18 students as student numbers tend to decrease in the final years, as some students do not wish to make the change from HNC to BSc as students were apprehension about Honours projects this required work by the College. Additionally in agricultural environments, there was uncertainty as to whether an Honours degree makes a significant difference for career aspirations. The demand from Industry for SRUC students is very high and a report on career destinations for SRUC students would be very useful.

#### Annual Monitoring Process

SRUC attempted to remove the barriers between two different schemes for Higher Education and Further Education activity by having the same system in place for the whole Institution. However issues had arisen, where a degree is delivered at more than one campus. Therefore Annual Monitoring for each delivery of a programme has now been put in place. Management teams will now meet to consider the quality management of the programme on their own site to ensure the process is relevant to their campus. The committee expressed support for this new process.

#### External Examiner Report for 2016/17

A problem had been highlighted in feedback, where a long delay in conveying Feedback resulted in students being unable to benefit from the comments or make any improvements ahead of the next assessment.

#### Student assessment feedback

The area of feedback improvements was recognised as important. Resources can be an issue for staff in meeting targets of 15 days. An 'internal audit' type system has been introduced to indicate when feedback results are due, this can be followed up and support for staff put in place if necessary. The Institution held a 'Speak Week' for students to highlight any additional support needs or issues.

#### Academic Appeals

Panel recommendations are now passed to the Assistant Principal ahead of final agreement to improve consistency.

#### Academic Governance Handbook

It was noted the Organisational Diagram was helpful and highlighted the separate Quality Assurance team a sub-committee of the Learning and Teaching Committee. With a dedicated member of staff dealing with Quality Assurance issues two days a week.

#### Membership of Accreditation committee

It was felt that the Membership of the Accreditation Committee was correct and the exchange of views over the past years had been very useful but the addition of a student rep would be very useful.

### **Accreditation**

The Committee agreed to the Accreditation.

SQAC: 25.04.19  
H/02/28/02

**SQAC 18/19 4G**

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Claire Vallance  
College of Science and Engineering  
March 2019

**APPENDIX 1: MEMBERSHIP OF SRUC ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE 2017/18**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>ROLE</b>
Dr Kyrsten Black	Assistant Principal Higher Education, SRUC
Matt Elliot	Deputy Head of Academic Affairs, College of Science and Engineering, University of Edinburgh
Mr Niall Evans	Head of Countryside and Environment, SRUC
Professor Tina Harrison	Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance, University of Edinburgh
Dr David James	Assistant Principle (Education), SRUC
Ms Gemma Jones	President, Students Association, SRUC
Dr Gordon McDougall	Dean of Quality Assurance and Culture, University of Edinburgh
Professor Jamie Newbold	Academic Director, SRUC
Linda Archibald (Secretary)	QA Administrator, College of Science and Engineering, University of Edinburgh



# MINUTES

## Present:

Dr Kyrsten Black – Assistant Principal: Higher Education, SRUC  
Mr Matt Elliot – Deputy Head of Academic Affairs, CSE, University of Edinburgh  
Mr Niall Evans – Head of Countryside and Environment, SRUC  
Prof Tina Harrison – Assistant Principal: Academic Standards & Quality Assurance, University of Edinburgh  
Dr David James - Assistant Principal (Education), SRUC  
Ms Gemma Jones – President, Students Association, SRUC  
Dr Gordon McDougall – Dean of Quality Assurance, CSE, University of Edinburgh (*Convener*)  
Prof James Newbold – Academic Director, SRUC

## In attendance:

Mrs Linda Archibald – Academic Support Administrator (L&T), CSE, University of Edinburgh

### 1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Alex Laidlaw, Head of Academic Affairs, CSE, University of Edinburgh

### 2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minutes of the Accreditation Committee meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2017 were APPROVED as a correct record.

### 3. Matters Arising

#### 5.1 Academic Governance Handbook

Dr Gordon McDougall had been confirmed as the nominee to the RUC Academic Board. It was noted that Dr McDougall would be retiring from his role as Dean of Quality Assurance in August. Kyrsten Black would liaise with Alex Laidlaw to confirm a replacement nominee to this role.

#### 6.1 Use of Video Conferencing for Teaching

The University of Edinburgh had completed the first stage of a three year programme which aimed to furnish all teaching rooms with lecture capture technology. This programme included provision for over 400 rooms, within all campus areas, considered 'lecture rooms'

The timescale between the installation of hardware and start of lectures had left less time for staff training than had been anticipated. Following additional staff training, and the implementation of a University Policy, it was expected that a much higher rate of staff usage would be realised by the next semester. Thought is currently being given to storage issues and retention periods for lecture materials

The University Policy anticipates that, where lecture capture is available, lectures will be recorded, with an 'opt-out policy' in place from the start of next semester. The option exists for staff to review, edit and pause lectures, which may be useful for copyright or sensitive issues.

It had been pointed out by staff that microphones in the lecture halls do not pick up student voices well for Q&A sessions and interactions. Solutions to this issue have included the lecturer repeating student questions and the use of a wireless 'cube microphone' which can be moved around the audience. While this microphone is not part of the standard kit, it can be obtained easily on request.

Committee questioned whether the availability of online lectures could have an adverse effect on student attendance. Research carried out ahead of installation did not highlight any significant difference in attendance at lectures at other Universities, although a specific Edinburgh-University evaluation has not been conducted.

#### *7.2 External Examiner Report Template*

It had been agreed that a copy of the Science and Engineering template would be forwarded to SRUC for information. Dr Black would follow this up with her own administrative staff and advise if this had not been received.

#### *7.4 Ex-Officio member of University of Edinburgh Senate*

This matter had been passed on to Ailsa Taylor in the University and was in progress

#### *8. Any Other Business – Course Approval Process*

Alex Laidlaw had put SRUC in touch with ELDeR colleagues. As some colleagues from SRUC took part in Global Academy Course provision, this had proved helpful.

## 4. Conveners Business

### Memorandum of Agreement

It was felt that a review of the Memorandum of Agreement would be appropriate at this time

Some issues had arisen around data management and the storage of data in EUCLID. The membership of the Accreditation Committee should also be considered in light of staff changes.

The University of Edinburgh would begin the process, liaising with SRUC colleagues, to highlight any areas of development. It was hoped that this review would be completed ahead of ELIR in March 2019.

## 5. For Discussion

### 5.1 Annual Report for 2016/17

The Annual Report had been forwarded to members of the Committee. It was noted:

#### Student Numbers

- It was difficult to ascertain student numbers due to the variance in size for final years. It was confirmed that the final year cohort was 18 students.
- Student numbers tend to decrease in the final years, as some students do not wish to make the change from HNC to BSc.
- Students may also perceive Honours projects with some apprehension and it was felt that the College should continue their endeavour to remove the 'fear factor' from this transition.
- While SRUC do promote the benefits of an Honours degree, students often feel this is a large commitment which may not be of significant value. This was particularly relevant in agricultural environments, where it is uncertain whether an Honours degree makes a significant difference for career aspirations.
- Many SRUC students continue to careers within the Industry, and the demand from Industry for these students is very high.
- It was felt that a detailed report on career destinations for SRUC students would be very useful. It would, however, be difficult to obtain comprehensive data unless a sizeable section of students

responded to questionnaires. It was noted that careers such as 'Farm Manager' was not classed as a professional career, so this issue can also be challenging.

#### Annual Monitoring Process

- This process involved two different schemes for Higher Education and Further Education activity.
- SRUC attempted to remove the barriers between these by having the same system in place for the whole Institution, regardless of the level. However issues had arisen, such as when a degree is delivered at more than one campus. Where a single monitoring report is given, issues raised which relate to only one of the campuses may be overlooked.
- Annual Monitoring for each delivery of a programme has now been put in place. This allows more detail to be collected but still allows a report which pulls everything together.
- In terms of quality enhancement, management teams will now meet to consider the quality of the programme on their own site to ensure the process is relevant to their campus. Information can then be cascaded from an individual programme to departmental level.
- Committee expressed their support for this new process, which appeared to be a very useful practice.

#### 5.2 External Examiner Report for 2016/17

The External Examiner Report was noted.

A problem had been highlighted in feedback, where a long delay in conveying Feedback resulted in students being unable to benefit from the comments or make any improvements ahead of the next assessment.

#### 5.3 Summary of student feedback

The area of feedback has a huge impact on the student experience and the Institution is continuing to work on improvements where possible.

A mix of experiences have been reported, with many Examiners complimenting the Institute on their feedback, and some problems being raised.

Resources can be an issue and the Institute has encouraged any member of staff who may be having difficulties meeting their feedback deadline to highlight this as soon as possible.

An 'internal audit' type system has been introduced. This process indicates when feedback results are due, and these can then be followed up and support for staff put in place if necessary.

The standard period for receiving feedback on assessments is 15 days. In exceptional circumstances, such as very large amounts of essays for very large courses, an 'opt-out' system is in place. This system allows markers to ask for additional time for feedback turn-around and highlights this issue, which can be considered when designing marking schedules.

Clearly, as short a time limit as possible is desirable. This is important to allow students enough time to digest any feedback ahead of future assessments.

The Institution held a 'Speak Week' for students to highlight any additional support needs or issues. Some results have been received which will feed into student support.

5.4 Staff feedback?  
Was there anything here?

5.5 Academic Appeals

It was noted that a system is in place where misconduct panel recommendations are passed to the Assistant Principal ahead of final agreement. This allows for more consistency of judgement between campuses.

5.6 Academic Governance Handbook

It was noted the Organisational Diagram at Appendix 1 gave a very good overview of the governance structure of the Institute.

The Institute has a separate Quality Assurance team which sits under the Learning and Teaching Committee as Programme Approvals and Review Committee.

A dedicated member of staff is employed for two days a week, dealing with Quality Assurance issues. Any issues are passed to the Learning and Teaching Committee.

5.7 Membership of Accreditation committee

It was felt that the Membership of the Accreditation Committee was correct and the exchange of views over the past years had been very useful.

The addition of student representation within the structure of the Committee would be very useful.

## 6. ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

6.1 SRUC Annual Report 2016/17

The Committee approved the annual Report

6.2 Accreditation

The Committee agreed to the Accreditation

## 7. ITEMS FOR Information

7.1 **Education Manual**

The Institution have worked on this Manual for the last 12 months but were aware that August was the stop point, in that any student-centred issues would not be incorporated after this time.

Some documents and procedures may need updating and were still being assessed. Workshops for any new processes will be held on campus for relevant staff.

8. Any other relevant business

There was no other business

**Date of Next Meeting**

To be Confirmed 2019

The University of Edinburgh  
Senatus Quality Assurance Committee

25 April 2019

## **SRUC Accreditation Committee 2018/19**

### **Executive Summary**

The College of Science and Engineering manages accreditation arrangements with Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) on behalf of the University. An Accreditation Committee meets in February each year to consider/confirm continuing accreditation.

This paper summarises the business of the 2018/19 SRUC Accreditation Committee. The Accreditation Committee is due to meet again in February 2020.

The University also partners with SRUC in the delivery of joint MSc and PhD programmes; it should be noted that this paper refers only to **undergraduate** SRUC degree programmes accredited and awarded by the University of Edinburgh.

### **How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?**

Aligns with the University's strategic objective of Leadership in Learning.

### **Action requested**

SQAC is invited to note and comment on the contents of the paper.

### **How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?**

As this paper is an update to provide information there are no actions to be implemented or communicated.

### **Resource / Risk / Compliance**

#### **1. Resource implications (including staffing)**

Accrediting SRUC degree programmes has resource implications for the College of Science and Engineering, which enters student records into EUCLID and manages the annual SRUC Accreditation Committee; the College invoices SRUC annually for these services. There are also resource implications for Student Administration, which manually produces degree certificates for accredited programmes and for the support services to which SRUC students on accredited programmes are currently entitled access.

#### **2. Risk assessment**

In order to preserve the University's reputation, it is essential to ensure that degrees accredited by the University of Edinburgh meet the same high standards of academic quality and student experience that we would expect from our own programmes. The annual SRUC Accreditation Committee provides a framework to assure the University that the SRUC degree programmes we accredit continue to meet these expectations.

#### **3. Equality and Diversity**

As this paper reports on past activity, there are no Equality and Diversity considerations and an EqIA is not necessary at this time. Advice will be taken on whether an EqIA is necessary in relation to any future amendments to the MoA.

**4. Freedom of information**

Open

**Originator of the paper**

Claire Vallance, Head of Academic Affairs / Dr Linda Kirstein, Dean QA  
College of Science and Engineering

## SRUC Accreditation Committee 2018/19: Report to Senate Quality Assurance Committee

### 1. Accreditation Arrangements

The University of Edinburgh accredits and awards the undergraduate BSc Environmental Resource Management<sup>1</sup> on behalf of Scotland's Rural College (SRUC). The College of Science and Engineering manages the SRUC Accreditation Committee on behalf of the University. Membership of the 2018/19 Committee is provided in Appendix 1.

Further to the withdrawal of BSc Sustainable Environmental Management at the end of 2017/18 the only accredited degree for consideration is now The BSc Environmental Resource Management.

The next meeting of the SRUC Accreditation Committee will be scheduled for February 2020. It is agreed that following the accreditation, Senate QA Committee will receive annual reports on SRUC accreditation in around February/April dependant on meeting dates.

### 2. 2018/19 Accreditation Committee

The SRUC Accreditation Committee last met in February 2019. Information considered by the Committee included the 2017/18 SRUC Annual Report, the SRUC Education Manual and Academic Governance Handbook. The Committee was assured by the information provided by SRUC, which demonstrated that appropriate policies and procedures were in place to ensure the quality of academic programme delivered.

**The Committee therefore confirmed it was content for the University of Edinburgh to accredit the following SRUC undergraduate degree programme for 2018/19:**

- **BSc Environmental Resource Management**

Other items discussed by the Committee included:

#### SRUC Staffing and Academic Board

It was noted that SRUC are now in the middle of a reorganisation as David James had now left and Neil Evans would also leave shortly as part of the reorganisation. The new Head of Department is Andrew Barnes. SRUC academic governance structure has been reviewed and updated, the presence of individuals is now determined by required office holder not individual. There has also been work in diversifying the academic board to around 30 members and will include elected student representatives.

#### SRUC Education Manual/Academic Progression

Further to previous delays, the Education manual is now mostly completed and available on the website. This has provided further clarity around assessment, marking scales (SRUC have adopted

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.sruc.ac.uk/courses/123/environmental\\_resource\\_management\\_bsc\\_bsc\\_hons](https://www.sruc.ac.uk/courses/123/environmental_resource_management_bsc_bsc_hons)

the University of Glasgow 20 point grading scale) and mitigating circumstances. New SQA Grade specifications were required in August 2018 prior to the start of the year which required some late updates to the document.

### Application for Degree Awarding Powers

SRUC's application for DAP continues to be an institutional priority and it is hoped that work on this can begin further to the outcome of SRUC's next ELIR, in 2019. It is noted that this is likely to take some time to complete and that a timescale is not currently available. In the event of a successful application there will still be a requirement for a transition period, the committee discussed whether a move to a joint degree format might be likely.

### Student Satisfaction

Video conferencing is still an issue due to maintaining quality across all sites and issues with external suppliers. This has now improved somewhat but used in a limited function, mainly where there are specialist speakers that benefit students across sites. In the future they will look towards using Skype more because of the superior service provided.

### External Examiners

Further to previous concerns raised by the External Examiners about the return of feedback this has now been improved and an audit of the feedback turnaround has taken place. There was some additional confusion with students who were expecting the University of Edinburgh turnaround time but this has now been clarified.

It is noted that the current External Examiner has now reached the end of their term. Nominations will be identified and circulated to programme approval board and review committee in the next month.

## 3. Future Developments

If as described previously, the application for DAP is not realised soon and there is an expectation that Edinburgh University is to continue to accredit SRUC degrees, then a review of the MOA will be required before the next accreditation. The MOA this is now out of date and not accurately reflecting the current state. It should be noted that as the accreditation management within the College is due to historical arrangements, with SRUC forging closer relationships with CMVM the MOA and future accreditation should ideally be managed at an institutional level.

Concerns have been raised in previous reports as to the UKVI risks posed by SRUC Tier 4 students who have to be recorded on EUCLID but whose engagement is not monitored by the University of Edinburgh.

Recording SRUC accredited students in EUCLID has additional resource implications, as well as creating administrative challenges for both institutions. The current MoA provides SRUC accredited

students with access to University of Edinburgh support services (e.g. Counselling, Disability, Careers). It is understood that there is very minimal use of these services by SRUC students; given the growth in Edinburgh's student population and the increasing pressure on support services, it may be appropriate to consider whether we wish to review these arrangements and renegotiate the broader MoA, including administrative and support arrangements.

It was agreed that a further conversation between Kyrsten Black and the Head and Deputy Head of Academic Affairs should be held outside of the meeting. This is to determine what a further MOA may look like and how this would proceed. The committee agreed that any new MOA should be for the standard five year term with an annual review and should additionally cover what happens in the event of a termination of agreement due to DAP being granted along any transitional arrangements.

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Claire Vallance / Dr Linda Kirstein, Dean QA  
College of Science and Engineering  
March 2019

APPENDIX 1: MEMBERSHIP OF SRUC ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE 2018/19

NAME	ROLE
Dr Kyrsten Black	Assistant Principal Higher Education, SRUC
Jennifer Carfrae	Programme/Team Leader for Environmental Resource Management, SRUC
Professor Tina Harrison	Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance, University of Edinburgh
Professor David Hopkins	Faculty Dean, Central Region, SRUC
Stuart MacKenzie	Student Representative, President of SRUC Students' Association
Professor Jamie Newbold	Academic Director, SRUC
Dr Claire Phillips	Dean of Quality Assurance, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine, University of Edinburgh
Heather Tracey	Deputy Head of Academic Affairs, College of Science and Engineering, University of Edinburgh
Claire Vallance	Head of Academic Affairs, College of Science and Engineering, University of Edinburgh
Dr Stephen Warrington (Convener)	Dean of Student Experience, College of Science and Engineering, University of Edinburgh
Dr Linda Kirstein ( <i>Apologies received</i> )	Dean of Quality Assurance and Culture, College of Science and Engineering, University of Edinburgh
Sarah Wyse (Secretary)	QA Administrator, College of Science and Engineering, University of Edinburgh

**Meeting of the Scotland's Rural College Accreditation Committee  
Tuesday 19 February 2019, to be held from 10.00am,  
in the Liberton Tower room, Murchison House**

# MINUTES

Present:

Dr Kyrsten Black	Assistant Principal, SRUC
Jennifer Carfrae	Programme/Team Leader for Environmental Resource Management, SRUC
Professor Tina Harrison	Assistant Principal, Academic Standards and Quality Assurance,
Professor David Hopkins	UoE Faculty Dean; Central Region, SRUC
Stuart Mackenzie	Students' Association President, SRUC
Professor Jamie Newbold	Academic Director, SRUC
Dr Claire Philips	Dean of Quality Assurance, (College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine, UoE
Heather Tracey	<b>Secretary</b> , College Deputy Head of Academic Affairs, UoE
Claire Vallance	College Head of Academic Affairs, UoE
Stephen Warrington	<b>Convener</b> , College Dean of Student Experience, UoE

In attendance:

Sarah Wyse	Minute Secretary, College Academic Support Administrator, UoE
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<b>1.</b>	<b>WELCOME AND APOLOGIES</b>
	Apologies were noted from Linda Kirstein, Neil Evans  It was noted that Stephen Warrington was convening in place of Dr Linda Kirstein who, in turn, has replaced Dr Gordon McDougall as College Dean with responsibility for Quality Assurance, following Dr McDougall's retirement.
<b>2.</b>	<b>MEMBERSHIP OF THE ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE</b> <b>Membership list for 2018/19</b>
	<i>with reference to Paper SRUCAC 1819 1 A</i>  It was noted that David Jones has now left SRUC and Niall Evans would be leaving shortly as a result of a structural reorganisation.  Professor Andrew Barnes, Head of Rural Economy, Environment and Society Dept. will be invited to join the Committee.

	<p><b>ACTION:</b> SRUC to supply contact details for Professor Andrew Barnes.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> UoE to extend membership invitation to Professor Barnes.</p>	<p><b>KB</b></p> <p><b>HT</b></p>
<b>3.</b>	<p><b>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING</b></p> <p><b>Minutes of the Accreditation Committee meeting held 21 February 2018</b></p>	
	<p>The Minutes were ratified as an accurate reflection of the meeting.</p>	
<b>4.</b>	<p><b>MATTERS ARISING (not covered elsewhere on the agenda or documentation)</b></p>	
	<p>It was confirmed that SRUC had received a copy of the University's External Examiner Report template.</p> <p>The University is yet to extend an invite to the Principal of SRUC to attend Senate meetings as an Ex-Officio member, as indicated in the Memorandum of Agreement.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> UoE to ensure extension of Ex-Officio membership invitation the Principal of SRUC.</p>	<p><b>HT</b></p>
<b>5.</b>	<p><b>FOR INFORMATION</b></p>	
<b>5.1</b>	<p><a href="#">Environmental Resource Management (BSc)</a> with reference to Paper SRUCAC 1819 1 B</p> <p>The document, used for recruitment purposes, was supplied for information. It was noted that this programme is offered at both Edinburgh and Aberdeen campuses.</p>	
<b>5.2</b>	<p><a href="#">Strategic Plan 2018-22</a> with reference to Paper SRUCAC 1819 1 C</p> <p>SRUC outlined their ambition for University status. They have undergone an extensive internal re-structure to this end and they hope that this year's ELIR<sup>1</sup> will act as a Launchpad to achieve this. If ELIR proves successful, SRUC intend to enter into the process to gain degree awarding powers by 2021/22.</p> <p>In addition the vision of establishing a northern, central, southern and western faculty structure was outlined.</p>	
<b>6.</b>	<p><b>FOR DISCUSSION</b></p>	
<b>6.1</b>	<p><a href="#">Academic Governance handbook</a> with reference to SRUCAC 1819 1 D</p> <p>The detail of SRUC's recent re-structure was discussed. The act of re-organisation provided a welcome opportunity for review and reflection of process and procedure.</p> <p>It was decided that membership of the Academic Board, akin to the University Senate, should be held by virtue of office, rather than by a named individual whose role may change. It was established that the Academic Board members will be 50% elected; elections to be held over the coming months. The first meeting is expected to be in May 2019 with estimated attendance of around thirty members, reflecting the diversity of sites and functions within SRUC.</p> <p>Student engagement was heralded as an important factor within Academic Governance to reflect the importance of the student voice within the organisation.</p>	

<p><b>6.2</b></p>	<p><b>Education Manual Updates</b>  <i>with reference to SRUCAC 1819 1 E</i></p> <p>It was noted that the production of this document has been an on-going process over the last 18 months and there are still some sections to be re-worked.</p> <p>SRUC aim to create unified procedures and processes across all levels, and to produce a single document to complement this. This is proving challenging due to the variation of teaching, qualifications and regulations from a number of awarding bodies to which SRUC must adhere.</p> <p>It was noted that some of the information around assessments was unclear and potentially contradictory. It was explained that this is as a result of a multiplicity of accrediting bodies, with varying assessment requirements. Years 1 and 2 must conform to SQA qualification policies, which saw updated conditions of assessment for graded units in August 2018.</p> <p>It was clarified that, with regard to examinations, the first attempt is a given, the second attempt permitted only where a student has a good attendance/participation record and a third attempt allowed only where there are mitigating circumstances. The latter circumstances are considered by an Exam Board.</p> <p>It was confirmed that SRUC employ the marking scheme of the University of Glasgow across programmes to ensure consistency. This scheme was praised for its simplicity, linear design and distinct banding system; although lacking in the fine grading of the top band.</p> <p>The issue of ‘grade inflation’ was raised, however SRUC reported that, culturally, their academics only tend to award the highest marks for exceptional work and, subsequently, ‘grade inflation’ is not an issue.</p> <p>It was noted that references are made to both ‘terms’ and ‘semesters’ within the document. SRUC confirmed that they currently used both, due to teaching time-table differences. It is something which they are minded to standardise however.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> The wording within the document is to be revised to ensure clarity.</p>	<p><b>KB</b></p>
<p><b>6.3</b></p>	<p><b>Memorandum of Agreement (2015)</b>  <i>with reference to Paper SRUCAC 1819 1 F</i></p> <p>It was noted that the current document carries no end date, indicative of the time in which it was written. However, it was agreed that existing Memorandum of Agreement was rather out of date and need to be revised. A revised version should be valid for 5 years and subject to annual review.</p> <p>The University will consult with SRUC to re-visit and update this document. The Memorandum of Agreement would be designed, noting that SRUC intend to apply for degree awarding powers, and would cover the transitional period and provision for any on-programme students in such and event.</p> <p>In addition, if degree-awarding powers are granted to SRUC, the two institutions may wish to enter into discussion regarding potential joint awards/ventures.</p>	

	<p><b>ACTION:</b> A meeting to be arranged to discuss, and draft, and updated Memorandum of Agreement. This would include consideration around issues such as SRUC student records and access to systems.</p>	<p><b>HT, CV, KB</b></p>
<p><b>6.4</b></p>	<p><b>SRUC Annual Report for 2017/18</b> <i>with reference to Paper SRUCAC 1819 1 G</i></p> <p><b>Postgraduate Research</b></p> <p>SRUC undertook an institution-wide review of their postgraduate research provision, which was a positive experience. Notably, students felt they would be happy, if not happier, to be awarded a PhD from SRUC as opposed to one of the current awarding bodies</p> <p>Currently, the greater concentration of PhD students may be found on the Edinburgh campus. SRUC plan to engage more research based staff members and to grow their PGR cohort in the north campus area. This will also enhance the experience for undergraduate students.</p> <p><b>Feedback</b></p> <p>It was confirmed that the issue of delay in feedback, mentioned on several occasions throughout the report, was now largely resolved. Internal auditing showed that communication with students during the process has been maintained and deadlines for feedback return have been met within every module in years 3 and 4. PGR students have also been employed to ease the teaching load within tutorials.</p> <p>Managing student expectation around feedback has also been a priority. It was noted that some students had read the UoE policy of a 15 working day turn around, and assumed this was applicable within SRUC. SRUC cannot achieve this for some assessments, particularly within large cross-campus assessment, with sole-marker responsibility.</p> <p>It was further noted that the negative responses around feedback centred upon the speed in which it was received, rather than the quality of the comments. However, SRUC recognised that the provision of lengthy and detailed feedback from some academics has added to the feedback delay issue.</p> <p>The merits and limitations of feedback providing software, such as Turnitin, was discussed. SRUC reported the use of audio feedback had been working well and was particularly advantageous for communication with distance learners.</p> <p><b>Lecture Record</b></p> <p>Lecture record media has been utilised primarily to solve issue of delivering the same lecture over multiple campuses. This was not initially successful due to technical issues. SRUC had employed external agencies to set up the media, which was in turn outsourced, and the quality of support poor. In addition, facilities required upgrading across campuses.</p> <p>Video conferencing, such as Skype, is now used to deliver cross-campus lectures simultaneously and has proved more positive terms of ease of use and student experience. SRUC will continue to develop the use of Skype.</p> <p><b>Study Spaces</b></p> <p>The importance of a range of good quality study spaces is another area of development within SRUC. The installation of sections of flexible, high quality study space has begun and will be rolled out across</p>	

	<p>all campuses with the aim of creating and enhancing engagement and collaboration in cross-campus group work.</p> <p><b>Quality Assurance</b></p> <p>It was confirmed that field trip attendance is not mandatory but to encourage attendance participants receive a certificate in the form of a 'John Muir award'. Concerns were raised over the financial implications for students. SRUC confirmed that the maximum cost to the student is £250, and the trips are arranged to ensure students have the summer to save. Furthermore, SRUC operate a deposit system to help manage the cost of trips.</p> <p>SRUC are looking into funding models for new overseas placements, where collaborations with other institutions could reduce accommodation and teaching costs.</p> <p>It was noted that, due to relatively small class sizes, teaching staff would be aware of student hardship. SRUC have facilities in place to help students in financial difficulty and would not countenance a student missing a trip due to monetary concerns.</p>	
<b>7.</b>	<b>FOR APPROVAL</b>	
<b>7.1</b>	<p><b>UoE Accreditation of Environmental Resource Management (BSc)</b></p> <p>The University formally agreed to re-accredit the programme.</p>	
<b>7.</b>	<b>Any other relevant business</b>	
	<b>Date of next meeting</b>	
	TBC	

The University of Edinburgh  
Senatus Quality Assurance Committee

25 April 2019

**Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) 2020 – Final  
Contextualised Themes**

**Executive Summary**

The paper informs Committee members of the final contextualised themes for the University's 2020 ELIR as agreed at Learning and Teaching Policy Group on 18 April 2019.

**How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?**

Relevant to the Committee's responsibility for the University's engagement with periodic Quality Assurance Agency Enhancement-Led Institutional Reviews, including monitoring the effective implementation of review recommendations.

**Action requested**

To note the final contextualised themes.

**How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?**

ELIR communications will be coordinated by Academic Services.

**Resource / Risk / Compliance**

**1. Resource implications (including staffing)**

No additional actions are requested.

**2. Risk assessment**

A successful ELIR outcome is of vital importance to the University.

**3. Equality and Diversity**

Will be considered as part of individual activities/projects.

**4. Freedom of information**

Open.

**Key words**

ELIR, Enhancement-led Institutional Review

**Originator of the paper**

Nichola Kett, Academic Policy Manager, Academic Services  
18 April 2019

## Final Contextualised Themes

Following extensive consultation (detailed below), the following five themes are proposed for the University's ELIR 2020. The themes are not in any order of importance. The wording of the theme headings may change to more accurately reflect the content as the narratives develop.

- Teaching and Academic Careers
  - This would include all the academic development work provided by IAD, plus the recent work of the Teaching and Academic Careers Task Group.
- Student Community and Student Voice
  - Including the work the Students' Association has done around representation and the work around student surveys, mid-course feedback and strengthening of other student voice mechanisms, but also including planned work and future directions under the new Student Experience Plan.
- Student Support
  - This will include an (expected) update on developments with student support following the focus on Personal Tutors in the last ELIR, but will refocus around the new plans under the Student Experience Plan for considering student support more broadly than academic support.
- Widening Participation
  - Including all work in support of widening participation, e.g. access to Edinburgh, the WP Strategy, and support for WP students to succeed.
- Student Skills and Employability
  - Including all work related to supporting the development of students' skills and attributes for employability.

The final contextualised themes were discussed and agreed with the Students' Association Vice President Education on Wednesday 3 April 2019.

The University of Edinburgh

Senatus Quality Assurance Committee

25 April 2019

## **Analysis of Institutional Annual Statements 2017/18**

### **Executive Summary**

This paper is an analysis, carried out by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Scotland, of institutional annual statements submitted to the Scottish Funding Council.

### **How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?**

The paper is relevant to the Committee's responsibility for leading the University's engagement with the external quality assurance frameworks.

### **Action requested**

The Committee is asked to note the analysis.

### **How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?**

No actions are proposed, the paper is presented to the Committee for information.

### **Resource / Risk / Compliance**

#### **1. Resource implications (including staffing)**

Not applicable. This paper is presented to the Committee for information and no actions are proposed.

#### **2. Risk assessment**

Not applicable. This paper is presented to the Committee for information and no actions are proposed.

#### **3. Equality and Diversity**

Not applicable. This paper is presented to the Committee for information and no actions are proposed.

#### **4. Freedom of information**

Open.

### **Key words**

Annual statements, analysis, Scottish Funding Council

### **Originator of the paper**

Nichola Kett (Academic Policy Manager, Academic Services)  
9 April 2019

## Analysis of institutional annual statements from the University sector: 2017-18

### Purpose of the paper

1. This paper provides an analysis of the annual institutional statements submitted to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) by each Scottish Higher Education Institution (HEI). The SFC guidance asks institutions to cover a range of topics in their statements: institution-led review (ILR) outcomes, review of support services, student engagement in ILR, and key messages derived from monitoring and analysis of data including feedback from students. This paper summarises the key information arising from the annual statements with particular emphasis on the ILR and related outcomes.
2. This analysis is intended to be informative across the sector as a whole and for institutions individually.
3. **Note:** this paper identifies the names of institutions where good practice and development points arising from ILR are identified in the reports submitted to SFC. Topics are summarised and, by definition, the full background is not included here. It should also be noted that ILRs relate to particular subject areas or provision and not the whole institution – it is therefore possible that positive practice and areas for development can be identified at the same institution in the same year. It is equally possible that development points can be picked up in one year when all other provision exhibits positive practice for the same topic. Nonetheless, we believe that by including institutions' names, this report becomes more useful for sector colleagues as it assists with sharing practice.

### Contents of the report

4. This report contains the following sections:
  - a summary of the key points (paragraphs 5-16)
  - detailed outcomes of institution-led review (ILR) in 2017-18
    - areas highlighted as positive practice (paragraphs 11-17)
    - areas highlighted for development (paragraphs 18-25)
    - areas that emerged with mixed outcomes (paragraphs 26-47)
  - what do the statements tell us about the nature of review in the University sector? (paragraphs 62-71)
  - institutional comments on context and data analysis (paragraphs 62-71)
  - how this information is followed-up on? (paragraphs 72-73)

### Summary of key points

5. It is evident from the annual statements that ILR activities in Scotland are thorough, providing institutions with assurance that academic standards are being achieved and that the quality of the student experience is high and is being enhanced. This view concurs with the outcomes from Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR). The annual statements show that students are engaged with both ILR and enhancement activities. It is also clear that institutions use the ILR outcomes, as well as other important information such as student feedback from institutional and national surveys, to improve provision at both programme/subject level and institutional level.
6. The annual statements show that a substantial volume of evaluative activity was carried out by institutions: 130 ILRs (compared to 94 in 2016-17) and 140 professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) engagements (compared to 117 in 2017-18) accrediting over 319 programmes (compared to 458 programmes in 2017-18).
7. Many of the outcomes are specific to the provision being reviewed but trends or themes can be seen across the sector and are summarised here.
8. **Positive practice** is identified in the following areas:
  - quality and commitment of staff
  - use of technology to support learning and teaching practice
  - research teaching linkages
  - engagement with review processes including self-evaluation.

Quality and commitment of staff was also identified as positive practice across the sector in 2016-17. Use of technology to support learning, research teaching linkages and engagement with review processes have emerged as new areas of positive practice in this year's analysis. In last year's report these areas were reported on as part of the wider topic of learning and teaching practices and curriculum design.

9. Areas for **development** were identified as:
  - staff and physical resources
  - programme marketing and student recruitment
  - postgraduate student experience
  - academic and staff development.

Staff and physical resources and postgraduate student experience were both areas for development in 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17. Academic staff development was identified as having mixed outcomes (positive in some reports and requiring development in others) in 2016-17 and an area for development

in 2014-15 and 2015-16. Programme marketing and student recruitment is a new area for development for session 2017-18.

10. A number of **mixed outcomes** are identified. These are where a topic is identified as positive practice in some reports and as an area for development in others. Four areas emerged this session:

- employability and links with industry – which was identified as positive practice across the sector in 2015-16 and 2014-15, and emerged with mixed outcomes in 2016-17. While this area continues to have mixed outcomes in the current analysis, this theme is viewed very positively by institutions, with the annual reports often providing detailed information on the broad range of approaches offered by institutions. Perhaps given the area's current strategic importance, the reports have also frequently outlined information linked to planned development activity
- assessment and feedback to students – has emerged with mixed outcomes this year, as it did in the previous three years
- student support – was identified as a mixed outcome this session and also in 2016-17, and as positive practice in 2015-16 and 2014-15
- learning and teaching practices and curriculum design – was identified as positive practice across the sector in 2015-16 and 2016-17, emerging this session as a mixed outcomes area.

#### Detailed outcomes of institution-led review in 2017-18

##### Areas highlighted as positive practice

11. The detail included in this section draws on the information provided in the institutional annual statements. It is possible that additional examples of practice could be found from wider engagement with the institutions.

##### Quality and commitment of staff:

12. As noted in previous years, this session sees institutions continuing to report on the dedication and commitment, enthusiasm, quality and availability, approachability and engagement of staff from both academic areas and student support services, with nine HEIs viewing this as an area of positive practice (Edinburgh Napier University, Glasgow Caledonian University, Glasgow School of Art, Open University, Robert Gordon University, Scotland's Rural College, University of St Andrews, University of Stirling and University of Strathclyde). The reports indicate the qualities listed are highly valued by students who feel supported to succeed at key points in their student journey.

##### Use of technology to support learning and teaching practice:

13. The 2016-17 analysis report commented on an increase in the use of technology to support learning and teaching practice as a sub-theme within the broader positive practice area of learning and teaching

practices and curriculum design. This session, 11 HEIs commented specifically on the use of technology to support learning and teaching practice as positive practice<sup>1</sup>.

14. Institutions talked about the increasing use and continued development of their virtual learning environments (VLEs) to support students (University of Aberdeen, University of Edinburgh, Open University, Scotland's Rural College, University of Stirling and University of Strathclyde), making programmes/courses more engaging and accessible (University of Aberdeen, University of Dundee, Heriot-Watt University, Open University, Robert Gordon University and University of Stirling) and supporting alternative approaches to learning and assessment (University of Stirling and University of Strathclyde). Two reports (Heriot-Watt University, and Robert Gordon University) highlighted the use of technology to support assessment and feedback processes. The Universities of Aberdeen and Strathclyde indicated work is underway to consider the use of learning analytics (LA) to support student engagement.
15. A range of technologies are being employed to enhance student engagement with learning and teaching including: lecture capture, video and QR codes for easy access to video from mobile devices (University of Aberdeen, University of Edinburgh and Heriot-Watt University); introduction of webinars (Heriot-Watt University); online assessment (Heriot-Watt University and Robert Gordon University), in-lecture assessment tools (Heriot-Watt University); online induction support (Scotland's Rural College); online quizzes (Heriot-Watt University); attendance monitoring (University of Aberdeen and Queen Margaret University) and the use of talking heads, audio feedback and simulations (University of the West of Scotland).

#### **Research teaching linkages:**

16. In eight statements, institutions commented positively on the high levels of research in the subject/programme areas under review and how this research activity was being embedded within or integrated into the learning and teaching, thus enriching the experience for students<sup>2</sup>

#### **Engagement with review processes including self-evaluation:**

17. Staff engagement with review processes was identified as positive practice by seven institutions. Colleagues were commended for their engagement and positive approach to review processes, for honest, comprehensive and critical self-reflection and for their responsiveness to stakeholder feedback in supporting curriculum design (University of Aberdeen, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, University of the Highlands and Islands, Queen Margaret University, Robert Gordon University, and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland). In session 2017-18, University of Glasgow introduced a staff survey which is circulated to all colleagues involved in the subject area being reviewed, prior to the event. The survey provides staff with the opportunity to communicate directly with the review panel on how they view learning and teaching. The University believes this approach

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<sup>1</sup> University of Aberdeen, University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, Glasgow Caledonian University, Heriot-Watt University, Open University, Robert Gordon University, Scotland's Rural College, University of Stirling, University of Strathclyde University and University of the West of Scotland

<sup>2</sup> University of Dundee, Glasgow Caledonian University, Glasgow School of Art, Heriot-Watt University, University of the Highlands and Islands, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, University of Stirling, and the University of the West of Scotland

provides greater opportunity for all staff to participate in subject review, for their views to be heard more directly by the panel and supports wider participation.

### **Areas highlighted for development or enhancement**

18. Four development areas were identified from the annual statements. The annual statements suggest that depending on institutional structures and arrangements for managing review outcomes institutions use a variety arrangements to address development points. The majority of institutions tend to separate discipline or school specific matters from those areas requiring consideration at institutional level.

#### **Staff and physical resources:**

19. The management and development of staffing resource across programmes and/or physical resources emerged as an area for development in the previous three academic sessions (2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17) and was identified again in session 2017-18 across 14 reports<sup>3</sup>. The main staffing challenge this session relates to having adequate staff resource to support programme delivery, while ensuring equity of workloads (University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, Open University, University of Stirling and University of Strathclyde).

20. The physical resource challenges included: the availability of adequate physical teaching, learning, study and social spaces for students (University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, Glasgow School of Art, Open University, Robert Gordon University and Royal Conservatoire of Scotland); availability of learning materials/resources (Open University); and library, ICT and online provision (University of Dundee, University of the Highland and Islands, Open University, Queen Margaret University, Robert Gordon University, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and University of Strathclyde). The annual reports provide evidence that institutions are working to address these issues with nine of them describing work which is either underway or in the planning phase linked to significant strategic investment in their estate, including developing learning and teaching and social spaces, student support facilities, library and IT, and sports facilities<sup>4</sup>. The University of the West of Scotland reported on the opening of its new campus in Lanarkshire in August 2018. The University of the Highlands and Islands outlined plans to invest in a new VLE platform and described the introduction of a new VC platform to support student teaching and learning across its multi-site campus.

#### **Programme marketing and student recruitment:**

21. Six institutions reported that, following their internal review activities, a development need had been identified linked to maximising the effectiveness of market intelligence, marketing activities and brand

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<sup>3</sup> University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, Glasgow School of Art, Heriot-Watt University, University of the Highlands and Islands, The Open University, Queen Margaret University, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Robert Gordon University, University of Strathclyde, University of Stirling, and the University of the West of Scotland

<sup>4</sup> University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow, Heriot-Watt University, University of the Highlands and Islands, University of St Andrews, University of Stirling, University of Strathclyde and University of the West of Scotland

promotion. These activities may happen at course and/or programme and/or subject and/or school level, in order to support student recruitment ambitions (University of Dundee, Robert Gordon University, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Scotland's Rural College, University of Strathclyde, and University of the West of Scotland).

**Postgraduate student experience:**

22. Five institutions identified areas for development in the postgraduate student experience (University of Glasgow, Glasgow School of Art, University of the Highlands and Islands, Robert Gordon University and University of Stirling). Where information has been provided by institutions, this report attempts to qualify these areas as being relevant to either postgraduate research students (PGR) or postgraduate taught students (PGT).

- **PGR students:** institutions highlighted a range of developments linked to the PGR experience including: improving structures and communication systems (University of Glasgow and Robert Gordon University); improving systems and management of the PGR lifecycle and management of the student experience (University of Glasgow, Robert Gordon University and University of Stirling); plans to expand postgraduate training opportunities for staff and students, with particular focus on postgraduate students who teach (University of Glasgow, Robert Gordon University, University of Stirling and University of the Highlands and Islands) and enhancements to supervision arrangements (Stirling)
- **PGT students:** in the case of PGT students two institutions reported on the need for more student support and on a need to enhance supervision arrangements (Glasgow School of Art and University of Stirling).

**Academic and staff development:**

23. The development of academic and other staff was identified as an area for development in 2017-18, as a mixed outcome in session 2016-17 and listed as an area for development 2015-16 and 2014-15. While it may have been identified as an area for development this session, the annual statements confirm that institutions continue to invest further time and resources to support the introduction of new initiatives or continue to develop their existing offer.

24. In terms of activities to support development, three of the annual statements identified a need to support staff who are involved in online delivery and/or developing the use of online technologies to enhance aspects of their pedagogical practice (Edinburgh University, Glasgow Caledonian University, and University of the Highlands and Islands). A number of institutions indicated that CPD provision was being developed and offered linked primarily to academic roles, for example, supporting academics in leadership roles (Glasgow Caledonian University and Robert Gordon University), support for staff in research supervision roles (University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow and Robert Gordon University), support for early career academics (University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow), and peer support for personal tutors (University of Abertay). The topics identified seem to link with areas in which HEIs are either expanding or developing provision. For example, online delivery and/or being

asked to develop policy and practice in areas such as, research supervision. This suggests positive alignment between strategy and improvement areas and HEIs academic development activity.

25. Two reports indicate that teaching and teaching excellence is being considered within staff recognition, career review, development and reward schemes (University of Edinburgh and the University of Glasgow).

#### **Areas that emerged with mixed outcomes: positive practice and development points**

26. Four broad topics emerged as positive practice in some reports and as areas for development in others, these were:

- employability and links with industry
- assessment and feedback to students
- student support
- learning and teaching practices and curriculum design

#### **Employability and links with industry:**

27. With the apprenticeships and skills agenda gaining both attention and traction across the sector, perhaps it is no surprise that enhancing student employability skills is cited repeatedly across the annual reports to SFC. This theme was identified as positive practice across the sector in 2015-16 and 2014-15, emerged with mixed outcomes in 2016-17 and continues to be reported in this manner across institutional review activity in 2017-18. As shown below (paragraphs 28, 29, 30 and 32) this theme is viewed very positively by institutions, with the annual reports often providing detailed information on the broad range of approaches offered by institutions. However, given the area's strategic importance, the reports have also frequently outlined information linked to planned development activity.

28. Sixteen<sup>5</sup> of the institutional statements identified employability as an area of positive practice. Strong and positive links with industry were identified by eleven institutions (University of Aberdeen, University of Abertay, University of Glasgow, University of the Highlands and Islands, Queen Margaret University, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Robert Gordon University, Scotland's Rural College, University of Stirling, University of Strathclyde and University of the West of Scotland), with two institutions highlighted the industrial relevance of their programmes (Edinburgh Napier University and Glasgow Caledonian University) and a further two commending their provision for providing opportunities for external partners to support curriculum design and development (Glasgow Caledonian University and Queen Margaret University). Two institutions specifically cited industry-related placements/experiences

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<sup>5</sup> University of Aberdeen, University of Abertay, University of Dundee, Edinburgh Napier University, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, Heriot-Watt University, University of the Highlands and Islands, Open University, Queen Margaret University, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Robert Gordon University, Scotland's Rural College, University of Stirling, University of Strathclyde and University of the West of Scotland

and collaborative projects as examples of positive practice compared with six last session (University of Dundee and Robert Gordon University).

29. A range of approaches to enhance the employability skills of students is evident across the reports. The University of Dundee cited employability as remaining a key priority, continuing to invest in careers internships, CV development initiatives, careers workshops, careers modules embedded in the curriculum, and other work experience initiatives for students. The 'Dundee Plus' Award to recognise and record student engagement with extracurricular activities. A Centre of Entrepreneurship has been established, which will support start-up businesses and promote entrepreneurship amongst students. The University of Stirling has developed a Work-based and Placement Learning Policy and through its internship programme are supporting 50 paid internship opportunities. Robert Gordon University has recently established an Employability and Professional Enrichment Hub.
30. The University of Aberdeen requires students to undertake a compulsory, non-credit bearing level 1 Online Professional Skills course to help skills development, support students to present themselves effectively to potential employers and postgraduate course providers, find work experience and plan their career. Separate (optional) courses at level 2 and 3 are also available. In 2018/19, the University plans to evaluate student feedback to inform discussion regarding prescribing the level 2 and 3 courses to maximise engagement. The University has also successfully piloted a 'build your future' model which can be contextualised by each school to show how specific discipline studies are complemented by professional practice and co-curricular activities and the impact of this post-degree.
31. Eleven institutions<sup>6</sup> reported they had received recommendations to enhance or develop practice in the broad area of employability including placements, work-based learning, volunteering and study abroad. Four institutions indicated how work was being taken forward within programmes to provide opportunities for students to reflect on the development of graduate attributes, transferable skills and capture employment opportunities during their studies (University of Aberdeen, Open University, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and University of Stirling). Three institutions cited the need to continue to expand, develop and formalise external links and relationships with a range of partners (Glasgow Caledonian University, Scotland's Rural College and University of Stirling).
32. Five institutions commented positively on work undertaken to approve provision to support the delivery of graduate apprenticeships (Glasgow Caledonian University, Heriot-Watt University, Robert Gordon University, University of Strathclyde and University of the West of Scotland), and three institutions outline future plans to consider this deliver model as an addition to their portfolios (Glasgow Caledonian University, University of the Highlands and Islands and Open University).

#### **Assessment and feedback to students:**

33. Analysis of the annual reports shows assessment and feedback to students as a mixed outcome, with institutions continuing to cite examples of good practice through their ILR processes. However, this area remains a priority for enhancement, perhaps driven by factors such as working to improve NSS scores,

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<sup>6</sup> University of Aberdeen, Edinburgh Napier University, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, University of Highlands and Islands, Open University, Robert Gordon University, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Scotland's Rural College, University of Stirling and University of the West of Scotland)

so is also frequently reported as an area for further development. Positive practice was identified in fourteen of the institutional statements<sup>7</sup> Six reports highlighted the breadth, variety and innovative nature of the assessment methods employed across programmes (Abertay University, University of Dundee, Edinburgh University, Queen Margaret University, St Andrews University and University of Stirling).

34. In addition, a number of reports cited positive practice in relation to the broad range of practice and/or innovative approaches to feedback being employed (University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh and Royal Conservatoire of Scotland). Enhancements to the quality of feedback to students (St Andrews and University of the West of Scotland) and improvements in the timeliness of feedback (University of Glasgow, Queen Margaret University) were also shared. The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland outlined making use of video as a tool to mutually construct feedback for students.
35. Assessment and feedback was identified as an area for development in twelve reports<sup>8</sup>. Five institutions reported on the need to improve the consistency of their assessment and/or feedback processes for students (University of Aberdeen, University of Glasgow, Heriot-Watt University, University of the Highlands and Islands and the Open University). A need to further improve the timeliness and quality of assessment feedback was also commented on by five institutions (University of Glasgow, Heriot-Watt University, the Open University, Scotland's Rural College and University of Strathclyde).
36. A number of reports commented that work is underway, to further clarify expectations linked to assessment and feedback in order to ensure students are better supported to engage more effectively with their feedback (University of Aberdeen, University of Dundee, Heriot-Watt University and University of the Highlands and Islands). The annual statements also suggest that a number of institutions are considering the balance between formative and summative assessment approaches and how to most effectively use formative assessment to support students to monitor their progress during the academic session (Glasgow Caledonian University, Heriot-Watt University, Royal Conservatoire in Scotland and University of Strathclyde).
37. Robert Gordon University reported on work being carried out by its Department for the Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Access (DELTA), which led a university-wide project to enhance students' experiences of assessment and feedback. The project brought together students and staff to identify and pursue enhancement solutions, incorporating a shift to the use of online submission, marking and feedback.
38. The Universities of Dundee and Strathclyde continue with their implementation of the Transforming the Experience of Students Through Assessment (TESTA) methodology with this now an integral part of

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<sup>7</sup> University of Abertay, University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow, Glasgow School of Art, Heriot-Watt University, Open University, Queen Margaret University, Robert Gordon University, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, University of St Andrews, University of Stirling, University of Strathclyde and University of the West of Scotland

<sup>8</sup> University of Aberdeen, University of Dundee, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, Heriot-Watt University, University of the Highlands and Islands, Open University, Queen Margaret University, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Scotland's Rural College, University of Strathclyde and University of the West of Scotland

their review and approval processes. The Open University report indicate it has decided to start working with this approach.

**Student support:**

39. A sector-wide commitment to providing high quality support for students is evident with 14 institutional statements specifically commenting on this as an area of positive practice<sup>9</sup>. Examples of the activity commended by ILR panels include: the quality and commitment of academic and support staff (see paragraph 12); approaches to build strong staff and student communities (University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow, Glasgow School of Art and University of St Andrews) and enhancements to student wellbeing services – including mental health (University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University and the University of the Highlands and Islands).
40. Glasgow Caledonian University used their Student Summit in 2017-18 to inform the development of an action plan to enhance student mental health and wellbeing. The University of Edinburgh's report commends approaches adopted in two of its schools to build academic communities to support students with their mental health and wellbeing. SolidariTEA is a regular facilitated tea/coffee morning where postgraduate research students can discuss matters outwith the technicalities of their research in a supportive environment. The University's School of Chemistry has implemented CHEMUNITY, an online staff-student collaborative project designed to support students academically, enhance the student voice and promote good mental health and well-being.
41. Seven institutions indicated they are currently working on their policy and practice around widening access, student transitions and articulation (University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, Heriot-Watt University, Open University and University of Stirling). The University of Dundee has embedded widening access in its new Strategy to 2022 and appointed a transitions officer to support articulating students. Glasgow Caledonian University continues to develop its approaches to successful progression and transition from college to university through its College Connect team. This session the University offered prospective students the opportunity to choose their options modules alongside their peers on the current undergraduate programmes, thus promoting being part of the University learning community from the beginning of the student experience. The University of Glasgow commended programme teams on 'exceptional' levels of support provided to students including: investment in building student community; scaffolding of student learning and support during transition; support for students from non-traditional backgrounds and support for students with disabilities.
42. Four institutions commented on positive practice linked to the availability and comprehensive nature of pre-induction and induction support for students (Open University, Royal Conservatoire for Scotland, University of Stirling and University of the West of Scotland).

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<sup>9</sup> University of Aberdeen, University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh Napier University, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, Glasgow School of Art, Heriot-Watt University, Open University, Queen Margaret University, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, University of St Andrews, University of Stirling, and University of the West of Scotland

43. Alongside the evident range of positive practice and ongoing enhancement to existing approaches, student support also emerged as an area for further development in thirteen reports<sup>10</sup>. Development areas included: continuing to enhance support linked to student mental health and wellbeing (University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, Glasgow University, Glasgow Caledonian University, Heriot-Watt and University of the Highlands and Islands); support for student transitions (University of Edinburgh, Glasgow School of Art, Open University and University of Stirling); continued work to support international students (University of Dundee and Glasgow School of Art) and enhancement to student supervision arrangements (Glasgow University, Stirling University and University of the West of Scotland).
44. Seven institutions indicated that activities are being undertaken to further enhance and strengthen their personal tutor systems (University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, Glasgow Caledonian University, Heriot-Watt University, University of the Highlands and Islands, Robert Gordon University and University of Stirling) and four discussed the introduction of attendance policies to support student engagement. (University of Aberdeen, University of Dundee, Heriot-Watt and Queen Margaret University).

#### **Learning and teaching practices and curriculum design:**

45. Thirteen HEIs<sup>11</sup> made specific reference to this area as positive practice arising from their ILRs, with much of the activity being commended by ILR panels as creative and innovative (University of Aberdeen, University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, the Open University and University of St Andrews).
46. Examples of particular practices include: approaches to support student collaborative working and engagement with interdisciplinary content on modules and/or programmes (University of Aberdeen, University of Edinburgh, Heriot-Watt University and University of the West of Scotland); team, and increasingly online, approaches to curriculum development and assessment strategies being adopted by staff (University of Edinburgh and Heriot-Watt University) and approaches to enhance the interactive nature of the learning experience (Heriot-Watt University, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and University of the West of Scotland).
47. Alongside the evident range of positive practice and ongoing enhancement to existing approaches, learning and teaching practices and curriculum design also emerged as an area for further development in ten reports<sup>12</sup>. Specific themes are difficult to identify across what is a diverse set of recommendations for development, with many of the examples cited reflecting wider institutional strategic priorities, for

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<sup>10</sup> University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, Glasgow University, Glasgow Caledonian University, Glasgow School of Art, Heriot-Watt University, University of the Highlands and Islands, Open University, Queen Margaret University, Robert Gordon University, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, University of Stirling and the University of the West of Scotland

<sup>11</sup> University of Aberdeen, University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, Glasgow School of Art, Heriot-Watt University, Open University, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, University of St Andrews, University of Stirling, University of Strathclyde and University of the West of Scotland

<sup>12</sup> University of Dundee, Edinburgh Napier University, Glasgow University, Glasgow Caledonian University, Glasgow School of Art, Heriot-Watt University, Open University, University of St Andrews, University of Stirling and University of Strathclyde

example, the University of Dundee, Glasgow Caledonian University and the University of Strathclyde are continuing to engage with technology enhanced learning and developing digital skills within the curriculum.

**What do the institutional statements tell us about the nature of review in the university sector?**

48. It is evident from the annual statements that ILR activities in Scotland are thorough, providing institutions with assurance that academic standards are being achieved and that the quality of the student experience is high and is being enhanced. The statements show that students are engaged with both ILR and enhancement activities. It is also clear that institutions use the ILR outcomes, as well as other important information such as student feedback from institutional and national surveys, to improve provision at both programme/subject level and institutional level.
49. **Methods of review** – the SFC guidance to HEIs on quality gives institutions flexibility in the design of institution-led reviews (ILR). The annual statements confirm that the unit of review varies across institutions often linked to their structure, size and subject mix. In all institutions, the ILR process results in a report and the area under review produces a response or action plan. A central or school committee considers the review outcomes and response. In addition, all institutions monitor academic provision on an annual basis usually at the programme level. The specific details of annual monitoring vary between institutions, however, in the majority of cases, reports on annual monitoring are discussed at institutional level in the learning and teaching committee or equivalent. Eight institutions highlighted that they hold annual meetings or discussions to consider the outcomes or to share information from annual monitoring (Glasgow School of Art, Heriot-Watt, Queen Margaret University, Open University, Robert Gordon University, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, University of St Andrews and University of the West of Scotland).
50. **Student engagement in review** - student engagement in ILR and other learning & teaching and quality processes continues to be a strong feature within the reports. All institutions reported that, in line with SFC guidance, there is a student member on their ILR panels. Three institutions (Glasgow Caledonian University, Heriot-Watt University and Queen Margaret University) confirmed that students were involved with their review processes for provision delivered with collaborative partners. In its annual statement Heriot-Watt University described undertaking a range of developments and activities to enhance student representation and engagement across its campuses in Edinburgh, Dubai and Malaysia, these include: fully incorporating the student council and Students' Association across these campuses; establishing a global student liaison committee (of the University Court); involving their three students' associations in the recruitment and training of ILR panel members and establishing student partnership agreements at each campus, with an aspiration to move to a single agreement in 2018-19.
51. Nine institutions (University of Aberdeen, University of Dundee, University of Glasgow, Heriot-Watt, University of the Highlands and Islands, Queen Margaret University, Robert Gordon University, University of St Andrews, University of Stirling) mentioned they provide briefing and/or training for student panel members and for student representatives/sabbatical officers and in the majority of these cases this activity is delivered in conjunction with the students' association. A number of institutions are using online training and discussion forums, developing online resources and using their VLE to support student representatives and ILR panel members (Glasgow School of Art, University of the Highlands

and Islands and Queen Margaret University). At University of St Andrews, the Centre for Academic Professional and Organisational Development (CAPOD) continued to adopt mechanisms such as video, a flipped-classroom model and training and induction events.

52. Overall, while details vary, the annual statements provide reassurance that students are indeed engaged with reviews from an institutional and subject perspective. In addition to students meeting ILR panels, ten institutions (University of Aberdeen, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh Napier University, University of Glasgow, Glasgow School of Art, Heriot-Watt University, University of the Highlands and Islands, Robert Gordon University, Scotland's Rural College and University of Stirling) indicated an expectation for students to be involved in the preparation for the review. The reports indicate that institutions are continuing to reflect upon and expand the range of mechanisms used to promote engagement and feedback as part of the institutions' self-evaluation practices including: student questionnaires, contributing more directly to self-evaluation documents, briefing sessions, staff student consultative committees, focus groups and student-led initiatives.
53. It is positive that three institutions (University of Aberdeen, University of Glasgow and Heriot-Watt University) specifically commented that students have a role in discussing the review outcomes and/or the production of development plans. Ten reports also confirm that student membership of key university committees is strong, allowing students to fully engage with quality matters and learning and teaching policy decisions, as well as the outcomes of institution-led reviews<sup>13</sup>.
54. Eight institutions<sup>14</sup> made explicit reference to the existence or development of a student partnership agreement (or equivalent) and six institutions highlighted the commitment and engagement of their students as positive practice (University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, Glasgow Caledonian University, Glasgow School of Art, University of St Andrews and University of Stirling).
55. The annual reports indicated that the theme of 'responding to student voice/feedback' is an area of increasing activity on the part of institutions. Four institutions commented positively on the approaches adopted by programme teams to be responsive and articulate action (University of Edinburgh, University of the Highlands and Islands, Open University and University of Strathclyde). While three reports suggested work is underway to support enhancement and share institutional practice (University of Aberdeen, Edinburgh Napier University and University of Highlands and Islands). In 2017-18, the Responding to Student Voice project (which was delivered by a student-led steering group as part of the current Enhancement Theme) developed a set of core principles that underpin policies and practices relating to responding to student voice in a range of contexts (<https://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/current-enhancement-theme/sector-wide-activity/responding-to-student-voice>).
56. **Professional service area review** – SFC guidance states that 'all services contributing to the student experience should be reviewed as part of an institution's approach' although there is flexibility in how

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<sup>13</sup> University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh Napier University, Heriot-Watt University, University of the Highlands and Islands, Queen Margaret University, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Scotland's Rural College, University of St Andrews, University of Strathclyde, University of the West of Scotland

<sup>14</sup> University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, Glasgow Caledonian University, Heriot-Watt University, University of the Highlands and Islands, Robert Gordon University, University of Strathclyde and University of the West of Scotland

this is done. The annual statements indicate that there is large variability in the approaches adopted by the sector. Five institutional statements indicate that consideration of professional services is embedded in ILR and/or quality related processes (University of Aberdeen, Open University, Queen Margaret University, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, and University of the West of Scotland). Where this is the case, many panels include at least one professional service area representative. Eight institutions reported on operating a rolling programme of activity to support professional service area review (University of Abertay, University of Glasgow, Glasgow School of Art, Heriot-Watt University, University of the Highlands and Islands, Scotland's Rural College, University of St Andrews, and University of Stirling) and four institutions indicate the use of a thematic approach (University of Edinburgh, Heriot-Watt University, Queen Margaret University and Robert Gordon University). A number of institutions operate a hybrid model with some professional services being reviewed on a periodic basis and others being evaluated as part of wider quality processes.

57. **Volume of activity** – there is a significant volume of review activity taking place within institutions. In 2017-18, 130 ILRs were carried out compared to 94 in 2016-17. In addition to ILR of academic provision, reviews were also conducted of specific units including graduate schools, a range of professional services and partner institutions.
58. **Professional body activity** – in 2017-18, 140 professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) engagements took place accrediting more than 319 programmes. Of the 140 engagements, 128 were confirmed as successful and 12 were awaiting an outcome at the time of writing. The figures for 2017-18 show an increase in PSRB engagements: 140 compared to 117 in 2016-17 but a decrease in the number of programmes that were accredited, 319 compared to 458 programmes in 2016-17. This reflects the cyclical nature of the engagements and no particular conclusions should be drawn from this change in number.
59. **Sharing practice in institutional evaluation and dissemination of positive practice** - Within institutions there are systematic approaches to identifying and sharing good practice formally through the consideration of review outcomes in a range of senior institutional committees. Institutions also adopt a range of more informal mechanisms to disseminate good practice including: enhancement workshops (Heriot-Watt University); digests of the outcomes of review processes (University of Dundee); learning and teaching conferences, lunchtime seminars and events (University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow, University of the Highlands and Islands, Open University, St Andrews University and University of the West of Scotland) or specific academic development activities. The Open University are working on utilising an online scholarship platform as a mechanism for sharing positive practice and Glasgow Caledonian University ran a successful student summit event to consider a number of the themes which emerge from their review activity.
60. The reports continue to indicate that key staff roles are in place to specifically support the effective cascading of good practice. In 2017-18, eight institutions (Glasgow School of Art, Heriot-Watt University, Open University, Queen Margaret University, Robert Gordon University, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, University of St Andrews and University of the West of Scotland) commented on the use of annual monitoring events, meetings or discussions and master classes as methods of sharing good practice.

61. At sector level, the Teaching Quality Forum (TQF) continues to be an effective mechanism for sharing good practice and discussing developments in the sector. During 2017-18, topics for discussion have included: annual monitoring of PGR students; academic integrity and contract cheating; benefits and challenges of using alternates at committee meetings; developing a more robust and comprehensive understanding of grade profiling/improvement in Scotland, the recent changes in the form and content of the Quality Code; and the challenges and opportunities associated with measuring 'beyond metrics' in higher education.

#### **Institutional comments on context and data analysis**

62. SFC guidance asks institutions to report on matters beyond the ILR outcomes including institutional context and key messages arising from analysis of performance indicators and student surveys.
63. The annual statements for this session once again continue to give a clear sense of a dynamic, fast-moving sector which is undertaking high volumes of change, frequently in response to student feedback. The statements show a real desire to deliver an excellent student experience and an increasing emphasis across the sector of a need to effectively respond to the student voice. The examples of changes taking place across the sector are broad and numerous and include: strategy and policy development; senior leadership and organisational restructure; academic year shifts; curriculum content and innovations in learning, teaching, assessment and feedback practices; and significant strategic investment in estates, learning and teaching and social spaces for students, and IT and student facing services.
64. The reports confirm that the institutions have systems in place to support monitoring, analysing and sharing key performance indicators (KPIs). Eight institutions specifically outlined their approach (University of Aberdeen, University of Abertay, University of Dundee, University of Glasgow, Heriot-Watt University, University of the Highlands and Islands, Open University and Queen Margaret University). A number of institutions reported on developing 'dashboards' to enable staff and students to engage with KPI data (University of Dundee, Edinburgh Napier University, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, Open University, Robert Gordon University and University of Strathclyde).
65. Ten institutions<sup>15</sup> reported on the use of suites of data to support their ILR and annual monitoring processes, with the reports giving a sense that these suites of data are becoming increasingly sophisticated, including information linked to: admissions; student achievement, progression and retention and awards; the outcomes of key internal and external surveys, etc. The reports also suggest that subject areas and programmes/course teams are more routinely and explicitly being expected to use this evidence to support their reflective processes, and support action and change. Queen Margaret University described developing a good practice guide on using evidence for enhancement.
66. The annual reports confirm that institutions across the sector are actively engaged in the analysis of key external surveys including the National Student Survey (NSS) (commented on by 17 institutions), the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) (commented on by 7 institutions), and the

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<sup>15</sup> University of Aberdeen, University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, University of the Highlands and Islands, Open University, Queen Margaret University, Robert Gordon University and University of Strathclyde

Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) (commented on by 5 institutions). Institutions employ a range of approaches to sharing this information with staff and students, including through committees, websites, VLEs and newsletters. A number of reports indicate institutions working collaboratively with their students' associations to support more effective communication with students about changes linked to this and other feedback mechanisms. Three institutions reported taking part in the International Student Barometer (University of Dundee, University of St Andrews and University of Strathclyde) and the University of Strathclyde indicated that it participated in the Higher Education Academy's United Kingdom Engagement Survey (UKSE). Institutions reported on taking forward a range of activities in response to their analysis of the survey outcomes.

67. In relation to the NSS, four HEIs specifically commented on disappointing performance in the NSS overall satisfaction question and outlined the actions they would be taking forward (University of Edinburgh, Glasgow School of Art, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and Scotland's Rural College). Three institutions commented on the challenges they experience around small sample size and response rate as a result of the criteria governing student eligibility (Glasgow School of Art, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and Scotland's Rural College).
68. As well as engaging with the feedback from these external surveys, 13 institutions specifically reported on using a range of internal approaches to gathering student feedback, including surveys and focus groups (University of Aberdeen, University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, Glasgow School of Art, Heriot-Watt University, University of the Highlands and Islands, Open University, Queen Margaret University, Robert Gordon University, University of St Andrews, Scotland's Rural College and University of Strathclyde).
69. Across the annual statements, institutions took the opportunity to comment on their analysis of other data sets, such as Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data (particularly the Destination of Leavers Data (DLHE)); data linked to widening access/participation (particularly for students from Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 20/40 backgrounds); data linked to student enrolment, performance, progression, retention and attainment; completion rates, and the insights HEIs are gaining from their own internal survey and feedback mechanisms. The increased reporting on data and how HEIs are engaging with it reflects the increased focus on data and evidence across the sector including through SFC Outcome Agreements and the current Enhancement Theme.
70. Four institutions referred to their participation in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) (University of Dundee, Heriot-Watt University, Open University and University of St Andrews).
71. Finally, five institutions outlined some of the work they are undertaking linked to the current Enhancement Theme - Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience. A number commented on its timeliness and how the Theme is supporting them well with the progression of institutional priorities and driving conversations around the use of evidence, in its broadest sense, to actively inform decisions made regarding improvements to the student experience (Glasgow Caledonian University, Robert Gordon University, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, University of Stirling and the University of the West of Scotland).

<b>How is this information followed-up?</b>
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72. This analysis is discussed in a range of sector forums including SHEEC and TLG. This analysis informs development and enhancement activity in the sector, allowing examples of practice to be picked up and shared in greater detail as part of the Enhancement Theme or Focus On projects.

73. The 2018-19 QAA Scotland will deliver the Focus On: Graduate skills project considering graduate attributes, employability, and skills. Following consultation with HEIs, students' associations and discussions at SHEEC, a number of priority areas were identified and as a result, the project will consider:

- Readiness for employment and effective ways of embedding skills inside (and outside) the curriculum, including digital skills for graduates from all disciplines.
- Equality and diversity and how we can support students from all backgrounds and characteristics to develop skills that will help them to secure and sustain their success in the workplace.

There will also be an international angle to the work, recognising that Scotland is an exporter of graduates around the globe and that all graduates will live and work in a global society.

QAA Scotland  
November 2018

## Annex

### **Institutions included in this report**

University of Aberdeen  
Abertay University  
University of Dundee  
University of Edinburgh  
Edinburgh Napier University  
University of Glasgow  
Glasgow Caledonian University  
Glasgow School of Art  
Heriot-Watt University  
University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI)  
Open University in Scotland (OUiS)\*  
Queen Margaret University  
Robert Gordon University  
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland  
Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)  
University of St Andrews  
University of Stirling  
University of Strathclyde  
University of the West of Scotland

\*the OUiS is not reviewed in the ELIR method but does participate in Enhancement Themes activity and provides an annual report to SFC

### **SFC annual statements on quality**

Each statement is endorsed by the relevant governing body. Institutions also share these statements with QAA Scotland officers to inform the ELIR annual discussion meetings. In addition, the statements form part of the Advance Information Set (AIS) submitted to Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR) teams before each review.

The SFC guidance asks HEIs to cover the following areas:

- providing a summary of the ILR outcomes from the preceding academic year (AY) including main themes, recommendations and/or commendations
- indicate the ways in which support services were reviewed or included in review processes, with regard to their impact on teaching, learning and the quality of the student experience
- indicate the role and nature of student engagement in ILR including at the self-evaluation stage during the AY.
- provide a reflective overview, which highlights key findings from the reviews in the preceding year, comments on 'distance travelled' and identified any significant outcomes or actions relating to development needs or to good practice resulting from ILR processes.
- relevant contextual information and key messages derived from monitoring and analysis of performance indicators, benchmarks and other collected data, particularly those relating to retention, progression, completion, attainment and achievement, and graduate destinations.
- the key messages from qualitative and quantitative analysis of feedback from students (including the National Student Survey and external surveys of postgraduate students) and actions taken/planned as a result.

The University of Edinburgh  
Senatus Quality Assurance Committee

25 April 2019

## **Internal Review Themes 2017/18 - Update**

### **Executive Summary**

The paper provides an update on actions identified from areas for further development arising from teaching/postgraduate programme reviews held in 2017/18 (SQAC 18/19 1E).

### **How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?**

The paper is relevant to the Committee's responsibility for the quality assurance framework.

### **Action requested**

For information.

### **How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?**

The paper provides an update on actions previously remitted and no additional actions are proposed.

### **Resource / Risk / Compliance**

#### **1. Resource implications (including staffing)**

There are no additional resource implications associated with the paper at this point.

#### **2. Risk assessment**

Failure to respond to areas for further development would constitute an institutional risk.

#### **3. Equality and Diversity**

The paper itself does not require an Equality Impact Assessment. The Equality Impact Assessment for internal periodic review processes is published at:

[http://www.docs.csg.ed.ac.uk/EqualityDiversity/EIA/Academic\\_Services-Internal\\_Periodic\\_Review\\_Process.pdf](http://www.docs.csg.ed.ac.uk/EqualityDiversity/EIA/Academic_Services-Internal_Periodic_Review_Process.pdf)

#### **4. Freedom of information**

The paper is open.

### **Key words**

Internal review, TPR, PPR.

### **Originator of the paper**

Nichola Kett, Academic Policy Manager, Academic Services  
9 April 2019

Area for further development	Action	Update
<p><b>Building academic communities.</b> Recommendations made related to developing academic communities which enable students to engage with research and developing a strategy for community building.</p> <p><i>This theme was highlighted as positive practice in annual monitoring</i></p>	<p>Academic Services to include building academic communities as a key theme at the University level sharing practice event scheduled for semester 2 2018/19.</p> <p>Academic Services to collate examples of good practice of building academic communities for Teaching Matters.</p>	<p>A sharing good practice from quality processes event was held on 6 February 2019. The themes were: academic community and assessment and feedback. Four presentations on academic community were delivered.</p> <p>The April 2019 issue of Teaching Matters is building academic communities <a href="http://www.teaching-matters-blog.ed.ac.uk/">http://www.teaching-matters-blog.ed.ac.uk/</a></p>
<p><b>Student support.</b> Recommendations related to extending peer mentoring, supporting student transition and clarifying expectations of the Personal Tutor system, including the number of meetings.</p>	<p>The University will be undertaking a holistic review of the Personal Tutor system which will link to a wider review of student support.</p> <p>No further action proposed.</p>	<p>N/a</p>
<p><b>Supporting and developing academic staff, including postgraduate tutors and demonstrators.</b> Recommendations focussed around career development, training and support, with a particular reference to training and support to ensure the effective use of virtual learning environments.</p>	<p>The University has established a task group to review the issue of Teaching and Academic Careers, considering how achievements in teaching are rewarded and recognised through the academic lifecycle and how the University can ensure it has appropriate academic development provision in place. Also, the Policy for the recruitment, support and development of tutors and demonstrators for will be evaluated in 2018/19</p> <p>No further action proposed.</p>	<p>N/a</p>

<p><b>Space – provision of study and social space for students.</b> Recommendations were made in relation to a lack of dedicated space for postgraduate research students at King’s Buildings, pressure on all types of accommodation, and students establishing and maintaining a sense of identity with their school.</p>	<p>The Convenor to include the provision of study and social space for students in the report to the University Executive on areas for further development identified from annual monitoring, review and reporting.</p>	<p>A paper outlining the areas for further development identified through annual monitoring, review and reporting processes, teaching/postgraduate programme reviews and student service annual reports for 2017/18 was submitted to University Executive in November 2018. It asked them to discuss the areas for further development identified and consider how they might feed into future activities to enhance the student experience. It was considered alongside the Student Experience Action Plan.</p> <p>Minute extract:  “The Executive noted the areas for further development identified through annual monitoring, review and reporting processes, noting these echoed the themes in the Student Experience Project Plan.”</p>
<p><b>Resourcing and planning.</b> Recommendations related to the resourcing of programmes and courses should student numbers expand, investing in teaching to allow for forward planning, and rewarding and recognising teaching.</p>	<p>The Convenor to include the resourcing of programmes and courses in the report to the University Executive on areas for further development identified from annual monitoring, review and reporting.</p>	<p>Minute extract:  “The Executive noted the areas for further development identified through annual monitoring, review and reporting processes, noting these echoed the themes in the Student Experience Project Plan.”</p>

The University of Edinburgh  
Senatus Quality Assurance Committee

25 April 2019

## Internal Periodic Review Reports and Responses

### Executive Summary

The following Year on responses from Internal Periodic Reviews 2017/18 are published on the Committee wiki: <https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/SQAC/Thursday+25+April+2019>

### Year on responses 2017/18:

Postgraduate Programme Review of Molecular, Genetic and Population Health Sciences

Teaching Programme Review of Social Anthropology

Teaching Programme Review of Medicine update response \* **to be tabled at the meeting** \*

### How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?

The paper is relevant to the Committee's responsibility for the quality assurance framework.

### Action requested

**Year on responses:** For comment and consideration of the recommendations. The Committee is asked to confirm that they are content with progress.

PPR/TPR	Recommendation	Comment
PPR of Molecular, Genetic and Population Health Sciences		We look forward to hearing about progress on the recommendations in the School Annual Programme Monitoring report.  We are interested to learn about the examples of positive change noted in the response as a result of the review
TPR of Social Anthropology		We look forward to hearing about progress on the recommendations in the School Annual Programme Monitoring report.  We are interested to learn about the positive change noted in the response as a result of the review

### How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?

Comments on the progress towards completion of recommendations will be reported back to the School/Subject Area. The responses will be published on the Academic Services website.

### Resource / Risk / Compliance

**1. Resource implications (including staffing)**

No additional resource implications.

**2. Risk assessment**

No risk associated.

**3. Equality and Diversity**

An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out on the internal review process.

**4. Freedom of information**

Open.

**Key words**

Postgraduate Programme Review, Teaching Programme Review, PPR, TPR, year on response.

**Originator of the paper**

Gillian Mackintosh  
Academic Policy Officer,  
Academic Services  
April 2019

The University of Edinburgh  
Senatus Quality Assurance Committee

25 April 2019

**Directors of Quality  
Strategic Development Sessions**

**Executive Summary**

This paper is a summary report on the two strategic development sessions for Directors of Quality.

**How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?**

The paper is relevant to the Committee's responsibility for the quality assurance framework.

**Action requested**

For Information.

**How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?**

The paper will be circulated to the Directors of Quality with a survey inviting participants to comment on the strategic development sessions.

**Resource / Risk / Compliance**

- 1. Resource implications (including staffing)**  
Not applicable.
- 2. Risk assessment**  
No change to existing practice.
- 3. Equality and Diversity**  
No change to existing practice.
- 4. Freedom of information**  
Open

**Key words**

Director of Quality

**Originators of the papers**

Brian Connolly, Academic Services

## **Directors of Quality Strategic Development Sessions**

In consultation with the Colleges? Academic Services ran two strategic development sessions for Directors of Quality in March and April 2019. The sessions focused on institutional expectations and aspirations for the Directors of Quality role and linkages to School, College and University level strategic plans and leadership. The first session was held on Wednesday 6 March 2019 at the Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation (ECCI) and the second session was held on Thursday 4 April 2019 in Murchison House, King's Buildings. Over the two sessions 20 (out of 26) Directors of Quality attended.

**Professor Tina Harrison** (Assistant Principal Academic Standards & Quality Assurance) introduced both sessions by discussing institutional expectations and aspirations for the role of Director of Quality.

Both sessions focused on the following themes:

### **The Role**

**Dr Jill Burke** (Director of Quality, Edinburgh College of Art); **Dr Andrew Cornfield** (Director of Quality, Law School), **Dr Angus MacBeth** (Director of Quality, School of Health in Social Science) and **Dr Claire Philips** (Director of Quality Assurance, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine) shared their experience as serving Directors of Quality. They discussed their understanding of the essentials of the role, challenges they have faced, and shared some practical survival tips. The following was noted:

Essentials of the Role:

- **Champion of Quality and Enhancement** – the role must strike a balance between ensuring standards and compliance while also acting as a force for change by providing informed insight for those in strategic leadership roles (such as Heads of Schools and Directors of Teaching).
- **Auditor** – monitoring quality processes, ensuring compliance, analysing data and compiling School/Deanery Annual Quality Report.
- **Enhancer** – using information from quality processes to identify areas for improvement and enhancement.
- **Love Data** - handy if the Director of Quality is good with/likes data analysis (or knows someone who does who can help!).

Challenges:

- **Local Diversity** - no standard approach to the role across University and in many Schools/Deaneries the role has no direct link to senior management teams or processes. Therefore the role can be marginal and isolated.
- **Authority** – due to the previous issue, the role can be perceived as lacking authority in some areas.
- **Induction** – due to a lack of induction or handover in some areas Directors of Quality are often left to discover and define role themselves from the outset.
- **Support** – due to the marginal nature of the role in some areas, there is often a lack of dedicated administrative support for Directors of Quality.
- **Research** – busiest time for role is June through to August when Directors of Quality draft the annual QA report – this can have a major impact on research time.

Survival Tips:

- **Don't do it all yourself** – build relationships early on with key colleagues such as Director of Teaching and Programme Directors and professional service staff in your School/Deanery and College office – vital sources of support.
- **Communication** - avoid jargon that could alienate students and colleagues unfamiliar with QAE terminology. Face-to-face communication helps build a personal connection and a sense of shared venture.
- **Timelines** – as early as possible, let colleagues know what you will need from them and when.
- **Accreditation Driver** - where applicable, align with accreditation processes and use them to drive the quality process.
- **Evidence** – keep a workable repository for School/Deanery QA material and documents.
- **Streamline** - the role as much as possible and let your School/Deanery take ownership. Not quite sure what this means?
- **Persuasion** – make quality relevant to colleagues – show how the process can be used to improve things with practical examples whenever possible. Look for easy wins.
- **Feedback** – communicate outcomes of QA processes to all staff and students involved.

- **Be Visible** – as Director of Quality and for QAE processes and outcomes.
- **Succession Plan** - including administration support.

### Leadership

**Professor Iain Gordon** (Head of School, School of Mathematics) and **Dr Simon Coleman** (Depute Head of Moray House School of Education) shared their experience and ideas of how the role can be integrated into school management and decision making structures. The following was noted:

- **Embedded Quality** – important that quality enhancement is embedded in teaching (not an appendage) and provides strategic direction for future planning.
- **Magpie** - Director of Quality should be a dynamic role, getting involved in University initiatives and picking-up examples of good practice from across the University to use back in their School.
- **Share** – Director of Quality should disseminate good practice (from across School/Deanery and University) and inspire colleagues and management via sessions, brainstorming events, invited speakers, web-based materials, videos, social media.
- **Structures** – Director of Quality should have links to core School committees (e.g. undergraduate and postgraduate studies committees, planning and resource committees, Boards of Studies).
- **Relationships** – Director of Quality should have direct access to Head of School and good working relationships with the Directors of Teaching, postgraduate studies, and Director of Professional Services. Good links with Programme Directors and College Deans are also valuable. Good formal and informal relationships with student reps are important.

### Strategic Planning

**Dr Lisa Kendall** (Head of Academic and Student Administration, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences) discussed how Quality can be used to inform strategic planning across the University. The following was noted:

- **Embedded Quality** – we must avoid the tick box reliance on quality assurance (QA) for audit only and consider QA as a way to evolve, innovate and enhance.
- **Evidence Source** - any strategic plan has to be underpinned by a solid evidence base and must have clear and measureable objectives. The Director of Quality is the gatekeeper to this evidence, accumulated via robust and reliable regulatory processes such as annual quality reports (at all levels), internal reviews (i.e. Taught

programme Review, Postgraduate Programme Review, Thematic Review of Student Support) and Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR).

- **Unique Perspective** – the Director of Quality is the only role (aside from the Head of School or Director of Professional Services) that encompasses undergraduate and postgraduate, on and off campus.
- **Drive Planning** - resources are critical to deciding what we can and cannot do and evidence from QA processes should be used more effectively to drive priority and target setting.
- **Performance Indicator** - QA can help to demonstrate “return on investment” – recruitment targets, equality and diversity, Widening Participation, progression and non-progression rates, outcomes, employability, student experience and “satisfaction”.

### College Issues

The sessions also provided an opportunity for open discussion between the College Deans of Quality and their School Directors of Quality focusing on issues specific to the Colleges. The following was noted:

- **Role Descriptor** - enhance to provide more help and guidance on practical issues such as timelines and pinch points.
- **Induction** - it was suggested that it would be useful to include relevant links (to University resources) and guidance (which would also need some College specific information) in a dedicated induction document (two pages max), which might sit alongside the Director of Quality role descriptor.
- **Time** - the time allocated to the role differs between Schools/Deaneries. A timeline, with a clear steer to show how busy the summer months are for Directors of Quality, would be a useful inclusion in induction information.
- **School Plans** - it was clear from the discussions that very few Directors of Quality are involved in the writing of School Plans. It was suggested that changes to the College QA reporting timeline would enable QA data to be included in plans and links made with Learning and Teaching.

A survey will be circulated to Directors of Quality to gather feedback on the sessions and identify what kind of support sessions they would find most useful going forward.

### Academic Services

April 2019

The University of Edinburgh  
Senatus Quality Assurance Committee

25 April 2019

## **Report from the Knowledge Strategy Committee**

### **Executive Summary**

To update SQAC on certain matters considered by the Knowledge Strategy Committee.

### **How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?**

Not applicable.

### **Action requested**

SQAC is invited to note the report.

### **How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?**

Not applicable.

### **Resource / Risk / Compliance**

#### **1. Resource implications (including staffing)**

Where applicable, as covered in the report.

#### **2. Risk assessment**

Where applicable, as covered in the report.

#### **3. Equality and Diversity**

Where applicable, as covered in the report.

#### **4. Freedom of information**

This paper is open.

### **Key words**

Knowledge Strategy Committee

### **Originator of the paper**

Dr Lewis Allan, Head of Court Services

## **REPORT FROM THE KNOWLEDGE STRATEGY COMMITTEE**

**18 January 2019**

### **1 Information Services Group Plan**

The Chief Information Officer presented the emerging key components for the Information Services Group's annual planning round submission. Key challenges and opportunities were highlighted, including:

- Challenges: Brexit, Plan S, ageing IT estate ('technical debt'), compliance and rising IT costs, information security, heritage collections risk;
- Opportunities: Distance Learning at Scale, student experience, digital transformation, core systems, City Region Deal, business intelligence and analysis.

In discussing prioritisation, the Committee noted student support for live mapping availability of study spaces and the subtitling of recorded lectures. Integration of the City Region Deal's data-driven innovation programme into 'core' University activities and the digitisation of library materials were also noted. Further updates on the planning round submission were requested.

### **2 Distance Learning at Scale Showcase**

The Committee received a demonstration of the visual outputs for the first Distance Learning at Scale (DLAS) programme, an MSc in Business Analytics. The following points were raised in discussion:

- The re-usable design template and overall approach of building in re-usability in all aspects was welcomed;
- DLAS courses are not intended to replace existing online courses, whether online Masters degrees or Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) but MOOCs can feed in to DLAS courses and those running existing online Masters degrees may choose to take up the DLAS design template;
- DLAS is in a pilot phase to test the business model and approach taken, with the Committee to be kept updated on progress.

### **3 Student and Staff Experience Action Plan**

An update on the development of a student and staff experience action plan was reviewed. Work to standardise the University's Virtual Learning Environment and improve the proportion of reading lists available electronically is ongoing, with significant progress made in lecture capture, with around 85% of lectures now being recorded. The Committee discussed demand for lecture capture from Masters-level international students who use small teaching spaces not fitted with lecture capture equipment. The new approach taken and use of logic modelling was supported.

### **4 Plan S**

The likely impact of a new initiative from major research funders to accelerate the transition to full and immediate open access to research publications, known as Plan S, was considered. The following points were raised in discussion:

- Copyright procedures will be reviewed to ensure that they are Plan S compliant;
- Clear communication with academic staff is vital given the compressed timetable and concerns that Plan S may restrict freedom to publish in some highly regarded academic journals and with some book publishers that choose not to comply with Plan S and make a full transition to open access;
- A further paper may follow on DORA (San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment);
- Possible effects on the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and international university league tables are under review;
- 70% of research in the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences is not funded by direct grants from external funders and any indirect effects from Plan S will need to be considered, although the immediate focus will be on compliance in research that is directly affected.

## **5 Library Materials Budget: Long Term Planning**

An update on the review of the model used to divide the overall Library material budget between central funds and the three Colleges was presented. The Committee discussed potential Plan S costs and the effect of currency fluctuations on the library materials budget given the large foreign currency-denominated purchases.

## **6 Information Security Strategy**

A draft Information Security Strategy was considered prior to submission to the University Executive. Links with the City Region Deal, the extent to which mandatory information security training is enforced, access to University systems by staff who have recently left the University and best practice in password protection was discussed. It was agreed to invite the Chair of the newly formed Data Ethics group linked to the City Region Deal to present to the Committee at a future meeting.

## **7 Other items**

Updates on the core systems procurement, network replacement procurement and information security were reviewed