<u>The University of Edinburgh</u>
Senate Quality Assurance Committee

**Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 25 April 2019
at 2pm in the Torridon Room, Charles Stewart House**

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
Brian Connolly	Secretary to Senatus Quality Assurance Committee, Academic Services
Dr Gail Duursma	School Representative (Engineering), College of Science and Engineering
Brian Green	Deputy Associate Principal (Learning & Teaching), University of Strathclyde
Dr Jeni Harden	School Representative (School of Molecular, Genetic and Population Health Sciences), College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine
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	Dean of Quality Assurance, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine

Apologies:

Lisa Dawson	Director of Student Systems and Administration
Dr Katherine Inglis	School Representative (Literatures, Languages and Cultures), College of Arts, Humanities and Social Science
Megan Brown	Schools Engagement Officer, Edinburgh University Students' Association

1.   **Welcome and Apologies**

The Convenor welcomed Paula Webster (Head of Student Data and Surveys, Student Systems) attending on behalf of Lisa Dawson.

2.   **Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 27 February 2019**

The Committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting.

3.   **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

For Discussion

4.   **Undergraduate Degree Classification**

4.1   **Undergraduate Degree Classification Analysis**

The Committee received the annual report on degree classification outcomes of successfully exiting undergraduates and thanked Jim Galbraith (Senior Strategic Planner, Governance and Strategic Planning) for preparing the paper.

The Committee noted that the proportion of first class and upper-second class degrees being awarded by UK higher education institutions is increasing and that this trend has provoked political interest in relation to the possible implications for academic standards. It was noted that the University remains in line with Russell Group comparators. It was also noted that most subject areas across the University are broadly in line with Russell Group comparators for their discipline and / or with the University average. The Committee will continue to monitor subject areas for patterns in degree classification outcomes which diverge substantially from either the institution average or disciplinary comparators.

4.2   **Strategic Discussion of Trends in Undergraduate Degree Classification Outcomes (CLOSED PAPER)**

5.   **External Examiner Taught Policy Review**

The Committee discussed proposed changes to the External Examiner Policy. The following was agreed:

- **External Examiner Reporting System** – the Committee agreed to a five year retention schedule for External Examiner reports held in the system (in line with the current published University retention schedule).

  Action: Academic Services to submit request to Student Systems for five year retention schedule.

- **Conflicts of Interest** – the Committee was not supportive of a new clause requiring Committee approval of exceptional appointments in relation to conflicts of interest. The Committee was in agreement that Colleges have robust processes in place and

therefore this extra approval step was unnecessary. Instead, the Policy should state that the Committee devolves responsibility to the College and that they will be responsible for reporting annually to the Committee on numbers of External Examiners appointed exceptionally with conflicts of interest and any related emerging themes.

- **Exam paper approval** – the Committee was not supportive of the proposal to remove the need for External Examiners to approve exam papers. The Committee was in agreement that the rigour of the current approach was an important element of the system.

- **Programme External Examiner** – the Committee was in agreement that the Programme External Examiner role (introduced in August 2016) is working well and performs an increasingly important element in the quality assurance process.

- **External Examiners for Taught Programmes Handbook** – the Committee approved the proposal to archive the Handbook.

- **Appointment Letters** – the Committee approved the minor changes to the appointment and one year extension templates for consistency with data protection regulations.

- **Reporting deadlines** – the Committee was in agreement that the current reporting deadlines (31 July for undergraduate and 30 November for postgraduate taught) should not be changed in the Policy. However, it was noted that some areas would like to encourage External Examiners to submit reports before the stated final deadlines. **Action: Academic Services to check the legality of having a different date in the External Examiner appointment letter.**

Action: Academic Services to confirm whether the changes to the Taught Assessment Regulations (TAR) cover MRes or integrated degrees.

The Committee **approved** the changes (with amendments as agreed above) to the External Examiner Taught Policy.

Action: Academic Services will circulate the policy, with changes approved by the Committee, to Curriculum and Student Progression Committee for comment. Academic Services will submit a final draft, incorporating any further proposed amendments, to the final meeting of the Committee in May.

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

The Committee discuss the initial proposals for changes to the structure and membership of the Senate Committees. It was noted that there were no specific proposals for changes to the Committee's remit or membership. The Committee agreed that it would explore ways to strengthen links with the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) so that the University's quality review processes inform strategic discussion of learning and teaching issues.

Action: Academic Services to explore options for an annual joint meeting of Senate Quality Assurance Committee and Senate Learning and Teaching Committee.

7.   **Senate Committee Planning 2019-20**

The Committee discussed priorities for the next academic session, 2019-20. The Committee agreed that continuing the work on Assessment and Feedback should be a priority.

8.   **Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) Accreditation Committee**:

The Committee discussed the Annual Report 2017-18 (which had been delayed due to staffing changes in the College of Science and Engineering) and the Annual Report 2018-19. The Committee noted the suggestion from the Accreditation Committee that it may be more appropriate for the accreditation process to be overseen at University level rather than College level.

Action: Dean of Education Quality Assurance and Culture to discuss at College level and report back to the Committee.

For Information and Formal Business

9.   **Enhancement-led Institutional Review 2020: Final Contextualised Themes**

The Committee noted the final contextualised themes for information.

10. **Analysis of Institutional Annual Statements 2017-18**

The Committee noted the analysis for information.

11. **Internal Review Themes 2017/18 – Update**

The Committee noted the actions undertaken in response to the themes.

12. **Internal Review Reports and Responses**

The Committee **confirmed** that it was content with the year-on progress of the Postgraduate Programme Review of Molecular, Genetic and Population Health Sciences and the Teaching Programme Review of Social Anthropology.

The Committee received and discussed a tabled paper which followed on from the year-on progress of the Teaching Programme Review of Medicine. The Convenor noted that the paper did not include details of a follow-up meeting with the School that she had attended in regard to recommendations 1 and 2. The Committee also noted that it was unclear whether the difficulties with the allocation of funding, referred to in the responses to recommendations 1 and 2, were specific to NHS Scotland or NHS Lothian.

Action: Medicine to resubmit the year-on response report with an update reflecting on the discussions with the Convenor and clarifying the source of the allocation funding difficulties.

13. **Directors of Quality Strategic Development Sessions**

The Committee noted the summary report for information.

Action: Committee Secretary to send the summary report to LTC for information.

Action: Academic Services to circulate summary report to Directors of Quality and gather feedback on the sessions to identify what kind of support sessions the Directors of Quality would find most useful going forward.

14. **Knowledge Strategy Committee – Update**

The Committee noted the update for information.

15. **Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

16. **Date of Next Meeting:** Thursday 23 May 2019 at 2pm in the Raeburn Room, Old College