<u>The University of Edinburgh</u>

Senate Quality Assurance Committee
Thursday 25th April 2024, 2pm - 5pm
Hybrid meeting: Cuillin Room, CSH and Microsoft Teams

A G E N D A

* Standing item

1.	**Welcome and Apologies**	
2.	**Minutes of the previous meeting** To approve: • 22nd February 2024 • Note of e-business February 2024	SQAC 23/24 4A SQAC 23/24 4B
3.	**Matters Arising** • Convener's communications • Curriculum Transformation (Workshop & PGT Timeline) • QESR/ELIR Update	Verbal Update
4.	**SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS**	
4.1	**Annual Reports 22-23:** Complaint Handling For discussion. **Closed** - Disclosure would harm the University's commercial interests.	SQAC 23/24 4C CLOSED
4.2	**Annual Monitoring:** Reporting templates 2023-24 - Programme template - School template - College template For approval.	SQAC 23/24 4D
4.3	**Student Data Monitoring (ELIR/QESR/Data Task Group)** For discussion.	SQAC 23/24 4E
4.4	**External Examiners** – External Examiner Reporting System (EERS) Thematic Analysis – External Examiner Appointments on BVM&S For noting and approval.	SQAC 23/24 4F SQAC 23/24 4G
5.	**ITEMS FOR INFORMATION & FORMAL BUSINESS**	
5.1	**Committee Priorities 2024/25**	SQAC 23/24 4H

	For discussion and approval.	
5.2	**Internal Periodic Review: Reports and Responses*** The Committee is invited to approve the IPR Responses published on the Committee SharePoint. **Year-on response:** - School of Divinity (PGT & PGR) year-on response - Moray House School of Education and Sport (UG) year-on response	SQAC 23/24 4I

6.	**Any Other Business**
	
	 Proposed dates for 2024/25 (all meetings 2-5pm):
	     - Tuesday 10th September 2024
	     - Thursday 5th December 2024
	     - Thursday 20th February 2025
	     - Thursday 3rd April 2025
	     - Thursday 15th May 2025	

7.	**Date of next meeting** Thursday 16th May 2024, Hybrid meeting: Cuillin Room Charles Stewart House and Microsoft Teams	

The University of Edinburgh
Senate Quality Assurance Committee

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

1. Attendance

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

2. Minutes of meeting held on 7th December 2023

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

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

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

3. Matters Arising

- **Reflection time to close meeting**

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

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

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

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

4. Annual Reports 2022-23

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

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

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

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

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

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

> **Action:** The Dean of Education Quality Assurance and Culture, CSE to approach colleagues within the College to support recruitment for appeals panel members.
>
> **Action:** Academic Appeals team to explore whether proportions as well as numbers of students in Schools can be included in further reports.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Action: CTP Lead and Committee Secretary to liaise on arranging a SQAC CTP workshop with involvement from School Directors of Quality.

7. Quality Enhancement & Standards Review (QESR)

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

The Convener outlined that the group will work to respond to the recommendations and to co-ordinate the managerial response. The group will report into both SQAC and Senate Education Committee (SEC) and will provide regular updates. The Committee discussed the priorities of the oversight group; assessment and feedback, with a focus on turnaround times, the Tutors & Demonstrators policy and implementation, and the development of the University-wide Learning & Teaching policy. These were identified as the critical priorities for the remainder of

the academic year. The Committee highlighted that the quality of feedback is of vital importance, as well as the turnaround time of providing that feedback.

The Committee approved the Terms of Reference of the QESR oversight group.

Action: Convener to share with the Committee the oversight group's spreadsheet of recommendations, initial response, actions taken and actions planned.

Action: Convener to add quality of feedback as an agenda item for the upcoming Assessment & Feedback Strategy Group meeting.

8. Mid-year update on progress against SQAC priorities

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

9. Postgraduate Researcher Experience Survey College Reponses.

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

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

10. Internal Periodic Review: Reports & Responses

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

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

11. Date of Next Meeting

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

<u>The University of Edinburgh</u>

Senate Quality Assurance Committee e-business
Friday 23rd February - Monday 4th March 2024 5pm

Note of e-business

1.	**Items for noting**	
1.1	**Postgraduate Researcher Experience Survey College Reponses** To note.	SQAC 23/24 3K
	This item was noted by the Committee. Comments received from members of the Committee raised the following points: • Recognition that the response rates are relatively low. There is interest in the plans that College & Schools may have to increase response rates for this survey. • A more co-ordinated approach to responding to results and action taken may be useful. • A key theme across all Colleges is space and how this relates to community, training and wellbeing. Expectation management around desks and space may help, but also prioritisation activity around estates and space. • To improve the impact of induction and guidance, refresher training and more user-friendly resources and handbooks may be helpful. • The new student support model, in place for taught students, may improve the provision of support if extended to the PGR cohort. • The current UoE SA PGR Director Role Descriptor does not include responsibility for community building, a strategic approach to the Student Voice. In light of the PRES results and response rates, it is suggested that the role should be reconceptualised and revised. • Consideration for students who are financially unable to study at UofE and areas for improvement on internal funding opportunities. **Action: Committee Secretary to share all comments received with the paper author.**	
2.	**Items for approval**	
2.1	**Internal Periodic Review: Reports and Responses** The Committee is invited to approve the IPR Final Reports and Responses published on the Committee SharePoint.	SQAC 23/24 3L
	In relation to each of the IPR responses, comments received from members of the Committee include: **Business School PGT & PGR 14-week response:** • School is requested to provide evidence of diversity of assessment in the next update, as well as more details & plans for addressing feedforward mechanisms.	

	• The School is requested to progress with the recommendation to keep a record of meetings between PGR students and supervisors that can be monitored via Euclid. **Edinburgh College of Art (ECA) All Provision 14-week response:** • The College should involve students in the development of guidance for staff on student co-development of the curriculum. • Accelerate progress on recommendation 4 around boundaries of Student Adviser roles. • Good practice in their approach to student voice. • The response outlines some areas where ECA feel unable to act due to University-level initiatives that supersede or complicate the recommended activities. • There is concern at the number of areas where the School see the need for further investigation to understand the issue rather than being at a point of implementing response. **School of GeoSciences PGT – 14-week response:** • It would be helpful to share how both staff and students are made aware of, and can access, the School Education Strategy. • Further updates and actions in relation to programme leadership and senior management leadership are expected in the year-on response. • Further information requested on implementation and monitoring of the principle that staff are expected to engage in PGT teaching to the same extent as UG teaching. • The School are expected to provide clarity on the timeline for review of dissertation formats to be addressed. • Request for clarity on the use of College WAM tariffs in CSE. The responses were approved by the Committee. **Action: Comments made in relation to recommendations will be referred back to Schools by the IPR team for further updates in the relevant quality processes.**	
	Date of next meeting Thursday 25th April 2024 2-5pm, Hybrid meeting: Cuillin Room Charles Stewart House and Microsoft Teams	

The University of Edinburgh
Senate Quality Assurance Committee

25 April 2024

**Annual Monitoring, Review and Reporting:
Reporting Templates 2023-24**

Description of paper
1. Seeks approval of changes to the Programme, School, and College annual reporting templates for 2023/24.

Action requested / recommendation
2. To approve the proposed changes to the reporting templates.

Background and context
3. At the September 2023 meeting the Committee agreed that the guidance on each reporting template should be reviewed to provide greater clarity on what was required. Specifically, the guidance for the postgraduate research reporting box on the School/Deanery reporting template should be reviewed to ensure consistent reporting on key issues.

Discussion

4. Following consultation with the College Deans of Quality, Dean of Postgraduate Research (CAHSS), Director of Quality Assurance & Curriculum Approval (ECA) and College office quality teams the following changes are proposed to the attached templates (see appendix):

5. **Programme template** – the following three new reporting boxes have been added to the template (bringing the total to 10): **Institutional Priority: Student Support** (to align the Programme template with the School/Deanery template); **Student Outcomes** (with a specific prompt to reflect on any differences in attainment for different student demographic groups); **Actions for the coming year**. Specific guidance for each reporting box (including word counts) has been included with clear direction on what is expected for UG/PGT/PGR reporting. The templates also have some minor formatting changes (for ease of reference) and ordering changes (with institutional priorities moved higher up the template).

6. **School template** – a new **Student Outcomes** reporting box has been added (with a specific prompt to reflect on any differences in attainment for different student demographic groups) and the guidance for the **postgraduate research** reporting box has been revised to ensure consistent reporting on key issues. Specific guidance for each reporting box (including word counts) has been included with clear direction on what is expected for UG/PGT/PGR reporting. The templates also have some minor formatting changes (for ease of reference) and

ordering changes (with institutional priorities moved higher up the template and actions planned for the coming year moved to the last reporting box).

7. **College template** – there have been some minor formatting changes (for ease of reference) and the question on 'Changes to/additions made to actions from last year' changed to a free text box with the following prompt: 'Please use this free text space as an opportunity for general reflection on the past year.'

8. The proposed amendments to the templates are due to be discussed at the Directors of Quality Network on Monday 22 April 2024.

Resource implications
9. The changes are relatively minor and focused on supporting colleagues completing the current reporting templates.

Risk management
10. There are risks associated with ineffective monitoring, review and reporting.

Equality & diversity
11. An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out on the normal process. The templates encourage reflection on key institutional reporting priorities and demographic data is available on these in PowerBI.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed
12. Academic Services will work with College Deans of Quality and College quality contacts to continue to communicate with colleagues in key roles at appropriate times.

Authors	**Presenter**
Brian Connolly	Brian Connolly
Academic Services	Academic Services

April 2024

Freedom of Information
Open

Programme/Programme Cluster Annual Report 2023/24	

All programmes, **taught** and **research**, must be monitored annually and reports provided to the School Director of Quality in time to inform the preparation of the School Annual Quality Report (due in late August each year).[1]

Scope: Your School/Deanery will decide on the optimum clustering of programmes to enable effective reflection whilst avoiding duplication of effort. Your report should cover all credit-bearing provision, including collaborative and credit-bearing continuing professional development (CPD) provision (where applicable).

Length: Your report should be brief (suggested length of no more than four pages, see word count guidance in each reporting box) and use bullet points where possible.

Data: Your report should include reflection on relevant data available via the following links (also see data guidance in each reporting box):
- Data to Support Annual Quality Processes
- Data Insights Hub
- Data Help Videos
- Student Analytics, Insights & Modelling

Please note that reports should not contain information which identifies any individual – Data Protection Policy

Deadline: To be determined by your School/Deanery.

Programme(s):	
Report written by (include contributors):	
Date of report:	

1. Actions from the previous year. Please report on progress with the actions you identified in last year's report and planned to take in 2023-24.
Guidance for UG/PGT/PGR: Your answer should refer to last year's report. If there are no actions on which to report, please explain why. *(100-200 words)*

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[1] https://www.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/atoms/files/annualmonrevreppolicy.pdf

2. Institutional Priority: Assessment and Feedback
Please report on activities to align existing practice with the [Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities](#).

Guidance for UG/PGT:
You should explain how you have taken action to ensure that the [Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities](#) are fully implemented, and that feedback turnaround times and quality are monitored effectively. Answers to the following questions should be included:

- What is your rate of return within the three-week turnaround for semester 2, 2023-24, and what steps are you taking to improve this in 2024-25?

- What changes have you made to assessments to bring them in line with the Principles and Priorities? What changes are still needed and what is the timeframe for these?

- What steps have you taken to address over-assessment? What changes are still needed and what is the timeframe for these?

- What strategies do you have to ensure quality of feedback? How do students rate your feedback?

Your answer could include reference to Subject-Area Learning and Teaching meetings, including Programme- or Subject Area-level review and development of assessment and feedback practices. Where possible, compare this year's data with previous years' data.

(150-250 words)

Guidance for PGR:
Not applicable.

3. Institutional Priority: Student Voice
Please report on the approach and effectiveness of student voice activities in line with the [Student Voice Policy](#).

Guidance for UG/PGT:

Your answer should include reflection on data from student surveys (NSS, PTES), SSLC meeting minutes and course feedback. Where possible, compare this year's data with previous years' data.

(150-250 words)

Guidance for PGR:
Your answer should include reflection on data from student surveys (PRES) and SSLC meeting minutes. Where possible, compare this year's data with previous years' data.

(150-250 words)

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4. **Institutional Priority: Student Support**
Please report on the effectiveness of student support arrangements.

Guidance for UG/PGT:
Your answer should include reflection on how your programme(s) aligned with the University's new Student Support model from September 2023, in terms of academic guidance and student support.

Your answer should include reflection on data from student surveys (NSS, PTES), SSLC meeting minutes, and course feedback. Where possible, compare this year's data with previous years' data.

(150-250 words)

Guidance for PGR:
Your answer should include reflection on the effectiveness of academic PGR student support arrangements (such as supervisor training, induction and training for annual reviews and vivas, support with career development/employability) and the approach to the wider PGR student experience (specifically in relation to community building, student satisfaction and possible differences between on-campus and online students).

Your answer should include reflection on data from student surveys (PRES) and SSLC meeting minutes. Where possible, compare this year's data with previous years' data.

(150-250 words)

5. **Institutional Priority: Industrial Action**
   Has the industrial action impacted the quality of provision and student experience, and, if so, how this has been mitigated?

   Guidance for UG/PGT/PGR:
   Your answer should include reflection on data from student surveys (NSS, PTES, PRES), SSLC meeting minutes, course feedback, external examiner reports, and progression/performance data or annual progress reviews/vivas.

   (100-200 words)

6. **Student Outcomes**
   Please reflect on student assessment, progression and performance data for your programme(s).

   Guidance for UG/PGT:
   Your answer should include reflection on assessment, progression and degree outcomes on your programme(s) and factors that might have impacted on them either positively or negatively (other than Industrial Action – see question 5).

   Your answer should include specific reflection on any differences in attainment for different student demographic groups on your programme(s).

   Your answer should include reflection on progression/performance data as well as student surveys (NSS, PTES), SSLC meeting minutes and course feedback. Where possible, compare this year's data with previous years' data.

   (100-200 words)

   Guidance for PGR:
   Your answer should include reflection on the outcomes of annual reviews (e.g., what % have repeat reviews or are downgraded), time to completion, completion rates and degree outcomes on your programme(s) and factors that might have impacted on them either positively or negatively (other than Industrial Action – see question 5).

   Your answer should include specific reflection on any differences in attainment for different student demographic groups on your programme(s).

Your answer should make reference to data on annual reviews and completion as well as student surveys (PRES) and SSLC meeting minutes. Where possible, compare this year's data with previous years' data.

(100-200 words)

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7. **What has worked well this past year?**
   Please give specific examples of good practice for sharing across your School/Deanery and beyond.

   Guidance for UG/PGT/PGR:
   Your answer should highlight particularly innovative or creative practice within your programme(s).

   (100-200 words)

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8. **What could have worked better/requires further development?**
   Please identify any areas for improvement as well as any challenges or barriers.

   Guidance for UG/PGT/PGR:
   Your answer could include areas for further development within your programme(s) or at School, College or University level.

   (100-200 words)

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9. **Please use this free text space if there is anything you would like to reflect on or highlight that has not been addressed elsewhere in the report.**

   (100-200 words)

10. Actions for the coming year.
Please identify actions you intend to take during the next year (up to 5 bullet points).

School/Deanery Annual Report 2023/24

The University is responsible for its academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience. The School/Deanery Annual Report is a key part of the University's commitment to reflecting on and systematically reviewing its provision and taking action to enhance it.[1]

Scope: Your report should cover all credit-bearing provision, including collaborative and credit-bearing continuing professional development (CPD) provision (where applicable).

Length: Your report should be brief (suggested length of no more than four pages, see word count guidance in each reporting box) and use bullet points where possible.

Contributors: Your report should include input and contributions from colleagues across your School/Deanery.

Data: Your report should include reflection on relevant data available via the following links (also see data guidance in each reporting box):
- Data to Support Annual Quality Processes
- Data Insights Hub
- Data Help Videos
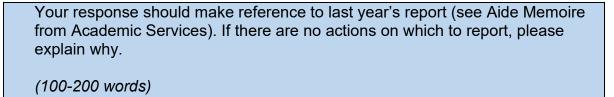- Student Analytics, Insights & Modelling

Please note that reports should not contain information which identifies any individual – Data Protection Policy

Deadline: **Monday 19 August 2024**

School/Deanery:	
Report written by (include contributors):	
Date of report:	

1. Actions from the previous year. Please report on progress with the actions you identified in last year's report and planned to take in 2023-24.
Guidance:

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[1] https://www.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/atoms/files/annualmonrevreppolicy.pdf

Your response should make reference to last year's report (see Aide Memoire from Academic Services). If there are no actions on which to report, please explain why.

(100-200 words)

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2. **Institutional Priority: Assessment and Feedback**
   Please report on activities to align existing practice with the [Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities](#).

Guidance:
Your response should explain how your School/Deanery has taken action to ensure that the [Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities](#) are fully implemented, and that feedback turnaround times and quality are monitored effectively. Answers to the following questions should be included:

- What is your rate of return within the three-week turnaround for semester 2, 2023-24, and what steps are you taking to improve this in 2024-25?

- What changes have you made to assessments to bring them in line with the Principles and Priorities? What changes are still needed and what is the timeframe for these?

- What steps have you taken to address over-assessment? What changes are still needed and what is the timeframe for these?

- What strategies do you have as a School/Deanery to ensure quality of feedback? How do students rate feedback in your school?

Data sources will include student surveys ([NSS](#), [PTES](#)), School/Deanery Education Committee and Board of Studies minutes and annual programme reviews. Where possible, compare this year's data with previous years' data.

(150-250 words)

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3. **Institutional Priority: Student Voice**
   Please report on the approach and effectiveness of student voice activities in line with the [Student Voice Policy](#).

Guidance:
Your answer should include reflection on data from student surveys (NSS, PTES, PRES), School/Deanery annual programme reviews, course feedback and SSLC meeting minutes. Where possible, compare this year's data with previous years' data.

(150-250 words)

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4. **Institutional Priority: Student Support**
Please report on the effectiveness of student support arrangements.

Guidance:
Your answer should explain how your School/Deanery implemented the University's new Student Support Model from September 2023, in terms of academic guidance and student support.

Your answer should include reflection on data from student surveys (NSS, PTES), School/Deanery annual programme reviews, course feedback and SSLC meeting minutes. Where possible, compare this year's data with previous years' data.

(150-250 words)

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5. **Institutional Priority: Industrial Action**
Has the industrial action impacted the quality of provision and student experience, and, if so, how this has been mitigated?

Guidance:
Your answer should include reflection on data from student surveys (NSS, PTES, PRES), School/Deanery annual programme reviews, course feedback, SSLC meeting minutes, external examiner reports, and progression/performance data or annual progress reviews/vivas.

(100-200 words)

6. Student Outcomes
Please reflect on student assessment, progression and performance data for your School/Deanery.

Guidance:
Your answer should include reflection on assessment, progression and degree outcomes on your programme(s) and factors that might have impacted on them either positively or negatively (other than Industrial Action – see question 5).

Your answer should include specific reflection on any differences in attainment for different student demographic groups on your programme(s).

Your answer should include reflection on progression/performance data as well as student surveys (NSS, PTES), SSLC meeting minutes and course feedback. Where possible, compare this year's data with previous years' data.

For PGR Student Outcomes please see Question 7.

(100-200 words)

7. Postgraduate research (PGR) provision
Please report on the effectiveness of your arrangements for supporting PGR students.

Guidance:
You should include answers to the following questions:

- What is the average time to completion and the completion rates in your School/Deanery? What percentage of students have repeat reviews or are downgraded? What factors might have impacted student outcomes either positively or negatively (other than Industrial Action – see question 5)? Your answer should include specific reflection on any differences in attainment for different student demographic groups on your programme(s).

- **What percentage of the postgraduate research (PGR) students who teach in your School/Deanery have been trained before engaging in teaching activities? What system does the School/Deanery have in place to monitor this training and what changes are still needed to ensure that all PGRs who teach are systematically trained and fully supported?**

- What support does your School/Deanery have in place for PGR students (such as supervisor training, induction and training for annual reviews and vivas, support with career development/employability)?

- What approach does your School/Deanery take to the wider PGR student experience specifically in relation to community building, student satisfaction (including contributing factors such as resources/facilities), and possible differences between on-campus and online students?

Your answers should include reflection on data from student surveys (PRES), School/Deanery annual programme reviews, course feedback, SSLC meeting minutes, annual progress reviews/vivas and completion rates. Where possible, compare this year's data with previous years' data.

(150-250 words)

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8. What has worked well this past year?
Please give specific examples of good practice for sharing across the University.

Guidance:
Your answer should highlight particularly innovative or creative practice within your School/Deanery.

(100-200 words)

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9. What could have worked better/requires further development?
Please identify any areas for improvement as well as any challenges or barriers.

Guidance:
Your answer could include areas for further development within your School/Deanery or at College or University level.

(100-200 words)

10. Please use this free text space if there is anything you would like to reflect on or highlight that has not been addressed elsewhere in the report.

(100-200 words)

11. Actions for the coming year.
Please identify actions for your School/Deanery during the next year (up to 5 bullet points).

College Annual Report 2023/24

The University is responsible for its academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience. The College Annual Report is a key part of the University's commitment to reflecting on and systematically reviewing its provision and taking action to enhance it.[1]

Scope: Your report should cover all credit-bearing provision, including collaborative and credit-bearing continuing professional development (CPD) provision (where applicable).

Length: Your report should be brief (suggested length of no more than four pages, see word count guidance in each reporting box) and use bullet points where possible.

Contributors: Your report should include input and contributions from colleagues across your College.

Data: Your report should include reflection on relevant data available via the following links:
- Data to Support Annual Quality Processes
- Data Insights Hub
- Data Help Videos
- Student Analytics, Insights & Modelling

Please note that reports should not contain information which identifies any individual – Data Protection Policy

Deadline: **Monday 25 November 2024**

School/Deanery:	
Report written by (include contributors):	
Date of report:	

1. **Actions from the previous year.** Please report on progress with the actions you identified in last year's report and planned to take in 2023-24.

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[1] https://www.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/atoms/files/annualmonrevreppolicy.pdf

2. Please use this free text space as an opportunity for general reflection on the past year.

3. Actions for the coming year.
Please identify actions or areas for improvement for the College and at University level during the next year (up to 5 bullet points each).

Actions identified for the College:

Actions requested of the University:

Senate Quality Assurance Committee

25 April 2024

Student Data Monitoring

Description of paper:
1. This paper notes the Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR) 2021 and the Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) 2023 recommendations on awarding gaps.

2. This paper also notes the Committee's previous decision to implement a new systematic approach to monitoring student retention, progression, and attainment data.

3. This paper invites the Committee to consider the next steps required to address 1 and 2.

Action requested / recommendation:
4. For discussion.

Background and context:
5. The [Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR) 2021](#) and the [Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) 2023](#) made recommendations regarding equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in the student population.

6. The ELIR recognised that the University was making progress to welcome and support a more diverse student body. In particular it acknowledged the work to develop support for black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) students and increase pre-enrolment and induction activities for students from widening participation (WP) backgrounds. The review noted that Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC), in response to the [2017-18](#) and [2018-19](#) Thematic Reviews, had overseen an increasing level of engagement with EDI data throughout the quality processes which had raised awareness of attainment gaps across the University. The report also noted that the University had appointed an executive-level, university-wide EDI lead to convene a university-level EDI committee to drive strategic development, action planning and the promotion of best practice for and beyond protected groups. However, ELIR recommended that the University address attainment gaps in student performance through the oversight, coordination and monitoring at an institutional level of school-level actions.

7. The QESR recognised that work has been undertaken through SQAC (and the Thematic Review process) to identify and monitor awarding gaps. However, it was also noted that schools *'have struggled to understand the underlying causes*

or what good practice should be encouraged'. Therefore, QESR recommended that the University should prioritise and complete the recommendation on attainment gap oversight, coordination and monitoring from the ELIR, expediating progress to ensure that the work being undertaken is effective. In addition, the QESR team recommended that the University should pay particular attention to sharing good practice and supporting staff in understanding the causes of attainment gaps and taking effective action.

8. Prior to these external reviews, SQAC had agreed (at the meeting held on 27 February 2020) to implement a new systematic approach to monitoring retention, progression, and attainment data. This decision was made in response to recommendations from the 2017-18 and 2018-19 Thematic Reviews. Specifically, it was agreed that the aim of the new approach would be to understand how well the University supports different groups throughout the student life-cycle: the likelihood of different student groups continuing or withdrawing from study at the University; the extent to which the University enables different student groups to fulfil their potential during their time at Edinburgh; and how successful the University is at supporting different student groups transition within their programme of study and afterwards to employment or further study. The Committee also acknowledged the importance of understanding this data in terms of the 'distance travelled' by different groups in order to provide a greater understanding of the 'value added' by the University and the extent to which the needs of different student groups had been supported by the University.

9. It was also agreed that the Committee's existing approach to monitoring Degree Classification Outcome data should be used as the basis of this systematic approach. In April each year the Committee receives an annual report (produced by Governance and Strategic Planning, GaSP) on degree classification outcomes of successfully exiting undergraduates, including sector trends in undergraduate degree classification outcomes. Any Schools/subject areas considered to have diverged substantially from either the University average or comparators in their discipline are then asked to specifically reflect on the issue, and any proposed remediation, in their School Annual Quality Report. The Committee then continues to monitor progress via this annual reporting process until the issue is considered to have been resolved. This approach ensures systematic University oversight whilst also encouraging Schools to engage with the specific data on attainment, reflect on the issues and context, and then seek local solutions.

10. The Committee agreed that this approach should be expanded to include data on progression (as well as attainment) and should encompass more granular data on a range of different student groups such as Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) students, mature students, and student parents and carers. Any School considered to have significant progression or awarding gaps amongst its students would be asked to specifically reflect on the issue, and any proposed remediation, in their School Annual Quality Report. The Committee would monitor progress via the annual reporting processes until the issue was considered to have been resolved.

11. The Committee established a Data Task Group to examine data set and methodological options for this new system. However the pandemic and industrial action repeatedly delayed the progress of this Group, with the maintenance of core requirements the primary focus of activities across the University.

12. During this period Schools (as noted by the ELIR and QESR) have increasingly engaged with WP and EDI data to identify awarding gaps for different groups of students in their annual reports. However, they have also noted that they are struggling to understand the underlying causes of these gaps or what good practice should be encouraged and cultivated to address the issue. Schools have expressed a desire for the University to establish a set of expectations or baselines in relation to WP and EDI to allow Schools to gauge their relative performance.

13. The need for more baseline expectations was also a key recommendation of the ELIR:

"… recognising the decentralised nature of university structures, the institution should establish a systematic approach to enable effective institutional oversight and evaluation of the implementation of policy and practice. As part of this, the University is asked to increase the range and use of institutionally determined baseline requirements to ensure consistency and accountability. The institution should ensure that mechanisms are put in place to adequately evaluate the consistency of implementation of strategic objectives across the institution and act when Schools deviate from institutional expectations."

14. There is an increasing emphasis on the use of data to assure and enhance the experience of students across the sector. The final report of the Scottish Funding Council's (SFC) [Review of Coherence and Sustainability](#) (June 2021) included the following recommendation:

"*Develop a single quality assurance and enhancement framework for tertiary education, to uphold academic standards, and enhance the learning experience of all students.* One of the core principles for the approach to quality assurance and enhancement in the Review report (building on feedback from stakeholders about what is valued in existing approaches) is: "*Evidence-based: data and evidence should inform our understanding of practice and quality assurance, and our plans for enhancement"* (page 70).

Also, the [UK Quality Code advice and guidance on Monitoring and evaluation, guiding principle 3](#) requires that: "Providers clarify aims, objectives, activities and actions, and identify the key indicators, issues, questions, targets and relevant information/data."

Discussion:

15. Given this background/context, the Committee is invited to discuss and agree the next steps required to address the ELIR and QESR recommendations (as noted above).

16. As noted above, the key challenge is to help schools understand the underlying causes of the awarding gaps and then take action to reduce the gaps. How can we link the expertise and insights of the central EDI committee to existing quality processes in order to establish and share good practice?

17. Should we plug the new SQAC data monitoring system into the existing [Equality Diversity Monitoring and Research Committee (EDMARC)](#) reporting system?

    EDMARC is a standing committee of EDIC and produces (in collaboration with GaSP) an annual report analysing student and staff data by the key equality dimensions of gender, age, disability and ethnicity. The report provides the University with comprehensive statistical data on protected characteristics to support the monitoring of equality and diversity within the University. However, staff are not required to systematically engage with the EDMARC data once it has been published on the University's Equality and Diversity website.

    SQAC could draw on the data and analysis in the EDMARC Student Report to determine which School may be required to provide a more detailed reflection or remedial action in its Annual Quality Report. This would allow SQAC to make use of an existing reporting mechanism and to benefit from the EDI experience and expertise of the EDMARC membership. This would also benefit EDMARC by providing greater visibility, engagement and traction for its annual report across all Schools and Deaneries.

    The EDMARC report is usually published in March so it could be considered at the April meeting of SQAC, alongside the annual Degree Classification Outcome Report (also produced by GaSP). This would provide SQAC with more granular outcome data covering a greater range of different student groups (i.e. ethnicity, gender, age, disability).

    In the longer term, SQAC and EDIC would need to explore the scope for an expanded EDMARC Student Report encompassing progression data and more granular data on a range of different student groups (such as student parents and carers). This process could begin by inviting the Convenor of the EDIC to the April meeting of SQAC.

Resource implications:
18. Additional statistical analysis resources may be required to systematically monitor retention, progression, and attainment data. These will need to be costed depending on the methodological approach agreed by the Committee.

Risk management:
19. Poor performance in retention, progression, and attainment metrics is a risk to the student experience and the University's reputation, increasing as these measures gain more publicity. As these measures gain more profile, it will be an

increasing risk to the University's reputation if we do not develop a better understanding of which groups of students are at higher risk of withdrawing or under-achieving and of any underlying reasons.

Equality & diversity:
20. Equality and diversity issues are integral to the development of a new system.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed:
21. Committee Secretary will feedback comments to relevant areas.

Authors	**Presenter**
Brian Connolly	Brian Connolly
Academic Services	Academic Services

April 2024

Freedom of Information: Open

Senate Quality Assurance Committee

25 April 2024

Taught External Examiner Reports:
Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Thematic Analysis 2022/23

Description of paper
1. The paper provides an analysis of data from the External Examiner Reporting System (EERS). It covers undergraduate (see section A) and postgraduate taught (see section B) programmes for academic year 2022/23, provides comparison with 2021/22 and trend analysis over the past five years. An overview of the total number of reports for 2022/23 is included in section C.

Action requested / recommendation
2. The Committee to note the report and identify any University-level actions (assigning to specific areas as appropriate). The Committee is also invited to consider the appropriate timing for future reports. The Committee to note the comments in relation to resource implications.

Background and context
3. The University's External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy states that Colleges and the University's Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) use information from External Examiner reports to identify common themes to help shape their strategic approach to quality assurance and quality enhancement, and to enhance the student experience.

4. The UK Quality Code guiding principles on External Expertise state, "Providers have effective mechanisms in place to provide a response to input from external examiners and external advisers." The University's mapping to the Quality Code states in response that Academic Response coordinators in Schools are responsible for responding to External Examiner reports and that the Quality Assurance Committee receives a thematic report from Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught external examiner reporting. The Committee identifies any institutional actions. The SQAC Convener agreed to the 2022/23 Undergraduate report being submitted in April, and this has been combined with the postgraduate taught report as a single paper. This approach was also taken for the 2021/22 reports.

Discussion
5. Analysis includes high level themes arising from commendations, suggestions and issues, items identified for institutional escalation in the External Examiners' reports, and summarises report status. The report is intended to identify trends across reports from all Colleges. The report is based on quantitative data from the PowerBI dashboard which extracts information and themes from the EERS system. Thematic analysis is attached as Appendix 1, based on data available on 9 and 10 April 2024 for undergraduate and postgraduate taught reports

respectively. It is anticipated that detailed analysis is carried out by Schools and Colleges to identify any issues. As stated in the External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy, Actions in response to External Examiners' reports (Section 57), College is responsible for identifying issues or suggestions that have institutional level implications and raising these matters in appropriate forums at an institutional level.

Resource implications

6. The paper is a report on activity therefore there are no resource implications associated with it. Contextual analysis is done at course, programme, School and College level and report outputs are considered through annual monitoring and Internal Periodic Review. Any actions taken by Schools and Colleges as a result of External Examiner reports are expected to be met from within existing resources. Further contextual or cluster analysis at institutional level is unlikely to be achievable within current Academic Services resources. There may be more value in targeted analysis of External Examiner reports at an institutional level, relating to specific University priorities.

Risk management

7. The paper is a report on activity and no risks are identified.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

8. This paper does not contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals as it is fulfilling external compliance within the quality framework.

Equality & diversity

9. The paper is a report on activity and an equality impact assessment is not required. Academic Services has not identified any major equality impacts in relation to this report.

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

10. The Committee should consider implementation and communication of any agreed action. College representatives should ensure that the outcomes of the Committee's discussions are available for consideration by the relevant College committees.

Author	**Presenter**
Susan Hunter, Academic Services	*Brian Connolly*
16 April 2024	

Freedom of Information

The paper is **open**.

1. Introduction

1.1 This paper provides a thematic analysis of External Examiner reports for undergraduate programmes. Analysis was conducted based on data available on 9 (undergraduate) and 10 (postgraduate taught) April 2024. The analysis focuses on high level themes across the University, and is compiled by Academic Services from a PowerBI report specifically created by Student Analytics for this purpose. (See also points raised under "Resource implications" on the coversheet of this paper.) External Examiners often write "N/A" or "not applicable" in their report entries and may also repeat or make similar comments in more than one part of their individual reports. The analysis in this paper does not exclude these remarks.

1.2 **Action requested** The Committee to note the report and identify any University-level actions (assigning to specific areas as appropriate). The Committee is also invited to consider the appropriate timing for future reports.

A   Undergraduate External Examiner Reports:

Thematic Analysis 2022/23

2.   Analysis of major themes

2.1 Analysis continues to show a high number of commendations across the University and a lower number of issues (see Figure 1). There has been a significant increase in reported issues on the previous year, particularly in the Colleges of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, and Science and Engineering (see 2.4). Trend analysis is included in Figure 2 below. The Committee should note that External Examiners can make multiple comments across categories and the analysis reflects the trends shown by the reporting system. Equally, External Examiners may flag something as a commendation, suggestion or issue but not add any narrative in their report. External Examiners may also repeat comments in different parts of their reports. Due to resourcing limitations in Academic Services, repeated comments and entries without narrative (for example n/a comments) are not excluded from the analysis which focuses on high level themes and trends. The analysis of themes in relation to commendations, suggestions and issues below is drawn from narrative comments added in the reporting system.
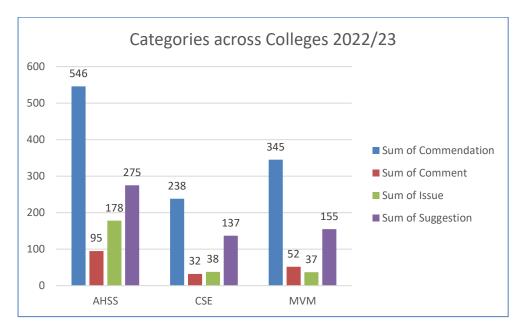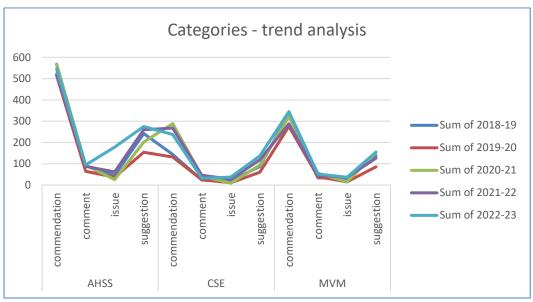
Figure 1

Categories across Colleges 2022/23

Figure 2 Categories trend analysis over past five years

Note: The data capture point for the past two years was later than the preceding years. However, as categories are set within External Examiner reports once submitted, this is less likely to significantly impact the trend analysis.

AHSS (College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences), MVM (College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine), CSE (College of Science and Engineering). The number of issues, commendations, suggestions and comments are in the context of the relative size of each college.

2.2   Commendations

Consistent with the previous five years, External Examiners most often commended the main **theme** of "The Assessment Process" across all three Colleges (241, 21% of the total number of commendations). The most commendations of a single **sub-theme** were in "Good practice and innovation" (in the Programme Development theme – total of 168 commendations). Some examples of External Examiners' comments from that sub-theme are:

> "A stand out is the academic portfolio. I think this is an excellent learning tool that challenges the student to develop independence, original thought, reflective analysis, the evolution of ideas and communication of the same. I particularly like the reflective interview, as AI now starts to infiltrate academic assessment, interviews and in-person assessment will have to compensate until credible AI policies are in place."
>
> "Excellent diversity in programme, encourages students to explore music and cultural topics that matter to them. Feedback exemplary throughout and excellent admin support always available to me as external."
>
> ""I was impressed with the level of research-focussed teaching on this programme. I was impressed with the level of annotations on the student work detailing how the marks were achieved. I was also very impressed on how access to all the student material was made available to me."

2.3   Suggestions

The Programme Development and Enhancement **sub-theme** "Enhancing student learning experience" attracted the highest number of suggestions (126, 22% of the total number of suggestions). External Examiners made suggestions in all Colleges. The majority of suggestions were specific to courses or programmes. There were 12 suggestions across all Colleges (2% of the total in the sub-theme) relating to consistency in assessment and feedback.

2.4   Issues

2.4.1   Overall, 253 issues were raised compared with 132 issues in 2021/22 which represents a 92% increase. This continues a rising trend in issues flagged by External Examiners in the past three years. There was a downward trend in reporting issues during the pandemic years; this was likely due to External Examiners being unwilling to raise issues during what were challenging years across the sector. We are now seeing a reversal of this trend. Colleges noted that there were a number of repeat issues raised in relation to the marking and assessment boycott with individual External Examiners raising the same point in

different parts of their reports, particularly in CAHSS. As noted above, this report does not exclude repeat report entries or where no narrative has been included.

2.4.2   As in the previous five years, the main **theme** was "Provision of Information" with 55 report entries made across all Colleges. However, this year The Assessment Process also received 55 report entries. Across these two themes (totalling 110 entries), 35 (32%) report entries related to the marking and assessment boycott with External Examiners reporting that this had impacted on the timely provision, or insufficient provision, of information. There were 33 (30%) report entries across these two themes, where External Examiners reported issues around the provision of sufficient information or the timely provision of information without specifically attributing this to the marking and assessment boycott.

Colleges are aware of the increase in issues reporting and continue to monitor this. Schools have responded to or are preparing responses to all reports.

3.   Overview of the number of Undergraduate External Examiner Reports

3.1   Table 1 shows the total number of undergraduate reports by College compared with the previous academic year. Note: the data capture point was April for both years in tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1: Number of undergraduate reports

	2022/23	2021/22
College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS)	124	122
College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine (CMVM)	62	62
College of Science and Engineering (CSE)	34	37
Total number of reports	220	221

3.3   Table 2 shows the number and stage of undergraduate reports in each College for 2022/23 and 2021/22.

Table 2: Number and stage of reports

	Report Stage	2022/23	2021/22
AHSS	Response Submitted (complete)	61 (complete)	92 (complete)
	Draft Response (response outstanding)	63 (in progress)	28 (in progress)
	Draft Report (report outstanding)	0	1 (late)
	Cancelled	0	1
MVM	Response Submitted	60 (complete)	58 (complete)
	Draft Response	2 (in progress)	4 (in progress)
CSE	Response Submitted	25 (complete)	31 (complete)
	Draft Response	9 (in progress)	6 (in progress)

3.3   Colleges are continuing to work with Schools to ensure responses are completed as soon as possible. It should also be noted that industrial action over the past couple of years has impacted both on External Examiners' ability to engage with the reporting process and on College's ability to follow up on late reports.

4.   Comments identified by Academic Response Coordinators as Institutional matters

4.1   Academic Response Coordinators can flag comments for School, College or Institutional escalation. The Committee's primary interest in institutional escalations is to identify any issues that require institutional action. There were three comments flagged for institutional escalation in 2022/23, all within the School of History, Classics and Archaeology from a single External Examiner. One issue was flagged in relation to Academic Standards/Comparability of standards, where the External Examiner noted "the current emergency regulations allow for exclusion of a much larger amount of credits from calculations than other institutions I am familiar with". The two suggestions flagged related to awarding unclassified degrees and borderline performance.

Table 3: institutional escalation themes 2022/23

Board of Examiners Meetings (suggestion)	2
Academic Standards, sub-theme Comparability of standards (issue)	1

Table 4: institutional escalation themes 2021/22

Issues raised in previous reports (suggestion)	1
Board of Examiners Meetings, sub-theme Procedures for Special Circumstances/borderline/misconduct (suggestion)	1

B   Postgraduate Taught External Examiner Reports:

Thematic Analysis 2022/23

1. Analysis of major themes

1.1   Analysis continues to show a high number of commendations and a low number of issues across the Colleges (see Figure 3). There has been an increase in the number of External Examiner reports across all Colleges (from the data capture point for this report to SQAC in April 2023) and therefore reporting across all categories has increased on the previous year. A trend analysis is provided in Figure 4. The Committee should note that External Examiners can make multiple comments across categories and the analysis reflects the trends shown by the reporting system. Equally, External Examiners may flag something as a commendation, suggestion or issue but not add any narrative in their report. External Examiners may also repeat comments in different parts of their reports. Due to resourcing limitations in Academic Services, repeated comments and entries without narrative (for example n/a comments) are not excluded from the analysis which focuses on high level themes and trends. The analysis of themes in relation to commendations, suggestions and issues below is drawn from narrative comments added in the reporting system.
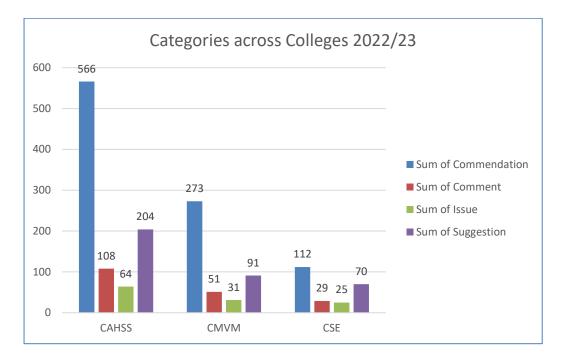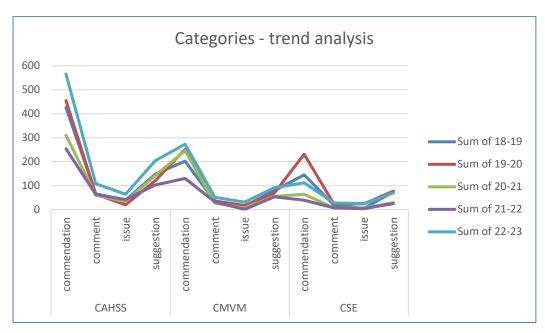
Figure 3

Figure 4 Categories trend analysis over past five years

Note: The data capture point for the past two years was later than the preceding years. However, as categories are set within External Examiner reports once submitted, this is less likely to significantly impact the trend analysis. (Further are comments included below in Section 2 regarding 2021/22 figures.)

CAHSS (College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences), CMVM (College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine), CSE (College of Science and Engineering). The number of issues, commendations and so on are in the context of the relative size of each college.

1.2   Commendations

As in the previous year, the main **theme** commended across all three Colleges was The Assessment Process (250 commendations, 26% of the total number of commendations). The single **sub-theme** with the most commendations was "Good Practice and Innovation" in the Programme Development and Enhancement theme (190 commendations, 20% of the total number of commendations). Some examples of External Examiners' comments are given below:

"I am always highly impressed with the extent and quality of the feedback provided by examiners to students. It is consistently highly detailed, comprehensive, and thorough, and provides specific guidance on ways that students can improve their work. In addition, this standard is kept across the different course for which I am external examiner, demonstrating a standard that is clearly well established and understood throughout the faculty that examine and teach these courses. Further, the use of formative assessments, which provide both breadth of subject specific teaching and opportunities for students to practice and develop their skills (and receive even more excellent feedback from their teachers) is deployed extremely effectively, and indicates the quality of the course and assessment design. Finally, the quality of student work, even in lower graded papers, indicates that the teaching delivered is of a high quality, and adaptive and responsive to student needs - even in papers which achieve lower grades, it is typically clear what it is that the student is trying to do, even if they are not as successful as their higher graded peers. This suggests that students have clear understanding of what they should be aiming for, even if they are not always successful in achieving it, a considerable achievement for course leaders."

""I think this is a fabulous course that has obviously been honed over many years to engage students with effective remote learning. I was particularly impressed with the lengths to which the team tried to assist those students who were having difficulty engaging in supporting them and allowing them to defer."

""These are terrific courses, and if I had my time again I'd happily sign up for them. All courses are challenging grown-up Master's modules. They are wide-ranging and, in some cases, they are unique in the best sense. Courses chime with one another. A lot of time has clearly been devoted to making them interesting. All courses demonstrate a highly thoughtful and sensitive response to anticipating the needs and interests of the specific cohort. Teaching very linguistically complex theoretical material to students for whom English is a second language is a very challenging project. Staff at Moray House have clearly risen to that challenge"

1.3   Suggestions

The Programme Development and Enhancement **theme** attracted the highest number of suggestions at 136 (37% of the total number of suggestions) across all Colleges. The majority of External Examiner suggestions in this theme specifically related to programmes or courses. There were a small number of suggestions in relation to consistency of feedback to students on assessed work (13 suggestions, 10% of the number of suggestions in this theme).

1.4 Issues

Overall, 120 issues were raised (a 39% increase on the previous year's report). As noted in Section B1.1, the number of reports has increased on the previous year resulting in an increase across all categories. Although this is a significant increase, the number of issues remains a small proportion of the whole. As with the increase noted in the undergraduate analysis above, this may be a result of a reversal in trend following the pandemic years. The main **theme** was Provision of Information with 43 issues (36% of the total number of issues) and was raised across all Colleges. This was also the main theme of issues from the previous year and the percentage of these remains unchanged when compared with the previous year. The most common issue raised in this theme was the late receipt of material with 17 report entries (40% of the total in this theme). Of these six report entries attributed this to the marking and assessment boycott.

Schools have responded to or are preparing responses to all reports.

2 Overview of the number of External Examiner Reports

2.1 Outlined in the figure and table below are the number of postgraduate taught (PGT) reports by College compared with the previous academic year. The data capture point was April for both years in tables 4 and 5 below and reflects what was available in the PowerBI report. In the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences there may be some allocation errors and reports which were cancelled or submitted in the wrong year; the College confirms 127 submitted reports for 2021/22. In the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine there were a couple of instances of External Examiners who had left or were ill not being able to be removed from the system; College confirms 64 submitted reports for 2021/22. Reasons for the difference in report numbers in the College of Science and Engineering are unclear, however the College confirms that they had 32 reports submitted in 2021/22 and therefore the number of reports has not significantly increased. It is likely that external factors also impacted submission rates across all Colleges. Data for 2022/23 is broadly in line with College expectations for report submissions.

Table 4: Number of postgraduate taught reports by College

	2022/23	2021/22
College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS)	152	83
College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine (CMVM)	54	33
College of Science and Engineering (CSE)	30	8
Total number of reports	236	124

2.2   Outlined in the figures below are the number and stage of postgraduate taught reports in each College for 2022/23 and 2021/22. As noted above the data for 2021/22 reflects what was available in the PowerBI report at the capture point.

Table 5: Number and stage of reports by College and academic year

	Report Stage	2022/23	2021/22
CAHSS	Complete (response submitted)	115	40
	In progress (response outstanding)	37	30
	Late (report outstanding)	0	9
	Due to breach*	0	4
CMVM	Complete	40	25
	In progress	14	1
	Late	0	7
	Due to breach	0	0
CSE	Complete	20	1
	In progress	10	4
	Late	0	2
	Due to breach	0	1

*Due to breach status is where External Examiners have identified an individual in their report.

2.3   Colleges are continuing to work with Schools to ensure any outstanding draft reports are received and that responses are completed as soon as possible.

3   Items identified by Academic Response Coordinators as Institutional matters

3.1 Two suggestions were identified for institutional escalation in 2022/23; one related to the personal tutor system and one to the procedures relating to industrial action. One suggestion was identified for institutional escalation in 2021/22.

Table 6 Institutional escalation themes 2022/23

Issues raised in previous reports (suggestion)	1
Provision of Information, sub-theme BoE arrangements (suggestion)	1

Table 7 Institutional escalation themes 2021/22

Programme Development and Enhancement theme (suggestion)	1

C   Total reports for 2022/23

In 2022/23 the External Examiner Reporting System recorded a total of 220 reports from 218 Undergraduate External Examiners, and 236 reports from 236 Postgraduate Taught External Examiners. Report status is monitored by Colleges and followed up with Schools at course and programme level as required.
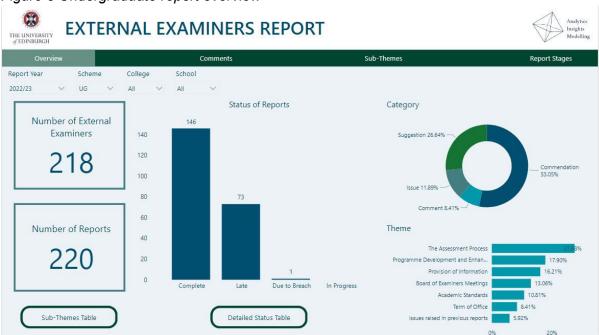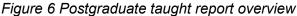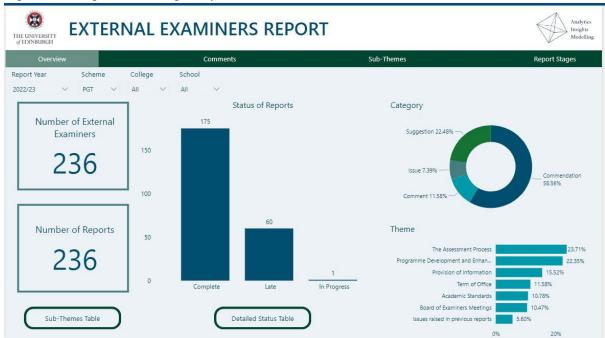
Figure 5 Undergraduate report overview

Figure 6 Postgraduate taught report overview

Susan Hunter
Academic Services
16 April 2024

Senate Quality Assurance Committee

25 April 2024

External Examiner appointments on BVM&S

Description of paper
1. Paper detailing challenges around the appointment of Course External Examiner on the BVM&S programme within R(D)SVS. In particular, challenges around avoiding any reciprocal arrangements across the whole programme.

Action requested / recommendation
2. To request that the committee considers the challenges outlined and approves the proposed mitigation to support management of External Examiner appointments on the BVM&S. This proposal has been reviewed and endorsed by the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine Quality & Enhancement Committee.

Background and context
3. Section 22 of the External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy states that 'External Examiners must be wholly impartial and independent of the University, its staff, governing body and relevant partners'. Section 22 a-f then set out a non-exhaustive list of potential conflicts of interest to avoid in the appointment of External Examiners. 22 (f) states that appointments must not be made that would create a reciprocal external examining arrangement involving equivalent programmes at another higher education institution. Policy notes related to the application of 22 (f) state in section 22.2 that staff who perform External Examiner duties in other Universities should keep their School informed in order to ensure that reciprocal arrangements involving equivalent programmes do not occur.

4. There is provision within the policy for Colleges to approve exceptional appointments where a conflict of interest has been identified. Exceptional appointments are reported to Senate Quality Assurance Committee on an annual basis.

5. The BVM&S team have identified operational challenges regarding the conflict of interest criteria, specifically related to the prevention of forming reciprocal agreements between a small number of institutions. This paper proposes a solution specifically for appointments made at course level only and requests approval from this committee to implement the proposed plan.

Discussion
6. The BVM&S programme appoints a Programme-level External Examiner and also a number of Course-level External Examiners. Appointment of External Examiners at Course level is a requirement of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, which provides external accreditation and the Programmes professional body. All External Examiner appointments are nominated by the School and approved by the CMVM QAE Committee.

7. There are 25 courses within the BVM&S programme which is delivered over five years

8. There are currently 12 Vet Schools in the UK; and 25 Courses requiring External Examiners. Of these twelve vet Schools four are yet to graduate students.

9. The BVM&S Programme External Examiner appointment always meets the requirement not to form reciprocal arrangements at programme level.

10. The School have reported to the College that it is not possible to avoid all potential reciprocal arrangements across the whole programme while operating within the context of such a small pool of potential examiners. All twelve vet schools are expected to meet the same requirements and face similar challenges.

11. To engage with industry stakeholders External Examiner appointments on some courses on the BVM&S programme are made directly from veterinary practice. This has the added advantage of providing an additional layer of externality to the assessment process and brings significant added value due to considerable professional expertise. However, vet practitioners rarely meet all appointment criteria related to knowledge of UK Higher Education frameworks and/or have limited experience of assessment and marking. In such instances, appointments are paired with External Examiners from a Higher Education Intuition to ensure appropriate coverage of all appointment criteria, which does not fully obviate the challenge of reciprocally at course level.

12. The School have requested that Course-level External Examiner nominations are eligible to be approved where these might form reciprocal arrangements elsewhere within the programme. An External Examiner appointment that would result in a direct reciprocal arrangement within equivalent courses would not be nominated or approved.

13. To mitigate the potential for reputational risk through perceived conflicts of interest the School will ensure non-reciprocal arrangements are in place within each year of the BVM&S programme. So, an appointment may create a reciprocal arrangement elsewhere in the programme, but never at course level or within year of the programme.

14. A list of External Examiner appointments to the BVM&S Programme, including their home institution, is maintained by the Programme Director on the BVM&S Learning & Teaching Committee Teams site. This is periodically reviewed via a standing item on the Learning & Teaching Committee agenda and whenever a new External Examiner appointment is considered. During this review process, Learning & Teaching Committee members are invited to identify any potential conflicts of interest within their respective teaching teams.

15. Nominations approved on this basis would be reported to the Senate Quality Assurance Committee on an annual basis as with all exceptional appointments made by the College.

Resource implications

16. There will be no additional resource implications. Nominations will continue to be considered and approved through established School and College processes.

Risk management

17. There are potential implications around reputational risk in relation to preventing perceived conflicts of interest of appointments made across the whole programme. It is proposed that these are mitigated through the confirmation that appointments would never be made between equivalent courses or within a particular year of the BVM&S. It is also noted that the appointment of vet practitioners (where appropriate) provides an additional externality that mitigates this risk.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

18. This paper does not contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals. It is in relation to meeting QA policy requirements.

Equality & diversity

19. This paper does not have any Equality and Diversity implications. It is in relation to meeting QA policy requirements.

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

20. The outcome will be reported to the School and to the CMVM QAE Committee which has oversight of External Examiner appointments within the College.

Author
Victoria Bennett, College QAE Officer
Dr Alexander Corbishley, BVM&S Programme Director
Professor Matt Bailey, CMVM Dean of Quality
1st March 2024

Presenter
Professor Matt Bailey, CMVM Dean of Quality

Freedom of Information *- Open paper*

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Senate Quality Assurance Committee

25 April 2024

Committee Priorities 2024/25

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

Action requested / recommendation
2. The Committee is asked to discuss and agree the proposed priorities for 2024/25, outlining areas of focus and objectives.

Background and context
3. In semester two of each academic year, Senate Standing Committees identify priorities to focus on throughout the following academic year.

4. Registry Services have taken the following into consideration when proposing priorities across the Standing Committees:

   - Committee remits
   - Feedback from Senate and standing committees
   - Feedback from standing committee conveners
   - University strategic priorities
   - External and regulatory requirements
   - Outcomes of quality processes, including external review

5. Member input (including from the constituencies they represent) is critical to shaping the proposed priorities and the associated areas of focus and objectives. Members are therefore invited to shape the draft priorities below or to suggest additional priorities to reach agreement on a set of proposed priorities which are relevant to the committee remit and the University's strategic priorities, and are achievable within resources. As such, members are asked to consider SMART criteria when discussing and agreeing the proposed priorities. Ideally, the objectives of the priorities should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.

6. The Standing Committees' proposed priorities will be reported to Senate in May 2024 for endorsement.

Discussion

DRAFT Committee priorities 2024/25

Proposed priority	Responding to 2023 Quality Enhancement & Standards Review
Rationale and fit with remit	This priority responds to the recommendations following the 2023 QESR and is relevant to the committee remit: 2.1 Oversee the delivery and enhancement of the University's quality assurance framework, ensuring that it meets external requirements. 2.5 Support the University's engagement with external quality requirements and activities, including: Enhancement-Led Institutional Review, the UK Quality Code, and responses to consultations and initiatives.

Area of focus and objectives	• Committee to focus on the progress required against QESR recommendations, and in particular the following time critical recommendations:
	   i) Assessment & Feedback (turnaround times and quality of feedback)
	   ii) Implementation of the Tutors & Demonstrators training policy
	• Committee to support and monitor the work of the QESR oversight group, which will report to both SQAC and SEC.

Regulatory/external requirement?	Yes. This is in response to recommendations made in the QAA ELIR 2021 Report and the later QAA QESR Report (published January 2024).

Proposed priority	Responding to the outcome of the Scottish Funding Council's Tertiary Quality Review
Rationale and fit with remit	A sector-wide Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework for implementation within 2024-25 is being developed (the University has been represented during this development). As above, this fits with the remit: • 2.1 Oversee the delivery and enhancement of the University's quality assurance framework, ensuring that it meets external requirements. • 2.5 Support the University's engagement with external quality requirements and activities, including: Enhancement-Led Institutional Review, the UK Quality Code, and responses to consultations and initiatives.
Area of focus and objectives	• Committee to focus on identifying where policy, guidance and practice is updated to align with changes to the Quality Enhancement Framework. • In line with its remit, the Committee is expected to promote the quality assurance framework as an important part of the University's activities and ensure that the outcomes inform relevant University business.

Regulatory/external requirement?	Yes – mapping to SFC Guidance on Quality is an external requirement.

Proposed priority	**Evaluation and monitoring of the implementation of the new student support model**
Rationale and fit with remit	Relevant to committee remit: • 2.5 Support the University's engagement with external quality requirements and activities, including: Enhancement-Led Institutional Review, the UK Quality Code, and responses to consultations and initiatives. • 2.6 Identify areas for innovation and enhancement of the student experience and ensure that these inform Senate Education Committee's policy development.
Area of focus and objectives	• Oversight of the evaluation of the implementation of the model (continuation from 2023/24 academic year). • Oversight of the development of an evaluation mechanism as the model transitions to business as usual – including how this mechanism integrates with existing quality assurance processes.
Regulatory/external requirement?	• Yes. The University has made progress on the recommendation in ELIR 4 to progress with student support services. Under this recommendation, the University was asked to develop an effective mechanism to monitor consistency of implementation and allow it to evaluate the impact of these changes on the student experience. This is an ongoing piece of work that will require SQAC's oversight once the SSM project team completes its work.

Proposed priority	**Awarding Gap & Attainment Monitoring**
Rationale and fit with remit	Relevant to committee remit: • 2.6 Identify areas for innovation and enhancement of the student experience and ensure that these inform Senate Education Committee's policy development. • 2.7 Consider the implications of the Committee's work and its decisions in the context of external initiatives and compliance and legal frameworks, particularly in relation to equality and diversity.
Area of focus and objectives	As per the report of QESR: • Complete the recommendation on attainment gap oversight, coordination and monitoring from ELIR 4, expediting progress to ensure that the work being undertaken is effective. • The University should pay particular attention to sharing good practice and supporting staff in understanding the causes of attainment gaps and taking effective action.

Regulatory/external requirement?	Yes – This was a recommendation in the QAA ELIR 2021 Report and has been re-emphasised in the QAA QESR Report (published January 2024).

Resource implications

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

Risk management

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

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

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

Equality & diversity

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

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

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

Author
Registry Services
March 2024

Presenter
Tina Harrison & Brian Connolly

Freedom of Information *Open*