

**Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee  
to be held on Thursday 25 January 2024  
at 2:00pm via Teams**

**AGENDA**

<b>1.</b>	<b>Welcome and apologies</b>	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Minutes of the previous meeting</b> To approve <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 23 November 2023</li> </ul>	<b>APRC 23/24 5A</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Exceptional Circumstances policy - update</b> To comment	<b>APRC 23/24 5B</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>4.1 Matters Arising</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convener's communications</li> <li>• Actions log</li> </ul> <b>4.2 Report of Convener's Action</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary of approved concessions</li> <li>• Updates to membership of Student Appeal Sub-Committees</li> </ul>	<b>Verbal Update</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Academic Year dates 2025/26 and Provisional Academic Year Dates 2026/27</b> To approve	<b>APRC 23/24 5C</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b>Committee priorities - mid-year reflection</b> To comment	<b>APRC 23/24 5D</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b>	
<b>Date of next meeting</b> Thursday 21 March 2024, 2-5pm, Boardroom, Chancellor's Building, BioQuarter campus		

**Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee  
to be held on Thursday 23 November 2023  
at 2:00pm via Teams**

**Unconfirmed minutes**

<p><b>Present:</b> Dr Adam Bunni Philippa Burrell Professor Jamie Davies Lisa Dawson Dr Murray Earle Professor Patrick Hadoke (Convenor)</p> <p>Clair Halliday Carl Harper Karen Howie</p> <p>Alexandra Laidlaw Professor Antony Maciocia Callum Paterson Rachael Quirk Dr Deborah Shaw Professor Tim Stratford Dr Emily Taylor Professor Stephen Warrington (Vice-Convenor) Kirsty Woomble</p> <p><b>Substitute members:</b> Dr Valentina Ferlito (on behalf of Dr Uzma Tufail-Hanif) Dr Neil Lent (on behalf of Dr Donna Murray)</p> <p><b>In attendance:</b> Isabel Lavers Cristina Matthews</p> <p><b>Apologies:</b> Dr Aidan Brown Professor Jeremy Crang Lucy Evans Dr Donna Murray Dr Uzma Tufail-Hanif</p>	<p>Head of Academic Policy and Regulation, Academic Services Head of Academic Administration (CMVM) Dean of Taught Education (CMVM) Academic Registrar, Registry Services Elected member of Senate Director of Postgraduate Research and Early Career Research Experience (CMVM) The Advice Place, Deputy Manager Vice President Education, Students' Association Head of Digital Learning Applications and Media, Information Services Head of Academic Affairs (CSE) Dean of Postgraduate Research (CSE) Academic Engagement Coordinator, Students' Association Head of Taught Student Administration &amp; Support (CAHSS) Dean of Students (CMVM) Dean of Learning and Teaching (CSE) Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Validation (CAHSS) Dean of Student Experience (CSE)</p> <p>Head of PGR Student Office (CAHSS)</p> <p>Elected member of Senate</p> <p>Lecturer in Learning and Teaching (IAD)</p> <p>Academic Administration Manager (CMVM) Academic Policy Officer, Academic Services</p> <p>Elected member of Senate Dean of Students (CAHSS) Deputy Secretary, Students (Co-opted member) Head of Taught Student Development (IAD) Elected member of Senate</p>
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<b>1.</b>	<p><b>Welcome and apologies</b></p> <p>The Convenor welcomed everyone and members of the Committee introduced themselves to the substitute members.</p>
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	<p>Reminder to the Committee that members can propose a substitute member, to be approved by the Convener, if they are unable to make the meeting. Once approved, the APRC administrator will then share the papers and meeting invitation with any substitute members.</p> <p>The Convener noted that this will be Philippa Burrell's last meeting, and that Isabel Lavers (in attendance) will be taking up one of the Committee positions for CMVM. The Convener thanked Philippa for all her contributions to the Committee and welcomed Isabel as a new member.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> APRC administrator to update membership lists.</p>
2.	<p><b>Minutes of the previous meeting – APRC 23/24 3A</b> For approval</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 21 September 2023 (enclosed)</li> </ul> <p>The Convener noted that a member not present at the meeting had communicated via email that they did not think the minutes were an accurate reflection of the meeting; that some of the questions raised were not included, and that some of the answers were not comprehensive.</p> <p>The Convener reminded the Committee that the minutes are not a verbatim transcript of the meeting, and stated that the questions raised, and answers provided, were summarised and covered in the minutes.</p> <p>A member suggested that the issue of whether the responses to the questions raised were adequate or not is a separate issue to whether the minutes accurately reflect the discussion that took place. If members feel that the questions were not sufficiently answered in the meeting, this can be raised as a query separately.</p> <p>Members present at the meeting agreed that the minutes were an accurate reflection of the meeting. The Committee approved the minutes.</p>
3.	<p><b>3.1 Matters Arising</b></p> <p><b>Convener's communications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Update on the termination of PhD</b></li> </ul> <p>The Convener updated the Committee on the case discussed at APRC at the meeting on 25 May 2023 (Closed Paper APRC 22/23 9G) where termination of supervision may have been necessary. A solution to this situation now looks possible at College level without the need for termination of supervision.</p> <p>The Convener noted that since the last meeting, Academic Services have identified a process for the termination of a PhD, which was approved by CSPC in 2017, and which involves a subgroup rather than a full Committee review. It was agreed to note and circulate the CSPC-approved process for future reference.</p> <p>In the event that such a case should come to the Committee in future, it will be dealt with following this process.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> CSPC-approved process for termination of PhD supervision to be noted and circulated to the Committee.</p>

- **Update on the operation of online exams in the December diet.**

The proposals approved by APRC in May 2023 included a provision that students who have additional time in exams as a reasonable adjustment would have a 20-minute submission period. However, the exam timetable has applied a uniform 15-minute submission period for all students, including those with additional time as a learning adjustment. Given that students had been informed of the 15-minute submission period, and that there was no issue with students' expectations not being met, the decision was taken not to make changes at this stage in order to avoid confusion. Guidance has been drafted for Schools and Deaneries, instructing them to contact the College in case a student with an adjustment for additional time submits an exam after the final deadline. The Disability and Learning Support Service and the Students' Association have both been informed about this and reported no major concerns. No students should have been disadvantaged by this issue.

The miscommunication on this item is partly due to how the Committee has handled minutes that relate to closed papers. Academic Services are reviewing their approach to handling minutes for closed items, and will be making changes to prevent a repeat of issues such as this one. The use of an action log was also emphasised in order to facilitate tracking of actions.

- **Update on APRC priorities**

Senate did not approve the APRC priorities paper presented at the September APRC meeting. Senate approved an amendment to the paper which related to reviewing the impact upon academic standards of variations to regulations applied during the period of industrial action. However, Senate did not approve the overall paper. The Convener clarified that the amendment would not have been in the remit of this Committee, it would be within the remit of the Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC), and that the substance of the amendment was already covered by the quality assurance processes of SQAC. In relation to this, there is an action from the APRC September meeting requesting an update from SQAC on the output of annual quality assurance monitoring processes and the impact of the temporary variations to the regulations (see actions log). The APRC priorities outlined in the paper were mostly responses to work initiated elsewhere, and the Committee will need to continue to work on these as part of its remit.

- **Actions log**

The actions log was circulated alongside the papers for the meeting, and the Convener provided a verbal update on this.

- **Academic Year Dates 2026/27**

The Committee would normally receive papers on Academic Year dates at the November meeting; however, given how the dates fall for AY26/27, we will be in a similar position to this academic year, i.e. the period available for the December resit period and exam diet will be shorter than usual. At the September APRC meeting, the Committee agreed to incorporate a second exam session into one or two days for the December diet. Given that the diet has not yet taken place, the proposal is to agree the Academic Year dates 2026/27 at the January 2024 meeting of this Committee, so that we can incorporate any lessons learned from this academic year.

### 3.2 Report of Convener's Action

- **Summary of approved concessions since the last APRC meeting 2023/24**

Since the last ordinary APRC meeting (21 September 2023), 18 individual student concessions have been approved.

	<p>In this period there have been no cohort concessions made.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Addition of a second day with two exam sessions for the December exam diet</b></li> </ul> <p>Timetabling indicated that they would need two days on which to have two sessions in the December exam diet in order to meet demand. This is in line with what the Committee agreed at the September meeting, i.e. that including two days with two sessions could be approved by Convener's Action without returning to the full Committee for additional approval. Following the request by APRC that days with two sessions should be towards the end of the diet, these have been scheduled on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> December.</p>
<b>4.</b>	<b>SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<p><b>Programmes with non-standard semester dates (CMVM) – APRC 23/24 3B</b> For approval</p> <p>This item was chaired by the Deputy Convener, as the paper is for CMVM.</p> <p>The paper was introduced by Philippa Burrell, Head of Academic Administration, CMVM. This paper is seeking approval for non-standard semester dates for five online PGT programmes in CMVM in order to align with the dates for other CMVM online programmes already approved.</p> <p>Further context was provided: online programmes used to have different non-standard semester dates across CMVM but these dates have been streamlined in recent years in order to achieve consistency across the College. The five online programmes being presented in the paper are already running and should have been approved by APRC last year. The request for approval is therefore retrospective.</p> <p>A member reported questions on behalf of Senate members. These were clarified as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Use of 'term' and 'semester': PGT online programmes in CMVM run from September to August. Given that there are three terms, 'term' is more appropriate than 'semester'. The paper uses both terminologies, given that 'term' is used in for this context in CMVM, but 'semester' is used elsewhere in the University.</li> <li>○ It was queried why ChM programmes were not included in the list of programmes for which an exemption was being sought; it was clarified that there is an existing exemption in relation to these, and other, programmes with non-standard dates, and that these were therefore already included in the appendix to the paper.</li> <li>○ It was queried why all programmes with non-standard dates are not included in the list; it was clarified that programmes on the list have all requested approval from APRC to run on non-standard semester dates, and that APRC have no record of other programmes with non-standard dates. If there are programmes with non-standard dates that do not appear on this list, Schools should seek approval for this from their respective College and then from APRC.</li> </ul> <p>There was clarification that there is no issue for programmes that run with standard University semester dates, and that only programmes with non-standard dates need to request approval for their academic year dates.</p>

	<p>There was also clarification that, although these term dates are not aligned with the University's standard semester dates, there is consistency in these term dates across CMVM.</p> <p>The Committee approved the proposal, but noted that in future these approvals should not be sought retrospectively. CMVM confirmed that the intention is to seek approvals in the correct sequence, and that mitigations are now in place to cover issues such as staff absence.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Philippa Burrell to communicate outcome of paper 3B to relevant Schools/Deaneries.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> APRC administrator to request update to list of programmes with non-standard dates on the website.</p>
4.3	<p><b>APRC annual concessions report 2022/23 – APRC 23/24 3C</b> To note and comment <b>This paper is closed.</b> Its disclosure would constitute a breach of the Data Protection Act.</p> <p>This paper was presented by Cristina Matthews, Academic Services. The paper provides the Committee with an analysis of the concessions approved for the AY22/23, themes identified and proposed next steps in order to aid continuous improvement of the handling of APRC concessions.</p> <p>Members noted that the number of concession cases that come to APRC, although higher than in previous years, is only a very small proportion of concession cases reviewed at the College level, particularly for PGR students. There was an acknowledgement that PGR cases will usually be more complex and that it is important to ensure that our policies and practices are providing the best support for students. Members were supportive of the next steps proposed in the paper, which included establishing a subgroup to explore PGR concessions in more depth. This group can discuss amendments to policies, regulations or practices that could help to manage some of the more complex cases and provide a better student experience. Some members expressed an interest in also exploring issues related to extensions and interruptions of study for PGT students, particularly part-time online PGT students.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> APRC administrator to set up subgroup to discuss options for improving PGR concessions; follow up with colleagues regarding PGT concessions relating to extensions and interruptions of study.</p> <p>There was discussion regarding the high number of concession cases reviewed across the University at the College level, and also about the value of obtaining degree completion rates for cases of PGR concessions. Academic Services are looking into whether we can obtain this data in order to provide insight into potential improvements to be discussed with the subgroup.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Academic Services to confirm whether we can obtain data on degree completion rates for PGR students with concessions.</p> <p>The Committee discussed whether or not the full Committee should continue to review cohort concessions that are not affected by industrial action, given that this was agreed as a temporary arrangement for AY22/23. Members expressed a range of views on this, but the Committee reached the agreement that, for now, it will continue to review all cohort cases.</p>

**5. Any Other Business**

No other business. The Convener thanked members for their contributions to the Committee over this particularly busy year.

**Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee****25 January 2024****Exceptional Circumstances Policy – update****Description of paper**

1. This paper invites the Committee to comment on an updated draft of a proposed Exceptional Circumstances policy. It also provides the Committee with an update regarding the systems and process changes required to implement such a policy, should it be approved.

**Action requested / recommendation**

2. The Committee is invited to note the information provided regarding systems and process readiness, and to comment on the updated draft of the policy. Some aspects of the policy have systems implications which will require a longer lead time to support. The Committee is asked to agree these elements in principle so that work on the system can progress. Such agreement in principle would not override the need for the Committee to approve the policy at a subsequent meeting.

**Background and context***Existing policy*

3. The University currently deals with adverse circumstances affecting students' performance in assessments through a coursework extensions process, set out in Taught Assessment Regulation 28, and the Special Circumstances Policy. The Extensions and Special Circumstances service (ESC) makes decisions as to whether to offer extensions to coursework deadlines of up to seven days, and to accept or reject requests for consideration of concessions in relation to Special Circumstances; accepted Special Circumstances requests are then dealt with by Boards of Examiners within Schools and Deaneries. Students with a Schedule of Adjustments for a disclosed disability can also receive Extra Time Adjustments for coursework and exams. These Adjustments are not encompassed by the draft Exceptional Circumstances policy and we do not propose to make changes to the process for these.
4. Concerns about the Special Circumstances and coursework extensions policies had been raised by students and staff consistently prior to summer 2022, leading APRC to establish a task group to consider where changes to policy may be appropriate in order to alleviate these concerns. This work took place in tandem with a separate review of the ESC process undertaken by Registry Services. The concerns about the current approach are summarised below:
  - Schools feel that students are using coursework extensions to manage their workload, in a way that departs from the original, "exceptional" intention for the policy;
  - This presents a fundamental concern that the existing policy does not adequately equip students with skills required to succeed in the workplace,

such as management of deadlines and juggling the normal stressors of academic study;

- The high volume of extensions is leading to significant challenges in marking and moderation, with high volumes of students receiving extensions for many assessments (up to 60% of a cohort in some cases);
- This can impact negatively the ability to complete marking and moderation to a required standard and within TAR deadlines;
- Some staff report completing the moderation process twice (i.e. once for work submitted on time, and again for work submitted with an approved extension), affecting workload and posing a potential risk to marking consistency;
- The ESC Review process revealed significant differences in practice between Schools regarding handling of special circumstances applications, especially in relation to consideration of the severity of circumstances and the use of algorithmic decision trees, posing a risk to the consistency of the student experience.

#### *Proposed Exceptional Circumstances policy*

5. The APRC task group reported its findings and recommendations to the Committee in March 2023 (APRC 22/23 6C). These findings and recommendations were referred to the Deputy Secretary, Students, who led further work with Heads of Schools and Colleges to produce a draft policy for APRC consideration. The draft policy was discussed at APRC on 30 June 2023, with a revised version considered at the subsequent meeting on 31 July 2023. The Committee was not content to approve the proposed policy at that time, noting the following key issues:
  - There was agreement among the Committee that the existing policy presents significant challenges which are difficult to manage across the University (see section 4).
  - Student representation on the Committee expressed concern regarding the policy and commented that, whilst they understand it is not the intention, the revised policy could appear punitive and would negatively affect the student experience. They expressed a concern that students do not see the policy as an avenue to resolve their issues.
  - College representatives on the Committee noted that Schools are broadly supportive of the new policy and support the general direction of travel but had significant outstanding concerns regarding the ability to implement the policy in time for 2023/24, bearing in mind the considerable demands this would represent in terms of systems development, workload and communications.
  - There are systems changes required to support the implementation of a new policy. For 2023/24 implementation, it was likely that an off-system solution would have been required, and this was felt to be sub-optimal.
  - There was, moreover, a general concern regarding the introduction of a new policy given the proximity to the start of the new academic year, both in terms of the systems and process changes required, and the need to communicate widely to students and staff about the new policy.

- Some members felt that the duration of extension was highlighted as inappropriate for students on a part-time online programme. They felt that these students require extensions of seven days to support the format and specific student type.
  - Overall, the Committee felt that there was insufficient time to adequately address the concerns relating to operational and systems readiness, student communications and preparedness and the significant administrative workload required to support implementation of a new policy for the start of the new academic year.
  - There was, however, general support for the policy to return to the Committee to consider for implementation in 2024.
6. In line with the Committee's agreement that the policy should return for further consideration, we are bringing an update to APRC at this stage, with a view to seeking formal approval of the policy at the March meeting.
7. At its July 2023 meeting, the Committee acknowledged that one of the risks associated with maintaining the status quo for the 2023/24 session was that Schools and Colleges would take individual action to address challenges experienced under the current system, especially with the volume of coursework extensions being approved. As anticipated, all Schools in the University have reduced the default length of extension offered to students for coursework, to four days in CAHSS, and three days in CSE. It will be important to reach a consensus position on the number of days for extension, in order to promote consistent treatment of students.
8. A critical area of feedback for revision to the Policy and associated processes is the identified the gap between students who require learning adjustments based on their assessment through DLSS and students who need help due to exceptional unforeseen circumstances. We have some students with particular needs (e.g. routine caring responsibilities) that are currently falling through the gaps and feel unsupported and we need to urgently address this with clear and separate approaches outside of this Policy. As previously communicated, a research project is currently being led by an academic colleague in the Law School. This work aims to understand any gaps and how these may be addressed with recommendations we would seek to implement urgently. We also expect a longer term set of recommendations linked to our WP Strategy for how we achieve more inclusive and connected support for our underrepresented students across the University, extending the good work that takes place in various areas. This research project is due to conclude next month and we will provide a report at the March APRC meeting.

## Discussion

### *Updated version of the proposed policy*

9. An updated version of the policy is presented for comment in Appendix 1. This revised version takes account of feedback received at the July 2023 meeting of APRC, and during subsequent discussions with colleagues in Colleges, Student

Systems, and EUSA regarding the systems and process implementation of the draft policy (including a workshop on 4 December 2023). The revisions also seek to incorporate to a greater extent the recommendations made by the APRC task group in March 2023. The proposals remain focused on seeking to address the concerns around existing policy identified in section 4 of this paper.

10. The table below describes the key features of the draft policy, highlighting where revisions have been made from the version considered by APRC in July 2023. It also notes where that feature aligns with recommendations made by the APRC task group in March 2023. More information about the changes made to the policy- including some which are not listed in the table- is provided below the table.

<b>Key feature of policy</b>	<b>Revised in this version?</b>	<b>Task Group recommended?</b>
The policy encompasses both shorter coursework extensions, and other concessions currently handled via Special Circumstances	No	Yes
Students can self-certify for extensions up to three times in a year	No	Yes
One self-certification request can cover a period of up to three days	Yes	Seven days
Self-certified extensions will be for three days	No	Four days
On defined part-time programmes, self-certified extensions will be for seven days	Yes	Yes
Students can apply for Exceptional Circumstances no earlier than 10 days before the relevant assessment deadline	No	Yes
Self-certified requests for extensions must be submitted in advance of the relevant assessment deadline	No	Yes
Other requests must be submitted with evidence	Yes	Yes
Requests must be submitted by a deadline published by the Exceptional Circumstances (EC) service for the relevant Semester	Yes	Yes
Applications after the relevant deadline must be supported by evidence indicating why they were not submitted on time	No	N/A
Where a student has requested removal of late penalties, the EC service is empowered to approve this up to a defined point	Yes	N/A
All other accepted requests will be considered by the relevant Exceptional Circumstances Committee (ECC) in a School/Deanery	No	Yes
	Yes	Yes

The ECC will make recommendations to the relevant Board of Examiners, who can offer one or more of a small range of outcomes		
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*Amendments made to the policy since July 2023*

11. As noted above, there are several aspects of the policy which have been amended since the last version considered by APRC. These amendments take account of the feedback presented at the July 2023 meeting, subsequent discussions regarding implementation, and further consideration of the recommendations of the 2022/23 APRC task group.
  - a) Principles (1)
12. We have reorganised this section to allow it to flow more logically. The definition of Exceptional Circumstances has been amended to align with the existing definition of Special Circumstances: the previous draft focused on failure to submit on time, and did not explicitly cover the impact of a student's circumstances on quality of performance.
  - b) Deadlines for submission (4)
13. Feedback indicated that the previous proposal of tying the deadline for submission of Exceptional Circumstances to the deadline for the relevant assessment would not be practicable, pushing the majority of applications into the "late" category, for example where a student's circumstances, or the requirement to provide evidence, pushed them beyond the assessment deadline.
14. The revised proposal is to retain the existing position under the Special Circumstances policy of having a single deadline for the submission of Exceptional Circumstances requests for each School, as opposed to individual deadlines for requests relating to an item of assessment based on the assessment deadline. These deadlines will continue to be published on the Exceptional Circumstances service web pages. In future, it would be desirable to harmonise the deadlines across Schools as far as possible to provide a more consistent experience for students, but the wording in the proposed policy does not preclude this. As currently, the deadline for requests relating to coursework extensions is aligned with the deadline for the relevant coursework assessment. This position reflects what was proposed by the 2022/23 APRC task group.
  - c) Student submission of preferences (4)
15. Based on feedback from the workshop on 4 December 2023, we have removed the provision for students to submit a preference as to whether they would wish to be offered a resit opportunity, if their application is accepted. It was agreed that this- existing- feature of the policy is confusing for students and not helpful in terms of managing their expectations regarding outcomes. However, we intend to make provision in the system for students to apply specifically for the removal of late penalties, where they have submitted an assessment late without an approved extension.

d) Outcomes for Exceptional Circumstances cases (7)

16. We have removed the list of outcomes from this section, as it did not align fully with the full list provided in (now) 11.6 and 11.7 of the policy. We have also added a clarification that, even where an application is accepted, it may lead to no action being taken, where none of the actions available would lead to a better academic outcome for a student (e.g. because their performance in an assessment affected by Exceptional Circumstances was better than normal for them).

e) Self-certification (8)

17. We have proposed that students on defined part-time programmes will be offered an extension of seven days, as opposed to the standard three days. This proposal is in recognition of concerns raised in particular by colleagues in CMVM around the needs of students taking online, professional programmes. This proposal also reflects what was proposed by the 2022/23 APRC task group. It is critical that this exception is communicated to all relevant students at the start of their course or programme.

18. We have also proposed a change to the criteria around the use of self-certification for multiple items of assessment. The previous proposal was that students could use a single self-certification request to cover multiple items of assessment where the deadlines for these fell on the same day. Feedback from Colleges and EUSA has indicated that this could lead to unfair or perverse outcomes. For example:

- Student A and Student B both experience the same circumstances, whose impact is significant for more than one day;
- Student A's deadlines for two items of assessment fall on a single day, while Student B's deadlines for two items of assessment fall on consecutive days;
- Student A would need to use only one self-certification, while Student B would need to use two.

The revised proposal is that a single self-certification could apply to items of assessment with deadlines falling during **the same three-day period** (including dissertations or research projects). This proposal would avoid the kind of situation illustrated above, and is closer to what was recommended by the APRC task group, which was that a single self-certification could cover a seven-day period.

19. The revised policy also clarifies that students can choose not to use up one of their three permitted self-certifications for an extension, where they wish to apply with evidence instead.

f) Evidence from family and friends (9.7)

20. The revised policy clarifies that evidence from the student's family or friends will only be accepted where this is used to provide additional information or context to support other provided evidence.

g) Expedited decisions (10)

21. We have removed the section regarding expedited decisions, which is a feature of the current Special Circumstances policy. Feedback has indicated that this feature is not used consistently by Schools and is not well understood, leading to an inconsistent experience for students. However, it remains desirable to give students early assurances about the outcome of their application where possible, which is what has motivated the revised proposal regarding removal of late penalties, below.

h) Removal of late penalties (11.2.2)

22. In line with the above, we have sought to design a process to expedite decisions regarding removal of late penalties, in lieu of having an "expedited decisions" process. The proposal is that the Exceptional Circumstances service will have the responsibility to offer students removal of penalties for late submission up to a maximum of 10 days after the deadline, where the student provides satisfactory evidence for their application to be accepted. This would be applicable where it was recorded in the Assessment and Progression Tools that the affected assessment allowed late submission for routine extensions, and/or Extra Time Adjustments offered as part of a Schedule of Adjustments. For example, where it was known that an assessment offered both Extra Time Adjustments of seven days, and a self-certified extension of three days, the Exceptional Circumstances service could offer removal of late penalties for up to 10 days. The process would be likely to involve the Exceptional Circumstances team confirming with the School that the student had submitted within the period during which removal of late penalties could be offered (i.e. up to 10 days after the original deadline), at which point the removal of late penalties could be confirmed and communicated to the student. Boards of Examiners would retain the power to offer removal of late penalties beyond this 10-day period, where they considered this appropriate (11.6c).

23. This proposal should offer a reduction in workload for Schools relating to those cases which lead to removal of late penalties. Although there would be administrative tasks involved in confirming that a student had submitted the affected assessment within the waiver period, and applying the removal of penalties, it would no longer be necessary for these cases to be considered by an Exceptional Circumstances Committee. There would be an increase in workload relating to these cases for the Exceptional Circumstances service, but this should be modest, bearing in mind that they would- even under the existing policy- be expected to consider and make decisions regarding accepting these cases, even were they not empowered to offer a specific outcome. Overall, it is desirable to reduce the level of "double-handling" of cases which is inherent to the current policy, and leads to it being highly resource-intensive. For students, the proposed approach would offer the benefit of their being more consistently offered early decisions regarding removal of late penalties, where this is possible.

i) Outcomes (11.6-11.7)

24. These have been streamlined to aid simplicity of use. Some outcomes have been combined, where possible, while others have been removed from the table because they do not represent concessions offered as a response to a student's circumstances, but are instead a standard entitlement, for example the offer of a resit (without a null sit), or the award of credit on aggregate. These latter outcomes have therefore been covered in a separate section of the policy. This streamlining of outcomes is in line with the recommendations of the APRC task group.
25. Some outcomes which currently require College approval under the Special Circumstances policy have been revised to allow Schools to approve them without escalation. This is in line with feedback from Colleges that College involvement in these cases is perceived to be redundant. Removing this level of oversight ought therefore to add efficiency to the handling of some cases, and does not pose an additional risk in terms of inconsistency of outcomes.
26. We have also added clarification that Boards responsible for course outcomes do not need to refer cases for further consideration by the relevant programme Board, if they are satisfied that appropriate mitigation has been applied at course level. This should serve to reduce a degree of duplication of effort by course and programme Boards.
27. We have also proposed to add a clarification (11.7.2) regarding the impact on other programme requirements when courses are excluded from programme-level calculations due to Exceptional Circumstances. For example, where a Postgraduate Taught student would normally require an overall average of 50% or more across 120 taught credits, with at least 80 credits at a minimum of 50%, in order to progress to the research project or dissertation, but 20 credits have been excluded from the calculation due to exceptional circumstances, the student may be permitted to progress with an average of 50% or more across the remaining 100 taught credits, and at least 70 credits at a minimum of 50%.

### *Systems*

28. As noted previously, there are resource implications for Student Systems in making the required changes to the ESC system. This is, however, a priority, and once fully scoped resources will be allocated and implementation work undertaken. Should any significant issues arise, these will be escalated accordingly. The prioritisation of this will be built into the planned programme of Student Systems work. To expedite the systems work and ensure full roll out for 24/25, we have undertaken analysis and development work to estimate resource based on the assumptions within this paper to provide confidence we can realise the necessary changes.
29. It is important to note there is an inherent risk in starting work ahead of the policy being approved. If elements of the proposed policy are changed as part of this latest round of approval, it will mean effort will have been wasted and there will

be an increased risk of system changes not being completed for 2024/25.

30. There is limited scope for a phased implementation of system changes but it may be possible to do the following in order to prioritise the most essential developments:

- i. Delay the systems changes which would prevent students from applying for Exceptional Circumstances more than 10 days before the due date of the assessment until after the start of 2024/25. Until then, this feature of the proposed policy could be supported by the EC team manually rejecting applications which do not meet this criterion. This would create additional work for the EC team during the interim period.
- ii. If APRC are supportive of the proposals around removal of late penalties, Student Systems can explore whether this can be implemented initially through process change and limited systems development, with a full system solution delivered at a later date. This approach carries risk in itself – significant initial design work would still be required to minimise the risk of rework being required at a later date.

31. The current estimates for development time take account of the difficulty typically experienced in arriving at firm decisions around implementation of the EC policy, given the range of complex scenarios presented by the policy. To alleviate this difficulty, the systems project team will need the assistance of an engaged stakeholder panel between now and the March APRC meeting (and beyond). This panel would need to:

- Provide advice and input around the detail of the implementation of the policy;
- Review and endorse process and system design decisions.

Based on the welcome input from colleagues so far, we do not anticipate securing this kind of engagement being an issue.

#### *Staff resource*

32. Staff in Schools and the Exceptional Circumstances service familiarising themselves with the new policy will take time, but will be supported by briefings and guidance. For Schools, the experience of receiving accepted cases from the Exceptional Circumstances service should be largely unchanged, with the exception of cases relating to removal of late penalties, where additional briefing and training will be required.

33. As noted above, the change to empowering the Exceptional Circumstances service to make decisions regarding removal of late penalties is expected to have resource implications for the service in terms of staff time, both for training in supporting this aspect of the process, and on an ongoing basis.

34. We propose the formation of a stakeholder panel to assist in the development of the underpinning systems. This will require staff time from stakeholders, primarily in Schools and Deaneries, and student representatives.

## **Risk management**

### *Risks of retaining the status quo*

35. As noted above, Colleges and Schools have already taken steps to address some of the perceived challenges with the existing policy by reducing the default length of extension to offered. It remains the case, however, that this approach leads to inconsistency of experience for students, for example with each College now operating a different default duration for coursework extensions.
36. Many staff feel that the current approach to extensions and Special Circumstances is failing to adequately prepare students for life beyond University by supporting an appropriate approach to deadlines. The existing policy no longer meets its purpose of applying only to “special” or exceptional situations, and is perceived as having become a process through which students manage their deadlines. A consequence of this is that Schools experience extremely high volumes of coursework extensions and Special Circumstances requests, making the process of timely marking and moderation of work for return to students increasingly challenging.

### *Risks relating to the proposed policy*

37. As noted above, the successful implementation of the proposed policy would be contingent upon changes being made to the associated systems. Resource from within the Student Systems Partnership is currently built into plans and will be ringfenced to deliver these changes.
38. There is a risk that the reduction in the permitted period for extensions and the restriction on the number of self-certified extensions is perceived by students as a less generous approach than what has been in place previously. This will need to be addressed by clear communications regarding the goals of the proposed policy. This risk must be balanced against concerns around the existing policy noted above, i.e. that it does not adequately equip students with skills required to succeed in the workplace, such as management of deadlines and juggling the normal stressors of academic study.
39. There is a risk that staff will not be sufficiently aware of the new policy to provide appropriate advice to students on how it will be applied. This may lead to students being given incorrect advice based on the existing policy. This risk can be mitigated by a comprehensive communications plan, with particular focus on ensuring that Student Advisers are well-versed in the new policy.

## **Equality & diversity**

40. When the proposed policy returns to APRC for formal approval, it will be supported by a revised Equality Impact Assessment.

41. The proposed policy maintains the existing position that the University's approach to supporting students with disclosed disabilities is through Schedules of Adjustments provided by the Disability and Learning Support Service (DLSS).

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

42. A communications plan will be prepared for the launch of the new policy and service, which will include:

- Email communication to students;
- Email communication and briefing sessions for staff in Schools;
- Additional, small-group training sessions for staff in Schools on request.

43. APRC will be asked to review the implementation of the new policy at an agreed point following its rollout.

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**Freedom of Information: Open**

## Appendix 1.

# Exceptional Circumstances Policy



THE UNIVERSITY  
of EDINBURGH

## Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure fair and consistent response to student experiencing unexpected short-term circumstances which are exceptional for the individual student, beyond that student's control, and which could reasonably be expected to have had an adverse impact on the student's ability to complete the assessment on time.

## Overview

This policy outlines the principles of exceptional circumstances, sets out the circumstances which would be considered exceptional circumstances, the process for requesting consideration of exceptional circumstances and the certification or evidence required to support applications. The policy outlines requirements for Exceptional Circumstances Committees, the process for the consideration of applications, possible outcomes and process for notifying students of the outcome and maintaining records.

## Scope: Mandatory Policy

The policy applies to undergraduate and taught postgraduate students, and to the taught components undertaken by research postgraduate students.

## Contact Officer

Academic Services

AcademicPolicy@ed.ac.uk

## Document control

Dates	Approved: DD.MM.YY	Starts: DD.MM.YY	Equality impact assessment: DD.MM.YY	Amendments: DD.MM.YY	Next Review: YYYY/YYYY
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## Approving authority

Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee

## Consultation undertaken

State bodies/officers/constituencies

## Section responsible for policy maintenance & review

Academic Services

## Related policies, procedures, guidelines & regulations

Taught Assessment Regulations, Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees:

[www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/policies-regulations/regulations/assessment](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/policies-regulations/regulations/assessment)

Guidance on policy, principle and operation of Boards of Examiners:

[www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/staff/assessment/boards-examiners](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/staff/assessment/boards-examiners)

Degree Regulations & Programmes of Study:

[www.drps.ed.ac.uk/](http://www.drps.ed.ac.uk/)

## UK Quality Code

Expectations are covered in the UK Quality Code Advice and Guidance on "Assessment"

## Policies superseded by this policy

Special Circumstances Policy

## Alternative format

If you require this document in an alternative format please email [Academic.Services@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Academic.Services@ed.ac.uk)

## Keywords

Exceptional Circumstances, Exceptional Circumstances Committee, Extension, Special Circumstances, Special Circumstances Committee,



# Exceptional Circumstances Policy

## 1. Principles

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure a fair and consistent response to students experiencing unexpected short-term circumstances which are exceptional for the individual student, beyond that student's control, and which could reasonably be expected to have had a significant adverse impact on the student's performance in an assessment, or resulted in non-attendance or a non-submission for a scheduled assessment.
- 1.2 Exceptional Circumstances are designed for emergencies and short-term circumstances. Circumstances acceptable under this policy must be exceptional (i.e. serious and unusual) relative to the normal daily challenges that academic study presents, and unpredictable in that the student could not reasonably have been expected either to avoid them, or to allow for them in planning the assessment work or preparation. For example, it is recognised that the assessment process itself can cause students to be more anxious or stressed than at other times of the academic year, and this should be considered to be one of the normal challenges that academic study presents. Except in a very small number of cases, where the impact is serious and incapacitating, this would not be considered as a valid exceptional circumstance.
- 1.3 Approval of any exceptional circumstances request is not automatic. The decision is at the discretion of the University.
- 1.4 If a student's circumstances are not covered by this policy, the University has a wide range of other options to help students to manage the challenges and demands of academic study. It is therefore important that students understand that using support is not a sign of weakness, rather it is a feature of academic success to access the support services in order to identify and develop successful strategies.
- 1.5 Students with a disability as defined by the Equality Act 2010 are expected to engage with the Disability and Learning Support Service (DLSS) in order to discuss where relevant adjustments may be made, and/or to develop coping strategies which will support them through their study; such arrangements are separate to this Policy (see section 6).
- 1.6 Students who do not have a disability but have known responsibilities or circumstances (e.g. caring responsibilities) that mean engagement with their studies may be impacted in other ways should speak with their Student Adviser in the first instance to discuss options.
- 1.7 Students who frequently apply for exceptional circumstances will be proactively contacted by their School or Deanery to offer support.
- 1.8 In the case of some professionally accredited programmes this Policy will extend to exceptional reasons for absence from classes where attendance is required in order to meet learning outcomes, e.g. practical, tutorial and clinical rotations in CMVM. These classes will be specifically identified by the School or Deanery and communicated to students at the start of the course.



# Exceptional Circumstances Policy

## 2. What would we consider an exceptional circumstance?

- i. Bereavement through the death of a close relative, partner or close personal friend.
- ii. For the student or a close relative (such as parent, child or spouse/partner) or a person who is dependent upon the student for their care:
  - Serious short-term illness or injury, including mental illness;
  - A long-term chronic health problem suddenly worsening;
  - A flare-up of a chronic health problem.
- iii. Victim of a crime whose impact upon a student is serious.
- iv. Disabilities for which reasonable adjustments are not yet in place and where the delay is not due to the student.
- v. Exceptional personal circumstances, e.g. events that result in a serious impact on a student's ability to engage with academic work during the assessment period in question; this includes unexpected changes to caring responsibilities.
- vi. For students in employment, an exceptional and significant change in their employment commitments, where this is beyond their control.
- vii. Other exceptional circumstances that have affected, or will affect the student's ability to meet a deadline or complete an assessment. Such circumstances will be considered on a case-by-case basis and may include jury service and military service.
- viii. Students taking part in elite level sporting events may be permitted to request extensions to coursework deadlines under the Performance Sport policy.

## 3. What would not be considered an exceptional circumstance?

- i. A long-term or chronic health condition (including mental ill-health) which has not worsened recently or for which the University has already made a reasonable adjustment;
- ii. A minor short-term illness or injury (e.g. a common cold), which would not reasonably have had a significant adverse impact on the student's performance in an assessment or ability to complete the assessment on time;
- iii. Circumstances which were foreseeable or preventable;
- iv. Holidays, including getting married, attendance at weddings, festivals and similar events;
- v. Loss of work not backed up, computer or printing problems;
- vi. Poor working practices such as:
  - a. Accidental submission of an incorrect document, wrong file type or a corrupted file;
  - b. claim of technical issues on behalf of the University with no proof of an error message/ system failure on a University system (e.g. Learn);
  - c. poor time management;
  - d. misunderstanding of the examination timetable or instructions on assessment deadlines.



# Exceptional Circumstances Policy

- vii. Deadlines for work or exams being set close together.

## 4. Requesting consideration of exceptional circumstances

4.1 It is the responsibility of students to submit their application for consideration of exceptional circumstances to the Exceptional Circumstances (EC) service using the online system:

- no earlier than 10 days before the submission deadline for the relevant assessment (including the date of an examination); and
- **(For coursework extensions)** no later than the submission deadline for the relevant coursework assessment; or
- **(For outcomes other than coursework extensions)** no later than the Exceptional Circumstances deadline for the relevant School published on the EC web pages for each Semester. Students must submit applications for coursework extensions before the submission deadline for the relevant assessment.

4.2 Students may submit requests earlier than 10 days prior to the assessment where an exceptional event is scheduled to take place e.g. medical procedure, jury service, court proceedings, that would reasonably be expected to result in more than one day's absence and cannot be rescheduled. Where a student anticipates an absence of more than a week, they should discuss this with their Student Adviser, rather than apply under this policy.

4.3 In their application, students should describe the circumstances, state when the circumstances affected them, and all assessments and courses affected. Students should ensure that they provide sufficient documentary evidence. It is advised that students consult their Student Adviser, Cohort Lead, or Student Support Team when completing their application. The EUSA Advice Place are available for support.

### *Late applications*

4.4 Deadlines for submission of Exceptional Circumstances are set in such a way as to allow ample time for students to submit their applications. The EC service will therefore only consider accepting submissions after the relevant School deadline where students provide an explanation for why they were unable to submit on time, with sufficient evidence to support this. No late applications will be considered after the final deadline for the relevant Semester published on the EC web pages.

## 5. Confidentiality

The University will treat the information provided by students as confidential in line with the University's Data Protection Policy, and will only share it with staff who have a legitimate need to access the information in order to consider the student's



# Exceptional Circumstances Policy

case or to provide students with support.

## 6. Students with Disabilities

6.1 The University supports students with long-term or chronic health conditions, including mental ill-health, if they are deemed to be disabled as defined by the Equality Act 2010, by putting in place a Schedule of Adjustments to provide reasonable adjustments to study and assessment support arrangements. Students are responsible for contacting the Disability and Learning Support Service (DLSS) to discuss the adjustments and support that they need.

6.2 Support and reasonable adjustments, including variable adjustments such as extensions for fluctuating conditions, should be approved as part of an agreed plan with the DLSS, and should not be accommodated using the Exceptional Circumstances Policy.

6.3 Students with disabilities can claim exceptional circumstances where adjustments have not been made in time for an assessment, and where the student can demonstrate that the delay is not their responsibility. Consideration of disability as an exceptional circumstance may also be appropriate where evidence is provided that the impact of a disability has unexpectedly worsened significantly (whether temporarily or permanently).

6.4 Students with disabilities are also able to use the Exceptional Circumstances process when they encounter circumstances other than their disability which meet the criteria within the policy.

## 7. What are the possible outcomes of applying for Exceptional Circumstances?

7.1 The University's EC service will decide whether or not an exceptional circumstances request is accepted.

7.2 Students submitting a self-certified coursework extension request will receive an extension to a coursework deadline in line with section 8 of this policy. Other accepted exceptional circumstances requests can have one or more of the outcomes set out in sections 11.6 and 11.7 of this policy.

7.3 In some cases, no further action will be taken in a case where applying one of the available outcomes would not be in a student's academic interest, e.g. where a student's performance in an assessment affected by exceptional circumstances is better than their average performance.



# Exceptional Circumstances Policy

## 8. Self-certification

Students can self-certify to request an extension to a coursework deadline under Exceptional Circumstances on a limited number of occasions, within defined criteria.

- a) Students should only submit self-certified requests that meet the criteria set out in Section 2 “What we would consider Exceptional Circumstances”.
- b) Extensions obtained through self-certification will be for three calendar days, except where:
  - i. The extension is being offered for a dissertation or research project, where an extension of seven calendar days will be offered; or
  - ii. the student is studying on a defined part-time programme, where an extension of seven calendar days will be offered.
- c) Self-certification can only be used for extension requests for in-course assessments.
- d) Students can self-certify up to three times within one academic year, including students with teaching over the summer (e.g. Taught Postgraduate Masters students).
- e) One request can cover more than one assessment where the submission deadlines for each assessment fall during the same three-day period.
- f) Self-certification can only be considered before the submission deadline for the relevant assessment. Any claims submitted after the relevant deadline, including after the conclusion of an examination must be accompanied by evidence.
- g) Students can only self-certify once for each assessment (you cannot self-certify for successive extensions on the same piece of work, for example).
- h) Falsification is a serious offence. If a student is suspected of submitting a fraudulent exceptional circumstances claim or evidence, this will be considered as a potential breach of the Code of Student Conduct.

## 9. Evidence

9.1 Where a student wishes to request an outcome other than a coursework extension, or they do not wish to use their self-certification entitlement for a coursework extension, they must submit satisfactory supporting evidence with their request.

9.2 Supporting evidence will normally be from a relevant professional, including staff at the University (e.g. Student Advisers, Wellbeing Advisers).

9.3 The evidence must give direct confirmation of the circumstances, from which it is possible to infer their effect on the student’s ability to engage with work in general, or assessment tasks in particular, made at the time of those circumstances or as soon as possible thereafter.



# Exceptional Circumstances Policy

9.4 Evidence should be provided in English, or accompanied by certified translations into English where appropriate. A request can be submitted in anticipation of the receipt of the supporting evidence.

9.5 The University understands that it can be distressing to be asked for 'evidence' in the case of very sensitive circumstances. We also understand that it can be very difficult to provide evidence of particularly traumatic events. If there are compelling reasons for it not being possible to provide evidence, the EC service will escalate to the Deputy Secretary, Students (or their delegate), who is authorised to use discretion to either suspend the need for formal evidence or accept alternative forms of evidence.

9.6 The required evidence is as follows:

- i. for bereavement:
  - no further evidence required.
- ii. for illness:
  - a signed and dated letter from a medical practitioner (GP, counsellor, therapist or clinical specialist) that states the dates when the illness affected the student and how the circumstances affected or are likely to affect the student's ability to prepare, submit or attend for an assessment or other event – should obtaining this be an issue, a student should contact their Student Adviser;
  - where the student has a chronic condition that is subject to flare-ups or a sudden worsening, a signed and dated letter from a medical practitioner (GP or clinical specialist) that states the nature of the condition and how flare-ups or a sudden worsening are likely to affect the student's ability to prepare, submit or attend for an assessment or other event. Once this evidence has been provided on the first occasion there is no need to obtain new evidence on subsequent occasions although the student will still need to submit a request on each occasion;
- iii. for a late diagnosis of a disability resulting in the need for reasonable adjustments, confirmation from Disability and Learning Support Service (DLSS) of the diagnosis and the date it was made and details of any delays to the implementation of the required reasonable adjustments;
- iv. For situations where the impact of a disability has unexpectedly worsened significantly, a signed and dated letter from the DLSS or a medical practitioner (GP or clinical specialist) confirming the impact upon the student's studies;
- v. for a student awaiting a diagnosis of an illness or condition for themselves or a close relative or dependent other:
  - a signed and dated letter from a medical practitioner (GP or clinical specialist) or from DLSS if the student is awaiting a diagnosis that a clinician or DLSS have arranged an assessment for, that states the



# Exceptional Circumstances Policy

dates when the student or patient attended for treatment, when tests were undertaken, and when a diagnosis is expected;

- vi. for accident or injury to the student:
  - a copy of an accident report provided by a police officer or other public official, or a signed and dated letter from a medical practitioner (GP or clinical specialist);
  - in all cases where a letter is provided it must state the dates when the accident or injury affected the student, the position and qualification(s) of the person providing the letter and their contact details;
- vii. For significant adverse personal or family circumstances being encountered by the student:
  - a signed and dated letter from one or more of the following: University staff member e.g. Student Counsellor, Student Adviser, Student Wellbeing Adviser, a medical practitioner (GP or clinical specialist), a social worker (stating their position with respect to the student), an officer of the law, a teacher outside the University;
    - the letter they provide must give their position and qualification(s) and their contact details and must provide information on the time when the circumstances occurred and whether they are continuing;
- viii. for students in employment, who have experienced an exceptional and significant change in their employment commitment, where this is beyond their control:
  - where they are in employment; a signed and dated letter from their employer, or their employer's authorised representative, stating that the student has been required by them to undertake work in the interests of the employer and, if relevant, that this was in time that had previously been agreed would be available for the student to study, prepare for assessment or other event, or take an assessment or attend another event
  - where they are self-employed; evidence from their client or the client's authorised representative stating that they have required the student to undertake unforeseen work that was necessary in the interests of the client's business, together with the dates and times when the student had been required to meet the client or undertake the previously unforeseen work;
- ix. for military service:
  - the individual's call-up papers (translated where necessary);
- x. for other exceptional circumstances:
  - official documentation relevant to the event which may include court or legal papers.

9.7 The following will not be accepted as evidence for exceptional circumstances:



# Exceptional Circumstances Policy

- i. self-certification of illness or medical circumstances outside of the agreed arrangements for self-certification (see above);
- ii. Written accounts from the student's family or friends, except where these provide additional information or context to support other provided evidence.

9.8 Where supporting evidence is provided it will be taken at face value. However, the University reserves the right to make follow-up enquiries to establish the authenticity of the documentation provided. If at any stage of an application it is suspected that the evidence put forward to support the application may have been dishonestly acquired or is itself dishonest, consideration of the application will be suspended and the matter referred for consideration as a potential breach of the Code of Student Conduct.

## 10. Exceptional Circumstances Committees (ECCs)

10.1 Each School or Deanery is responsible for having one or more Exceptional Circumstances Committees (ECCs) to consider appropriate outcomes in accepted exceptional circumstances cases and make recommendations to the relevant Board of Examiners.

10.2 Schools may set up one ECC per Board of Examiners or ECCs which cover a number of Boards of Examiners. The Board sets up an ECC as a sub-committee of the Board.

10.3 To be quorate, an ECC will consist of an academic Convener along with at least two other members of staff, one of whom must be a member of academic staff (and the other of whom can be a member of academic or professional services staff). Schools can include additional members (from among academic or professional services staff), but should seek to keep the membership as small as is consistent with robust decision-making, in order to avoid providing sensitive information about students to more people than is necessary.

10.4 If a Board of Examiners is very small and wishes to operate as its own ECC, this requires College approval. The Convener of the Board of Examiners may also convene the ECC but this is not a requirement.

10.5 ECCs will meet before the relevant Board of Examiners meetings take place. ECCs can also conduct business by correspondence where it is necessary to consider cases submitted after the scheduled ECC meeting, as long as all decisions are confirmed by a quorate membership (see above).

## 11. Process for consideration of applications



# Exceptional Circumstances Policy

## 11.1 Acceptance or rejection of exceptional circumstances requests

In relation to each request for consideration of exceptional circumstances, taking into account all information available to it, the EC Service determines:

- Whether there is sufficient evidence regarding the submitted circumstances and their impact on the student's performance in an assessment;
- Whether the submitted exceptional circumstances were exceptional for the individual student, whether they were beyond the student's control, and whether it is reasonable to conclude that they would have had a significant adverse impact upon the student's performance in an assessment, or resulted in non-attendance or a non-submission for a scheduled assessment;
- During what period the submitted exceptional circumstances were affecting the student's performance.

Based on their assessment, the EC Service will determine whether the application is accepted. Where the EC Service does not accept an application, they will inform the student of this, providing an explanation for their decision.

## 11.2 Determination of outcomes in accepted cases

### *Self-certification*

11.2.1 The EC service is empowered to offer extensions of 3 or 7 calendar days to students who meet the criteria for self-certification in section 8 of this policy.

### *All other cases*

11.2.2 For cases accepted based on supporting evidence, the EC service is also empowered to offer removal of penalties for late submission, in line with 11.6 c). The EC service can offer removal of penalties for late submission for assessments which are eligible for extensions (including Extra Time Adjustments offered in line with Schedules of Adjustments), provided the student submits by the final date that submission would be accepted by the relevant School (i.e. where a student had requested an Extra Time Adjustment, and had an additional, self-certified extension).

**11.3** Where an outcome not available to the EC service may be more appropriate in a case, the EC service will forward an accepted application for consideration by the relevant Exceptional Circumstances Committee(s) in the School(s) or Deaneries responsible for the course(s) to which the application relates. The decision by the EC service to accept an application is binding on an Exceptional Circumstances Committee (ECC).



# Exceptional Circumstances Policy

## 11.4 Exceptional Circumstances Committee (ECC) consideration

11.4.1 On receipt of an accepted exceptional circumstances request from the EC service, the ECC will consider all of the information relevant to the student's assessment, which may include information regarding the student's performance in the affected assessment(s) (including provisional marks, where available), and their performance in other assessments (as relevant).

11.4.2 The ECC will make a recommendation to the Board of Examiners regarding the appropriate action to take with regard to the affected assessments, courses, or programme. The ECC can either make a specific recommendation or recommend a range of options to the Board of Examiners. These recommendations are not binding on the Board of Examiners.

11.4.3 The ECC will provide a report of its recommendations to the relevant Board of Examiners through the EC online system.

## 11.5 Exceptional circumstances: general points about Board of Examiners decisions

In coming to a decision where exceptional circumstances are considered, Boards of Examiners should act in the best academic interest of the student.

## 11.6 Exceptional circumstances: decisions regarding course outcomes

Where a student's exceptional circumstances application has been accepted, the relevant Board of Examiners decides on one or more of the options set out in the table below, taking into account the recommendations of the ECC.

For certain categories of decision, the Board will need to seek approval for the action from the relevant College committee. Where this is necessary, this is indicated below.

Action	College approval required?
a) No action – the actions available would not be in a student's best academic interest	No
b) No action at course level; flag for consideration in relation to progression or award decision	No
c) Disregard penalties for late submission of coursework	No
d) Disregard missing or unreliable component(s) and derive overall mark/grade from completed work (see 12.7.1)	No
e) Record the course as a 'null sit', with the option of allowing the student to be examined at a subsequent diet, and / or to submit missing assessment and / or repeat some or all assessments, on a first sit basis	No
f) In exceptional cases, permit the student to resubmit a revised dissertation for a postgraduate Masters programme	Yes



# Exceptional Circumstances Policy

g) In exceptional cases, permit the student to take specially prepared alternative assessments, including oral assessment	No
h) If course result is borderline (within 2 percentage points of the pass mark), award pass	No

11.6.1 Where marks/grades for specific components of assessment are missing or deemed unreliable, a Board of Examiners can only derive an overall mark/grade for the course from the existing assessed work if it is satisfied that there is sufficient evidence of attainment of the Learning Outcomes in other components of the course.

11.6.2 Boards of Examiners cannot adjust marks / grades as a consequence of exceptional circumstances.

12.6.3 Where a Board of Examiners applies one or more of the outcomes above at course level, it need not refer the case for further consideration at programme or award level, unless it is not satisfied that the action taken at course level is adequate mitigation for the impact of the student's circumstances.

## 11.7 Exceptional circumstances: decisions regarding progression and award

Where a student's exceptional circumstances application has been accepted, the relevant Board of Examiners decides on one or more of the options set out in the table below, taking into account the recommendations of the ECC.

For certain categories of decision, the Board will need to seek approval for the action from the relevant College committee. For very exceptional actions, the relevant College committee would need to seek approval for the action from the Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC) via a concession.

Action	College or APRC approval required?
a) No further action – the actions available would not be in a student's best academic interest	No
b) Where a mark for a course is missing or deemed unreliable, exclude the affected course(s) from the relevant calculation for the award of credit on aggregate; progression; award of degree; degree classification (including the award of PGT Merit and Distinction)	No
c) Exceptionally, allow a student to graduate without the required number and / or level of credits for the degree	Yes

11.7.1 Irrespective of any action taken with regard to exceptional circumstances, Honours and Postgraduate Taught students may also be awarded credit on aggregate for failed courses as normal, in line with Taught Assessment Regulations 52 (Honours students) and 56 (Postgraduate Taught students).



# Exceptional Circumstances Policy

11.7.2 Where a course result is excluded from a programme-level calculation under 11.7 b), Boards of Examiners may adjust other criteria for award, or for the award of credit on aggregate accordingly. For example, where a Postgraduate Taught student would normally require an overall average of 50% or more across 120 taught credits, with at least 80 credits at a minimum of 50%, in order to progress to the research project or dissertation, but 20 credits have been excluded from the calculation due to exceptional circumstances, the student may be permitted to progress with an average of 50% or more across the remaining 100 taught credits, and at least 70 credits at a minimum of 50%. Boards must also consider students who are borderline for progression purposes in line with Taught Assessment Regulation 44.

11.7.3 For decisions regarding aegrotat degrees and posthumous degrees, see the relevant Undergraduate and Postgraduate Degree Regulations.

## **12. Notifying students of the outcomes of requests for consideration of exceptional circumstances**

The EC service will notify students of the decision regarding whether or not their exceptional circumstances application has been accepted using the online system within five working days. The School or Deanery will notify students of any action taken by the Board of Examiners in relation to their exceptional circumstances application using the online system no later than five working days after the publication of ratified marks as noted in the University Key Dates. The School or Deanery will also inform the student's Student Adviser of the decision.

## **13 Appeal**

Students have the right to appeal a decision by the EC service not to accept an application, or an outcome decision made either by the EC service or their Board of Examiners under the Student Appeal Regulations.

## **14. Reporting and maintaining records on requests for consideration of Exceptional Circumstances**

14.1 Where the EC service decides not to accept a request for consideration of exceptional circumstances, the service will record the reason for this decision in the relevant online system.

14.2 The School or Deanery will minute ECC meetings (including meetings conducted by correspondence), recording all decisions and recommendations in the relevant online system. The ECC will report its decisions and recommendations to the Board of Examiners in as concise a form as is consistent with clarity and the student's interest, where possible maintaining the anonymity of the student.

14.3 The EC service and the School or Deanery will maintain records in line with Data Protection guidelines.



# Exceptional Circumstances Policy

## 15. Sources of further guidance

Further guidance for students regarding the exceptional circumstances process is available at: [www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/students/assessment/exceptional-circumstances](http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/students/assessment/exceptional-circumstances)

Edinburgh University Students' Association provides further guidance to students regarding exceptional circumstances, and the Students' Association Advice Place can provide independent advice to students regarding the preparation of their requests for consideration of exceptional circumstances.

[www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/adviceplace/academic/exceptional-circumstances](http://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/adviceplace/academic/exceptional-circumstances)

In order to support consistency of handling of student requests for consideration of exceptional circumstances, Colleges, Schools and Deaneries must not produce their own supplementary guidance.

**Insert latest date approved/amended**

DRAFT

## Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee

25 January 2024

### Academic Year Dates 2025/26 and Provisional Academic Year Dates 2026/2027

#### Description of paper

1. This paper requests Committee approval for the academic year dates for 2025/26, which were approved as provisional dates at the 26 January 2023 meeting of APRC. The paper also requests Committee approval to amend the provisional academic year dates for 2026/2027.
2. This paper also lists the programmes with non-standard academic year dates. College Committee representatives are asked to check if this information is still correct at the time of the meeting (January 2024). This information is also available on the University website:  
[www.ed.ac.uk/semester-dates/programmes-with-non-standard-academic-years](http://www.ed.ac.uk/semester-dates/programmes-with-non-standard-academic-years)

#### Action requested / recommendation

3. The Committee is invited to approve the proposed academic year dates 2024/25 provided in Appendix 1.
4. The Committee is invited to approve the revised provisional academic year dates 2026/27 provided in Appendix 1.
5. College Committee representatives are invited to review the list of programmes with non-standard academic year dates provided in Appendix 2 to confirm its accuracy.

#### Background and context

6. This is an annual paper to approve final and provisional academic year dates. The academic year dates are drafted following the academic structure approved by Senate and published at [Academic year structure](#).
7. The academic year dates for 2025/26 were approved as provisional dates at the 26 January 2023 meeting of APRC. No issues have been raised in relation to these provisional dates. The Committee is therefore invited to approve these as the academic year dates for 2025/26.
8. APRC received the provisional dates for 2026/27 at its January 2023 meeting. ResLife confirmed that the 2026/27 provisional dates presented in January 2023 would not allow sufficient time to prepare for Induction in the week commencing 7 September 2026, following the end of the Edinburgh Festival. Revised dates, with Induction taking place in the week commencing 14 September 2026, were presented to the Committee in June 2023.

9. As a consequence of the later Induction Week required for 2026/27, and due to the scheduling constraints associated with the December exam diet, the revised dates presented in June 2023 proposed that the revision period for December 2026 be reduced to two days. The Committee agreed that two days would be insufficient time for the revision period. The proposed dates, including the revised start date for Induction Week, were not approved by the Committee.
10. The December exam period requires a minimum of 11 sessions be allocated to the December exam diet (including Saturdays) and that the diet conclude by 21 December. The exam diet usually takes place over 11 days, each day with a single exam session. Some years it has taken place over fewer than 11 days, with one or two days having two exam sessions. The timing of Induction for 2026/27 presents challenges for scheduling the December 2026 exam diet.

### **Discussion**

11. The academic year dates for 2023/24 presented similar challenges to the dates for 2026/27 due to the timing of Induction week, which compressed the exam diet into 10 days. At its last meeting in September 2023, the Committee agreed to introduce a second exam session to one or two days of the December 2023 exam diet to ensure the diet could be scheduled without use of the designated revision week. A full review of the delivery of exams is currently on-going to ensure the Exams Service is fit for purpose for the future – this will include a review of the December diet and will include analysis on the impact (staff and students) of the compressed diet and reintroduction of two session days.
12. The dates for the exam diets presented in these provisional dates for 2026/27 may still change following the outcomes of the current review of the exams service. Following the advice from ResLife there is, however, more certainty regarding the need to schedule Induction for the week commencing 14 September 2026. The current provisional dates published for 2026/27 indicate that Induction is scheduled for the week commencing 7 September 2026: [Academic year 2026/27 | The University of Edinburgh](#). The Committee is therefore invited to approve the revised provisional dates 2026/27 as in Appendix 1, which state that Induction will take place the week commencing 14 September 2026. If these were to be approved, a request would be made to update the provisional dates published on the University website.

### **Resource implications**

13. No resource implications.

### **Risk management**

14. No key risks associated with this paper.

### **Equality and diversity**

15. Equality and diversity issues, including the risks to specific student groups, will be considered once a final proposal for the duration of the revision and exam diet for 2026/27 is presented. No equality impact assessment is required.

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

16. The information will be conveyed to Communications and Marketing who will reformat and formally publish this at [www.ed.ac.uk/semester](http://www.ed.ac.uk/semester) dates.

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January 2024

**Presenter**

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**Freedom of Information Open**

## Appendix 1: Proposed Academic Year Dates 2025/26 and Provisional Academic Year Dates 2026/2027

### Academic Year Dates 2025/26

Week	Week commencing	Activity
1	8 September 2025	Induction
2	15 September 2025	T1
3	22 September 2025	T2
4	29 September 2025	T3
5	6 October 2025	T4
6	13 October 2025	T5
7	20 October 2025	T6
8	27 October 2025	T7
9	3 November 2025	T8
10	10 November 2025	T9
11	17 November 2025	T10
12	24 November 2025	T11
13	1 December 2025	Revision
14	8 December 2025	Exams
15	15 December 2025	Exams
16	22 December 2025	Winter vac 1
17	29 December 2025	Winter vac 2
18	5 January 2026	Winter vac 3
19	12 January 2026	T1
20	19 January 2026	T2
21	26 January 2026	T3
22	2 February 2026	T4
23	9 February 2026	T5
24	16 February 2026	Flexible Learning Week
25	23 February 2026	T6
26	2 March 2026	T7
27	9 March 2026	T8
28	16 March 2026	T9
29	23 March 2026	T10
30	30 March 2026	T11
31	6 April 2026	Spring vac 1
32	13 April 2026	Spring vac 2
33	20 April 2026	Revision
34	27 April 2026	Exams
35	4 May 2026	Exams
36	11 May 2026	Exams
37	18 May 2026	Exams
38	25 May 2026	Summer vac 1
39	1 June 2026	Summer vac 2
40	8 June 2026	Summer vac 3
41	15 June 2026	Summer vac 4
42	22 June 2026	Summer vac 5

43	29 June 2026	Summer vac 6
44	06 July 2026	Summer vac 7
45	13 July 2026	Summer vac 8
46	20 July 2026	Summer vac 9
47	27 July 2026	Summer vac 10
48	03 August 2026	Summer vac 11
49	10 August 2026	Summer vac 12
50	17 August 2026	Summer vac 13
51	24 August 2026	Summer vac 14
52	31 August 2026	Summer vac 15

### Provisional Academic Year Dates 2026/2027

Week	Week commencing	Activity
1	14 September 2026	Induction
2	21 September 2026	T1
3	28 September 2026	T2
4	5 October 2026	T3
5	12 October 2026	T4
6	19 October 2026	T5
7	26 October 2026	T6
8	2 November 2026	T7
9	9 November 2026	T8
10	16 November 2026	T9
11	23 November 2026	T10
12	30 November 2026	T11
13	7 December 2026	Revision/Exams
14	14 December 2026	Exams
15	21 December 2026	Exams/Winter vac 1
16	28 December 2026	Winter vac 2
17	4 January 2027	Winter vac 3
18	11 January 2027	T1
19	18 January 2027	T2
20	25 January 2027	T3
21	1 February 2027	T4
22	8 February 2027	T5
23	15 February 2027	Flexible Learning Week
24	22 February 2027	T6
25	1 March 2027	T7
26	8 March 2027	T8
27	15 March 2027	T9
28	22 March 2027	T10
29	29 March 2027	T11
30	5 April 2027	Spring vac 1
31	12 April 2027	Spring vac 2
32	19 April 2027	Revision
33	26 April 2027	Exams
34	3 May 2027	Exams
35	10 May 2027	Exams

36	17 May 2027	Exams
37	24 May 2027	Summer vac 1
38	31 May 2027	Summer vac 2
39	07 June 2027	Summer vac 3
40	14 June 2027	Summer vac 4
41	21 June 2027	Summer vac 5
42	28 June 2027	Summer vac 6
43	5 July 2027	Summer vac 7
44	12 July 2027	Summer vac 8
45	19 July 2027	Summer vac 9
46	26 July 2027	Summer vac 10
47	2 August 2027	Summer vac 11
48	9 August 2027	Summer vac 12
49	16 August 2027	Summer vac 13
50	23 August 2027	Summer vac 14
51	30 August 2027	Summer vac 15
52	6 September 2027	Summer vac 16

### Additional notes 2026/27 - to be incorporated on the University website

#### Semester 1

Date	Event
14 September 2026	<a href="#">Welcome Week</a>
21 September 2026	Semester 1 starts / Teaching block 1 starts
23 October 2026	Teaching block 1 ends
26 October 2026	Teaching block 2 starts
To be confirmed	<a href="#">Graduations</a>
4 December 2026	Teaching block 2 ends
To be confirmed	Revision
To be confirmed	<a href="#">Examinations</a>
21 December 2026	Semester 1 ends
22 December 2026	Winter teaching vacation starts
To be confirmed	University closed
10 January 2027	Winter teaching vacation ends

#### Semester 2

Date	Event
6-8 January 2027	<a href="#">January Welcome</a>
11 January 2027	Semester 2 starts / Teaching block 3 starts
12 February 2027	Teaching block 3 ends
15-19 February 2027	Flexible Learning Week
22 February 2027	Teaching block 4 starts

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
2 April 2027	Teaching block 4 ends
5-16 April 2027	Spring teaching vacation
19-23 April 2027	Revision
26 April - 22 May 2027	<a href="#">Examinations</a>
22 May 2027	Semester 2 ends
24 May 2027	Summer teaching vacation starts
To be confirmed	<a href="#">Graduations</a>
To be confirmed	<a href="#">Resit examinations</a>

## Appendix 2. Programmes with Non-Standard Academic Years

This information is also available on the University website:

[www.ed.ac.uk/semester-dates/programmes-with-non-standard-academic-years](http://www.ed.ac.uk/semester-dates/programmes-with-non-standard-academic-years)

### **College of Arts, Humanities and Social Science**

#### **Business School**

- Business Administration, Master of (MBA) (Full-time)
- Business Administration with International Exchange, Master of (MBA) (Full-time)
- Executive Master of Business Administration (MBA)

#### **Centre for Open Learning**

- Access Programme
- International Foundation Programme

#### **School of Economics**

Postgraduate

- Mathematical Economics and Econometrics (MSc)

#### **Edinburgh College of Art**

Postgraduate

- European Master's in Landscape Architecture (European Masters)
- Urban Strategies and Design (MSc)

#### **The Moray House School of Education**

Undergraduate

- Community Education (BA Hons) (Full-time)
- Primary Education with Gaelic (Fluent) MA (Hons)
- Primary Education with Gaelic (Learners) MA (Hons)
- Primary Education with Earth Sciences MA (Hons)
- Primary Education with History MA (Hons)
- Primary Education with Mathematics MA (Hons)
- Primary Education with Modern Languages (German) MA (Hons)
- Primary Education with Religious Studies MA (Hons)
- Primary Education with Scottish Studies MA (Hons)
- Physical Education MA (Hons)

Postgraduate

- Dance Science and Education (MSc)
- Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (Primary) (PGDE)
- Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (Secondary) (PGDE)
- Outdoor Education (MSc)
- Outdoor Environmental Education (MSc)
- Transformative Learning and Teaching (MSc)

Online learning

- Digital Education (Online Learning) (MSc/PgDip/PgCert)
- Social Justice and Community Action (Online Learning) (MSc/PgDip/PgCert)

**School of Law**

Professional development

- Diploma in Professional Legal Practice

**School of Health in Social Science**

Undergraduate

- Nursing Studies BN (Hons)

Postgraduate

- Applied Psychology for Children and Young People (MSc)
- Clinical Psychology (DClinPsychol)
- Counselling Studies (PgCert)
- Counselling (PgDip)
- Interpersonal Dialogue (MCouns)
- Nursing (MN)
- Psychological Therapies (MSc)
- Psychotherapy and Counselling (DPsychotherapy)

**School of Social and Political Science**

Undergraduate

- Social Work (BSc Hons)

**College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine**

**Edinburgh Medical School: Medical Education**

Undergraduate

- MBChB Medicine (6 year programme)

Postgraduate online learning

- Clinical Education (Online Learning) (MSc)
- Simulation Based Clinical Education (Online Learning) (PG Cert)

**Edinburgh Medical School: Biomedical Sciences**

Undergraduate

- Biomedical Laboratory Science (Professional Practice) (Part-time) (BSc)

Postgraduate

- MScR in Biomedical Sciences (Life Sciences)
- MScR in Integrative Neuroscience

## Postgraduate online learning

- Anatomical Sciences (Online Learning) (PgDip)
- Biodiversity, Wildlife and Ecosystem Health (Online Learning) (MSc)
- Cancer Biology and Precision Oncology (MSc) (Online Learning)
- Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (Online Learning) (MSc)
- Global Health and Infectious Diseases (Online Learning) (MSc)
- Global Health Studies (Online Learning) (PgCert)
- International Animal Health (Online Learning) (MSc)
- Science Communication and Public Engagement (Online Learning) (MSc)

**Edinburgh Medical School: Deanery of Clinical Sciences**

## Undergraduate

- Oral Health Sciences

## Postgraduate

- Endodontology (DClinDent)
- Orthodontics Dentistry (DClinDent)
- Paediatric Dentistry (DClinDent)
- Prosthodontics Dentistry (DClinDent)

## Postgraduate online learning

- Applied Medical Image Analysis (Online Learning) (PG Cert)
- Clinical Management of Pain (Online Learning) (MSc)
- Clinical Ophthalmology (Online Learning) (ChM)
- Critical Care (Online Learning) (MSc)
- General Surgery (Online Learning) (ChM)
- Imaging (Online Learning) (MSc)
- Internal Medicine (Online Learning) (MSc)
- Neuroimaging for Research (Online Learning) (MSc)
- Paediatric Emergency Medicine (Online Learning) (MSc)
- Patient Safety and Clinical Human Factors (Online Learning) (MSc)
- PET-MR Principles and Applications (Online Learning) (PG Cert)
- Primary Care Ophthalmology (Online Learning) (MSc)
- Restorative Dentistry (Online Learning) (MSc)
- Stem Cells and Translational Neurology (Online Learning) (MSc)
- Surgical Sciences (Online Learning) (MSc)
- Surgical Writing and Evidence Based Practice (Online Learning) (PG Cert)
- Trauma and Orthopaedics (Online Learning) (ChM)
- Urology (Online Learning) (ChM)
- Vascular and Endovascular Surgery (Online Learning) (ChM)

### **Edinburgh Medical School: Deanery of Molecular, Genetic and Population Health Sciences**

#### Postgraduate online learning

- Clinical Trials (Online Learning) (MSc)
- Data Science, Health and Social Care (Online Learning) (MSc)
- Epidemiology (Online Learning) (MSc)
- Family Medicine (Online Learning) (FMF)
- Global Health Challenges (Online Learning) (PgCert)
- Public Health (Online Learning) (MPH Full-time and Part-time)

### **Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies**

#### Undergraduate

- BVM&S Veterinary Medicine (5 year programme)
- BVM&S Veterinary Medicine (Graduate Entry Programme – 4 year programme)

#### Postgraduate online learning

- Advanced Clinical Practice (Online Learning) (MVetSci)
- Advanced Veterinary Practice (Online Learning) (RCVS Certificate)
- Applied Conservation Genetics with Wildlife Forensics (Online Learning) (MSc)
- Applied Poultry Science (Online Learning) (MSc)
- Clinical Animal Behaviour (Online Learning) (MSc)
- Conservation Medicine (Online Learning) (MVetSci)
- Equine Science (Online Learning) (MSc)
- Food Safety (Online Learning) (MSc)
- Global Food Security and Nutrition (Online Learning) (MSc)
- International Animal Welfare, Ethics and Law (Online Learning) (MSc)
- One Health (Online Learning) (MSc)
- Veterinary Anaesthesia and Analgesia (Online Learning) (MSc)
- Veterinary Epidemiology (Online Learning) (MSc)

### **College of Science and Engineering**

#### **College of Science & Engineering**

#### Postgraduate online learning

- Data Science, Technology and Innovation (Online Learning) (MSc, PGDip, PgCert)

**Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee**

**25 January 2024**

**Committee Priorities – Mid-Year Reflection**

**Description of paper**

1. The paper asks the Committee to reflect mid-year on progress with committee priorities. The outcomes of the discussion will be included in the next update on standing committee business to Senate in February and will inform the Committee's work on the priorities for the remainder of the academic year.

**Action requested / recommendation**

2. The Committee is asked to **comment** on progress with the committee priorities for 2023/24 in order to inform area(s) of focus and/or actions/outcomes for the remainder of the academic year as appropriate.

**Background and context**

3. The Committee identified its priorities for the next academic year in March 2023 and these were presented to Senate in May and October 2023 as part of the Annual Report of the Senate Standing Committees.
4. Senate discussed the Annual Report in October 2023 but the paper was not approved (Senate did not approve the paper by a vote of 51%). The Senate Standing Orders require the standing committees to **report** to Senate on an annual basis on action taken under powers delegated to them by Senate.
5. Senate has indicated a preference for more information on standing committee business, including most recently during the discussion at the October 2023 meeting on the Annual Report. This paper aims to provide Senate with more information as the outcomes of the discussion will be included in the next update on standing committee business which will be presented to the February 2024 meeting. It is also anticipated that this paper and resulting discussion will help the development of the next Annual Report.

***Committee priorities 2024/25***

6. A paper will be presented for discussion at the March meeting of the Committee. In order to support the discussion and to provide more information for Senate, enhancements to the previous process will include: increased time at the meeting for the discussion; outlining the rationale and how priorities fit with the remit of the committee; providing information on the anticipated area(s) of focus and/or actions/outcomes; and identification of where a priority is related to a regulatory/external requirement.

## Discussion

### **Committee priorities 2023/24**

#### ***Policy and regulatory arrangements for the Curriculum Transformation Programme***

7. The Models of Degree Types, Framework for Curricula, and the Degree Programme Specification Guidance will need to be reviewed as part of the Curriculum Transformation Programme. These frameworks and guidance are due for review in 2023/24 as agreed in the updated schedule of review of policies, regulations and guidance approved by the Committee in March 2023, and are expected to be submitted to the Committee for approval in Spring 2024.

#### ***Strands of work relating to the Assessment and Feedback Guidance, Procedures, Data, Systems and Evaluation Group (particularly in relation to academic policy and regulation)***

8. The Committee has not received work or updates so far in 2023/24 in relation to the Assessment and Feedback Guidance, Procedures, Data, Systems and Evaluation Group.

#### ***Ongoing work around Coursework Extensions and Special Circumstances***

9. At its July 2023 meeting, the Committee considered but did not approve the implementation of a draft Exceptional Circumstances policy, which was designed to replace the existing policy and regulations relating to Special Circumstances and coursework extensions. However, the Committee agreed that it would be desirable for the draft policy to return for further consideration during 2023/24. The Committee will receive, for comment, an updated draft of a proposed policy, and an update on systems and process changes required to implement such a policy, at its January 2024 meeting. We anticipate that a final policy will be submitted to the Committee for approval at the March 2024 meeting.

#### ***Receive policies for approval in line with agreed updated schedule of review of policies, regulations and guidance***

10. Academic Services, and other stakeholders and policy owners, are conducting consultations with relevant stakeholders to revise the policies and guidance as set out in the updated schedule approved by the Committee in March 2023. The policies and guidance under the remit of APRC which are due for review in 2023/24 include:
  - Special Circumstances Policy
  - Handbook for Boards of Examiners for Taught Courses and Programmes
  - Student Maternity and Family Leave Policy
  - PhD by Integrated Study Guidance
  - Performance Sport Policy
11. The Student Appeal Regulations and the Work-Based and Placement Learning Policy had not been noted for review in 2023/24 in the schedule, but have now

been prioritised for review, and will be presented to the Committee for approval in 2023/24.

12. Following the standard annual schedule for the consultation and review of regulations, the Committee will also receive, for approval, updates to the following regulations:
  - Undergraduate Degree Programme Regulations (due March 2024)
  - Postgraduate Degree Programme Regulations (due March 2024)
  - Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees (due May 2024)
  - Taught Assessment Regulations (due May 2024)
13. The following frameworks and guidance are also due for review in 2023/24 (as noted above cf.7) as part of the Curriculum Transformation Programme and are expected to come to APRC:
  - Models of Degree Types
  - Framework for Curricula
  - Degree Programme Specification Guidance

#### **Resource implications**

14. This paper does not propose any actions. The resource implications of any actions which arise from the discussion would need to be outlined and considered.

#### **Risk management**

15. Progress against 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**

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

#### **Equality & diversity**

17. This paper does not propose any actions. The equality and diversity implications any actions which arise from the discussion would need to be outlined and considered.

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

18. The outcomes of the discussion will be reported to Senate in February 2024 as part of the update on standing committee business. Additionally, the Senate Committees' Newsletter provides information on standing committee business.

H/02/27/02

# APRC 23/24 5D

**Author**

Academic Services  
January 2024

**Presenter**

Prof Patrick Hadoke  
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Director of Postgraduate Research and Early  
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**Freedom of Information *Open***