

Meeting of the Senatus Researcher Experience Committee  
to be held on 29 September 2015 at 2.00 pm  
in the Board Room, Chancellor's Building, Little France

## A G E N D A

- 1 **Minutes of the previous meeting** Enclosed
- 2 **Matters Arising**
  - 2.1 Electronic business:
    - 2.1.1. Higher Degree
    - 2.1.2 Regulatory Standards for Format and Binding of Thesis
  - 2.2 Collaborative Provision Group update
- 3 **Convener's Communications**
  - 3.1 Times Higher Education awards

### FOR DISCUSSION

- 4 **Space Enhancement Management Group: postgraduate research space pilot**
- 5 **Postgraduate Research Experience Project (1.1, 1.2\*)**
  - 5.1 Online Annual Progression Monitoring system REC 15/16 1A
- 6 **Postgraduate Degree Regulations: Leave of Absence** REC 15/16 1B
- 7 **Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) results 2015 (1.2\*)** REC 15/16 1C  
**Closed**  
[Student Experience Surveys wiki](#) (EASE log in required)
- 8 **Programme Handbooks** REC 15/16 1D
- 9 **Associated Institutions**

### FOR INFORMATION

- 10 **Research Policy Group update**
- 11 **Early Career Researcher Support: career development (1.3\*)**
- 12 **PhD Study: What should an Edinburgh PhD be? (1.2\*)**
- 13 **Task Group: Distance PhD (1.2\*, 1.4\*)** REC 15/16 1H
- 14 **Enhancement Themes**
- 15 **Consumer Protection Law**
- 16 **Edinburgh University Students Association Vice President Academic Affairs: priorities** REC 15/16 1E
- 17 **Committee Priorities for 2015/16, Terms of Reference and Membership (1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4\*)** REC 15/16 1F

H/02/26/02  
REC: 29.09.15

- 18 **Committee Terms of Reference and Membership** (1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4\*)  
[REC Terms of Reference](#)  
[REC Vision and Strategy](#)  
[REC Membership](#)  
[Senate Committee Members' Handbook](#)
  
- 19 **Authoring Senate Committee papers** (updated paper) REC 15/16 1G  
[Senate Committee Coversheet and Guidance](#)
  
- 20 **Any Other Business**  
19.1 Conference and event attendance/forthcoming events  
19.2 Recruitment strategy
  
- 21 **Date of next meeting – change of venue:**  
Tuesday 8 December 2015: Room 7.01, Dugald Stewart Building, 3 Charles Street – all meeting dates are published online at:  
<http://edin.ac/1q8lkcA>

\* *Relevance to [REC Vision and Strategy](#)*

Susan Hunter  
Academic Services  
22 September 2015

REC: 29.09.15

H/02/26/02

**REC 15/16 1A**

The University of Edinburgh

Senatus Researcher Experience Committee

29 September 2015

## Online Annual Review Form – Progress Report

### **Executive Summary**

Paper describes the project with the online annual review form and the rollout events which happened over the summer

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

University Strategic Theme: Outstanding Student Experience. Committee priority: Enhance annual progression review process.

### **Action requested**

For Information

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

None Required

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

1. **Resource implications (including staffing)**  
None
2. **Risk assessment**  
Not included
3. **Equality and Diversity**  
N/A
4. **Freedom of information**  
*The paper is open*

### **Key words**

### **Originator of the paper**

Ruth McCallum – Senior Business Analyst – System Systems Partnership – 16/9/15

## Online Annual Review Form - Progress Update

### Go Live

The online annual review form went live on EUCLID on 28/7/15.

### Training and Help

Online Training and Support from Student Systems for the process is available at the following location

[http://www.studentsystems.ed.ac.uk/staff/user\\_guides/pgr\\_annual\\_review/index.htm](http://www.studentsystems.ed.ac.uk/staff/user_guides/pgr_annual_review/index.htm)

Schools themselves are able to develop their own online help for students and staffs which can be linked into Student Self Service,

### Information Sessions

Individual Sessions were held during July and early August with all schools attended by PGR administration staff and in some case postgraduate directors. These sessions ran through the functionality, process and the data set-up required to get the process started.

This also included information about which staff need to be set-up in which role to be able to be involved in the sign-off processes.

An information session was also held with the IAD staff taking over from Louisa Lawes.

Roadshow sessions were held at the four campuses.

- Central
- Kings Building
- Little France
- Easter Bush

The sessions covered

- Reason for the changes
- Reason for priority of the work
- Overlap with PREP project.
- Demonstration of the software
- Q and A sessions.

The main people attending these sessions were academics acting in both supervision and sign-off roles.

The first three sessions were well received. Following discussion arising at the fourth session, where the School felt that it had strong processes already and what had been introduced was only replacing the administration part of their process, work is being done to resolve this issue which will ideally involve merging the two processes together.

### Timing

Schools were advised that the expectation was that the form would be used instead of the paper form for reviews from September 2015. So a student with a start date of 1/9/15 would have one scheduled for 1/5/16.

Ad-Hoc annual reviews can be scheduled through the EUCLID Student Hub at any point.

REC: 29.09.15

H/02/26/02

# REC 15/16 1B

The University of Edinburgh

Senatus Researcher Experience Committee

29 September 2015

## **Postgraduate Degree Regulations: Leave of Absence**

### **Executive Summary**

Following the 2015 annual regulations review, Academic Services was tasked with providing information to facilitate discussion on the leave of absence Postgraduate Degree Regulation for the 2016 annual review. Desk-based benchmarking with Russell Group institutions was carried out and information on compliance requirements for Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) returns and UK Border Agency (UKBA) implications was sought from Student Systems and Student Administration. The Curriculum and Student Progression Committee approves the degree regulations and seeks input from REC on the postgraduate research perspective. The paper outlines themes for discussion by REC, to assist Academic Services to develop proposals for amendments to the relevant regulation.

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

Excellence in Education, Outstanding Student Experience

### **Action requested**

REC is invited to discuss and provide a steer on issues raised (see questions on page 4).

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

Outcomes from discussion will input to the annual regulations review. Communication of resulting policy will be through Academic Services annual communication on updated and new regulations, policies and guidance in June 2016.

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

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

No resources implications are identified as the paper provides themes for discussion only.

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

No risk assessment is included in the paper, however there may be compliance risk associated with how student attendance or absence is recorded (see Compliance on page 3).

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

None identified at this stage, however further consideration of equality and diversity implications will need to be considered when formulating policy.

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

The paper is **open**

### **Key words**

#### **Originator of the paper**

Susan Hunter, Academic Policy Officer  
Academic Services  
31 August 2015

## Postgraduate Degree Regulations: Leave of Absence

### Introduction

The Postgraduate Degree Regulations apply to all categories of postgraduate study at the University of Edinburgh, except for those qualified by a Senatus approved Memorandum of Agreement for joint or collaborative awards. Students must also comply with any requirements specific to their degree programme as set out in the Degree Programme Tables, the relevant College Regulations and the University's Assessment Regulations for the current academic session.

During the 2015 regulations review, the review panel, REC and CSPC debated the wording for the leave of absence regulation. It was considered problematic to define leave of absence particularly in relation to postgraduate research study and in particular to define circumstances in which a leave of absence is appropriate rather than an interruption of study, and to define the relationship between leave of absence and location of study.

### University regulation on leave of absence

Current wording of the leave of absence regulation:

#### ***Leave of Absence***

*29. For students not on distance learning programmes, leave from attendance and participation is permitted to undertake study, research or other activities outside their programme of study, that enhance the student's career or study. It requires College approval after consideration of an application by the student's, personal tutor, supervisor or programme director. The College will define how all absences will be approved and recorded.*

#### [Postgraduate Degree Regulations 2015-16](#)

REC raised two points in relation to the current wording at the last review:

1. The current wording is commonly misunderstood by supervisors and students who think they don't need to tell anyone if the student goes somewhere else in connection with their project. This has implications for example for visa issues, health and safety, and compliance.
2. The current wording does not work well for students studying away from Edinburgh (for example distance/flexible PhDs). REC proposed a change to clarify that the normal location of study may not be in Edinburgh, while requiring notification/permission for any change in location, wherever the "normal" place of study might be.

## University guidance on interruption of study

Current University guidance on interruptions of study for postgraduate research students says:

### **Authorised interruption of study**

*An interruption of study concession is applicable where a student is **unable to work** on the thesis for a significant period of time due to circumstances that are largely beyond their own control. Periods of interruption do not count towards the student's total permitted period of study.*

*These circumstances can include, amongst others,*

- *Medical and health problems*
- *Personal and family problems*
- *Bereavement*
- *Problems experienced because of deficiencies in the provision of supervision or facilities*
- **Registration for another degree, diploma or professional qualification**
- **Undertaking distinct time-limited specialised training that would be beneficial to the student's project or generic skills training**
- **Undertaking distinct time-limited employment that would be beneficial to the student's project or generic skills training**

*Interruptions are not appropriate where the student is able to work on the thesis but is not progressing at the expected rate where the reasons are foreseeable or to allow a student to undertake long- term periods of paid employment. In addition interruptions are not available to permit students to take extended annual holiday leave or to effectively extend the period available to the student to complete their thesis.*

### [Authorised interruption of study or extension of study – Postgraduate Research](#)

## Compliance

The University must operate within a framework of compliance with various external agencies.

- Statistical reporting to HESA is mandatory and includes, for example, students who are interrupted.
- Funding body requirements must be complied with.
- The University must also comply with visa and immigration requirements.

Therefore, for all students both taught and research, the University needs to record whether students are actively studying, where they are and what they are doing.

The University's Risk Policy and Risk Appetite states; "The University places great importance on compliance, and has no appetite for any breaches in statute, regulation, professional standards, research or medical ethics, bribery or fraud. It wishes to maintain accreditations related to courses or standards of operation, and has low appetite for risk relating to actions that may put accreditations in jeopardy."

## Benchmarking

Desk top research was carried out on 24 Russell Group institutions. This included an investigation on what is provided for in postgraduate regulations and policies in relation to interruptions and suspension of study, and leave of absence from study.

A variety of practice exists within the sector. Where leave to study outside an institution is explicitly stated within regulations, most institutions require that permission is applied for. In some cases time periods are stipulated, for example where absence exceeds two weeks permission is required, or that periods of absence must not be more than 12 months. Permission for leave may be required for compulsory elements such as fieldwork or engaging with research away from the campus base. Other terms used include actively engaging with research, work directly related to studies.

Generally it appears that leave of absence is granted for **activity directly relevant to the programme of study**. Activity such as internship is generally dealt with by interruption or suspension of studies. Most institutions provide additional information for international and Tier 4 visa students.

## Themes arising for discussion

REC is invited to consider the following themes and provide a steer for the regulations review.

Students who are interrupted have limited access to University facilities and supervision and are not eligible for benefits available to students, for example Council Tax exemption.

Students who are on leave of absence and therefore actively engaged in study, retain full access to University facilities, supervision and the benefits of being a registered student.

1. How do we define “actively engaged in study”?
2. If we consider that a student may seek leave to pursue activities outside the University which are not defined as a necessary part of their programme of study but will contribute to the programme of study, should they be interrupted?
3. How do we define “activities outside the University which are not defined as a necessary part of their programme of study but will contribute to the programme of study”?
4. Do all our postgraduate research programmes clearly define what is a necessary part of the programme of study and any expectations regarding location of study?
5. If we consider that a student may seek leave to pursue activities outside the University which are not defined as a necessary part of their programme of study, are there implications for the student’s supervision?
6. Our current regulations provide time limits for interruptions and extensions, should we also stipulate time limits for leave of absence?

The University of Edinburgh

Senatus Researcher Experience Committee

29 September 2015

**Programme Handbooks**

**Executive Summary**

As part of the Programme and Course Information Management (PCIM) project, a Programme and Course Handbook policy was developed. This paper outlines proposed amendments to the policy to ensure clarity and appropriateness of the policy for postgraduate research programmes.

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

Outstanding student experience

**Action requested**

The Committee is asked to:

- Confirm that the Programme and Course Handbooks Policy applies as appropriate to postgraduate research programmes. The policy will then be updated to reflect which content is only applicable for taught programmes.
- To consider if there is additional core content which should be included in postgraduate research programme handbooks.

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

Any changes to the policy would be communicated by email to a key group of contacts. The updated policy would be placed on the Academic Services website. Changes to policies are communicated annually to key contacts via an email from Academic Services. Committee members will communicate within their constituencies.

**Resource / Risk / Compliance**

1. **Resource implications (including staffing)**  
Potentially, dependant on current practice.
2. **Risk assessment**  
No. A risk register was maintained as part of the PCIM project.
3. **Equality and Diversity**  
*Has this been considered?* Yes. An equality impact assessment was carried out when the policy was developed and will be reviewed should any substantial changes be made to the policy.
4. **Freedom of information**  
*The paper is open*

**Key words**

Postgraduate, research, programme, handbook

**Originator of the paper**

Nichola Kett, Academic Services, 4 September 2015

As part of the Programme and Course Information Management (PCIM) project, a [Programme and Course Handbook Policy](#) was developed. The main aim of this policy is to ensure that students know where to find particular information on their programmes and courses through the provision of core content in handbooks. Programme and course handbooks are part of the academic governance framework of the University. Additionally, there are external requirements in relation to the provision of information for students that the University must follow.

The policy is currently applicable as appropriate to postgraduate research programmes. However, feedback received indicates that the first version of this policy may not clearly stipulate nor adequately cover the requirements of postgraduate research programmes. In particular:

- There is some core content that would not be applicable (such as the external examiner requirement for taught programmes).
- No explicit references are made to supervision or research skills training.

**The Committee is asked to:**

- **Confirm that the Programme and Course Handbooks Policy applies as appropriate to postgraduate research programmes. The policy will then be updated to reflect which content is only applicable for taught programmes.**
- **To consider if there is additional core content which should be included in postgraduate research programme handbooks.**

**Examples of PGR Programme Handbooks from each College**

[ESALA Postgraduate Research Programmes Handbook](#) (2014/15)

[Institute of Genetics and Molecular Medicine Graduate School Handbooks](#) (2014)

[School of GeoSciences Postgraduate Research Student Handbook](#) (2014)

**References to handbooks in the Postgraduate Degree Programme Regulations 2015/16**

2. Every student must comply with the detailed requirements of the curriculum for the degree as set out in the appropriate Degree Programme Table, the programme **handbook**, the course **handbook**, the order in which courses are attended and the assessment for the programme, which are published in the University Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study.

10. Some postgraduate degree programmes may be pursued by part-time study on either a continuous or intermittent basis. Requirements for progression through individual programmes of study are shown in the relevant Degree Programme Table for taught postgraduate programmes and/or programme **handbook** for postgraduate taught and research programmes. Conditions for part-time study will be set out in the programme **handbook**.

23. Students must attend and participate as required in all aspects of their programme of study. This includes being available for teaching sessions, assessment, examination and meeting, Personal Tutors, Programme Directors or supervisors face-to-face and/or electronically. The Degree Programme Table and programme **handbook** sets out programme requirements for attendance and participation.

41. Taught professional doctorates will have additional entrance, curriculum and examination requirements. Information is provided in relevant Degree Programme Tables and programme handbooks. Students will be required to successfully complete the taught component, submit the thesis and/or portfolio and fulfil any placement requirements.

**Reference to handbooks in the Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students**

The research degree programme or supervisory team may also require students to undertake and pass some coursework, as outlined in the relevant Degree Regulations and Programme **Handbooks**.

The University of Edinburgh

Researcher Experience Committee (REC)

29 September 2015

**CHSS Draft program costing for PhDs by distance**

**Executive Summary**

*This Distance PhD task group met on 15<sup>th</sup> May, and unfortunately circumstances have precluded a subsequent meeting. CHSS proposes to submit this draft document to the convener for discussion at the next Working Group meeting.*

*A number of Schools in CHSS are interested in participating in the pilot of PhD by distance, however, we had been advised that a proposal on the fees to be charged is now required. We propose that PhDs by distance are aligned to the standard University of Edinburgh fee structure according to the residence status of the student. Non UK/EU students working overseas are charged at the same rate as on campus Overseas students. Home EU students are charged the home/EU rate wherever they are located. Once REC has had the opportunity to review and make comments on the fee proposal, a revised version will be submitted to Fees Strategy Group for its October meeting.*

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

*The University strategic plan 2012-2016 included 'widening participation at the heart of our agenda', and emphasised the importance of global impact, flexibility in study patterns, 'enhancing our distance education provision', embedding internationalisation, and admitting the very best students. These aims can be seen reflected in the draft Strategic Vision 2025, which includes building 'strong and vibrant communities within and beyond the university', the aim of having more postgraduate students and a more internationalised student body, and to have 'many more students benefitting from the Edinburgh experience (largely or entirely) in their own country – supported by deep international partnerships and world-leading online **distance learning**'.*

**Action requested**

*For information and advice on how to progress the deliberations of the Working Group.*

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

*Any revisions REC recommends will be incorporated into a proposal to be submitted to Fees Strategy Group at its October meeting.*

**Resource / Risk / Compliance**

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

*The paper presents a draft academic case towards a resolution about fees.*

**2. Risk assessment**

*The proposal is on behalf of CHSS, relates to individual students on programmes in CHSS, and does not provide any view on how fees should be charged in other Colleges or if specific distance programmes are subsequently developed.*

**3. Equality and Diversity**

*The distance initiative is a way of including current and potential research students whose participation in a PhD programme is impeded by distance.*

**4. Freedom of information**

*Open*

**Key words**

Distance learning, PhD by distance

**Originator of the paper**

*Richard Coyne, Dean of Postgraduate Research, College of Humanities and Social Science*

University of Edinburgh

## Programme Costing Template – narrative section

To accompany Excel template

Course Name	PhD
Delivery Method	Distance Learning
Contact	Theresa Mckinven and Richard Coyne 24/09/2015

1. How does this programme fit with both College and University Strategy?

*The University strategic plan 2012-2016 included ‘widening participation at the heart of our agenda’, and emphasised the importance of global impact, flexibility in study patterns, ‘enhancing our distance education provision’, embedding internationalisation, and admitting the very best students. These aims can be seen reflected in the draft Strategic Vision 2025, which includes building ‘strong and vibrant communities within and beyond the university’, the aim of having more postgraduate students and a more internationalised student body, and to have ‘many more students benefitting from the Edinburgh experience (largely or entirely’ in their own country – supported by deep international partnerships and world-leading online **distance learning**’.*

*The university-level commitment to increasing opportunities for students based anywhere in the world to study at postgraduate level was developed through the ‘Non-traditional PGR provision Task Group’ (see REC paper REC 12/13 2 C) with representation from across the university, and which looked at a variety of non-traditional routes, including distance learning, joint PHDs and professional doctorates. The work of this task group has been followed up at the implementation stage by colleges and central services, for example the recent GASP project to improve support for the development of collaborative provision (joint PhDs), the Senatus REC working group on PhD Publication Route, and the Senatus REC working group looking at implementation of PhD by distance.*

*In HSS, the College plan for 2015-2018 refers to ‘the further expansion of our PGR student populations (remaining) an important College priority’, and that ‘once University policy is fully developed on the provision of distance learning/supervision for research postgraduates, we hope that this will be an additional, more flexible, option to offer applicants’. College Postgraduate Studies Committee has approved an interim programme approval process for schools to establish distance PhD provision.*

2. Who are the main competitors for this Programme. How does Edinburgh’s offering compare?

*Among Russell Group universities, the universities with the most developed provision are Birmingham, Manchester, UCL and Sheffield. Other well-established distance PhD programmes are offered by Leicester and Open Universities.*

*Universities have taken slightly different approaches to developing their distance PhD provision. The most common model is for students to spend some time at the institution (see Leicester, Birmingham, Sheffield, Manchester). There has been some move towards entirely distance delivery, supported online (Liverpool, Open). This option is not the preferred route in CHSS, with Schools believing that it is important for students even if based mainly off campus to have some face to face contact, and to reinforce that this is an ‘Edinburgh’ PhD.*

*At PhD level, the main distinguishing factor is the research which is taking place in the School, and the supervision available. This forms the distinctive offering for each*

*institution. From this perspective, the competition relates to availability of research specialism and supervision. Prospective students who are not able to leave their current employment or spend long periods of time away from their current residence don't currently have the opportunity to study at Edinburgh, so would have no option but to study elsewhere.*

*There is some slight variability in the fees charged by our competitor institutions. Most have taken the route of charging standard Home/EU and Overseas fees to students (pro-rata for part-time). This fits with UoE approach of charging Home/EU fees according to the rate set by Research Councils, and increasing OS fees by 5% (approved by FSG February 2015). We recommend that the same rate is charged to distance students as on campus students, i.e. Home/EU fees pegged to Research Council rates and Overseas fees set the same as the on-campus rate, and both charged at 50% for part-time students, which the majority of distance students in HSS are likely to be.*

*There is as core question as to whether the programme is 'distance' or the student is 'distance'. For the majority of students in HSS, the likely scenario is a programme which is very similar to the on campus programme, but with the student being mainly supervised at a distance, with likely a minimum of two visits to Edinburgh, for the first year report and the viva. While there may be some additional set up costs in particular for research methods training, these are likely to be minimal compared to fully online delivery. The majority of supervision is likely to be undertaken by Skype or similar technology, and for standard PhDs in humanities and social science, there is likely to be little additional resource required to support students who are not based full-time in Edinburgh. Distance PhD students are therefore more likely to be 'mixed mode' delivery, and different to ODL PGT students, where the programme is delivered wholly online with no requirement to visit Edinburgh during their studies.*

*Developing and maintaining interaction within student cohorts will also require some resource consideration. In particular, students resident in Edinburgh and leading in seminars and other events will require encouragement and support on ways to include fellow students working at a distance.*

*In line with the majority of our competitor institutions, we propose that the student is required to pay the cost for any visits to the university (Birmingham have recently changed to include this cost for the student).*

3. What is the target market of the Programme? Will any existing programmes be affected by the introduction of this Programme?

*The target market for the programme are students who wish to study for a PhD at Edinburgh, but are unable to leave their current residence or employment. Currently, there are a number of students who apply to study full-time in Edinburgh, and then have to leave for a variety of reasons. These students are often granted an extended leave of absence. There are others who are often off-campus, but may attend monthly for supervision. The creation of a formal PhD by distance route would enable the university to regularise the status of these students and ensure that appropriate support is provided.*

4. What Marketing has been planned or completed to support the predicted student numbers?

*Many Schools have been contacted by prospective students who would like to study for a PhD at a distance, but as yet we don't have the provision to permit it. The proposal is therefore aimed at facilitating the interest which has been demonstrated by applicants and Schools. UKVI restrictions require that for a Tier 4 student to be eligible for a Short Term Study visa the student must be registered on an 'official' distance learning programme if they need to visit the institution. The formal recognition of distance learning as an official study route for PhD would allow for a small growth in PHD numbers for both Home/EU and overseas students, with little additional investment required to facilitate.*

5. If this programme is in collaboration with other institutions, give details of the partners and the fee structure.

*At present we are not envisaging that distance PhDs need to be delivered with an external supervisor.*

#### **Note on fees**

We propose that a case is made to the Fees Strategy Group to peg PhD by distance to the standard University of Edinburgh fee structure according to the residence status of the student. So non UK/EU students working overseas are charged at the same rate as if they had moved to the UK on Tier 4 visas. Home EU students are charged the home/EU rate wherever they are located.

REC: 29.09.15

H/02/26/02

**REC 15/16 1E**

The University of Edinburgh

Senatus Researcher Experience Committee

29 September 2015

**Edinburgh University Students Association Vice President Academic Affairs:  
priorities**

**Executive Summary**

This paper seeks to provide an introduction to EUSA's new sabbatical officers and their priorities for 2015-16.

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

Aligns with Excellence in Education and Outstanding Student Experience

**Action requested**

This paper is for information

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

This paper is for information

**Resource / Risk / Compliance**

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

None

**2. Risk assessment**

None

**3. Equality and Diversity**

Has this been considered? Yes

**4. Freedom of information**

*The paper is open*

**Key words**

**Originator of the paper**

Imogen Wilson, EUSA Vice President Academic Affairs

**The sabbatical officers elected for 2015-16 are:**

Jonny Ross-Tatam, EUSA President

Imogen Wilson, EUSA Vice President Academic Affairs (VPAA)

Andy Peel, EUSA Vice President Societies & Activities (VPSA)

Urte Macikene, EUSA Vice President Services (VPS)

**VPAA Objectives for 2015-16:**

**1. Addressing Assessment issues**

The aim is to ensure assessment is varied and challenging while meeting modern expectation of a world-class institution, and to put students' interests ahead of traditional practice. Every student learns in a different way, and our assessment options should reflect this. We should always aim to promote a culture of community where students feel that they can approach academic staff with questions.

- End the physical hand-in – students should not have to hand in work on paper if they are handing in assessment online already. If staff want to read and mark the work on paper, they should be responsible for printing it. Turning in work on paper adds stress and additional financial costs for students, and is not environmentally friendly.
- Examine courses taught in semester 1 in the December exam diet, and have exam boards meet shortly thereafter and not months later to confirm marks.
- Diversify assessment away from exams – this could mean: more take-home/open book exams, more informal in-class assessment, tests during the semester rather than at the end, a greater reliance on coursework, etc. We encourage staff to include Reps or all students in a cohort in discussions about different forms of assessment for learning.
- Have a semester structure to aid assessment and re-sit issues – we need to somehow address the problem of our asymmetric semesters and stop using it as an excuse.

**2. Progressive and flexible learning**

The aim is to promote innovative ways of learning and teaching by putting an emphasis on student/staff collaboration, on open access learning, making the most of vast online opportunities, and making those opportunities available for students outside of Edinburgh too.

- Continue and hopefully expand SLICCs after the pilot.
- Promote the new 'introduction to Gender Studies' course which will be formally co-created by students and staff as part of the 'SPS in Practice' course in semester 2 this year.
- Promote innovative ways of giving students feedback, including audio-recorded feedback, Feedback Days or Meet the Marker events that encourage all students (no matter if they have done well or struggled with the assessment) to meet with staff and discuss how they can improve

- Challenge tradition by prioritising liberation issues in the curriculum and across the university
- Design an introductory section of the Holyrood Elections MOOC which can be used as an educational resource for first time voters at Edinburgh University, other universities and colleges, and secondary schools in the wider community

**3. To protect the rights of students and staff.**

The aim is to prevent the negative impacts of government cuts, and always have the highest-possible quality of education as our number 1 priority.

- Campaign against any proposed fee rises.
- Bring back the post-study work visa, or failing this, reverse the cruel new financial demands around extending a tier 4 visa.
- Expose and then cover extra course costs
- Ensure tutors are on contracts that they want, that they are adequately trained (and paid for their training), that they have clear marking criteria provided when marking students' work, and that their pay adequately takes into account the time needed to mark work and provide high-quality feedback.

The University of Edinburgh  
Senatus Researcher Experience Committee  
3 September 2015

## **Annual Report of the Senate Committees**

### **Executive Summary**

This is the sixth annual report of the four Senate Standing Committees: Curriculum and Student Progression Committee, Learning & Teaching Committee, Quality Assurance Committee, and Researcher Experience Committee. It reports on activity of the Committees for 2014/15 and proposes ambitions for 2015/16 and beyond. The Committees will seek to deliver as many of these as possible, while adjusting them as necessary to take account of any changes in the internal and external environment.

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

#### **Action requested**

For information

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

The paper will be circulated to Senate Committees at their next meeting and information will be included in the Senate Committees' Newsletter.

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

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

Yes this paper will have resource implications. Some of the resource requirements will be met through existing resources or has agreed funding in place. Other activities will have funding cases considered through the annual planning round or on an individual basis through relevant channels. These will be taken forward by the relevant committee or functional area.

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

None

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

*Has this been considered? Yes*

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

*The paper is open*

### **Key words**

### **Originator of the paper**

Anne Marie O'Mullane, Academic Policy Officer, Academic Services

Tom Ward, Director of Academic Services

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## Annual Senate Committees' Report 2014/15

### 1. Executive Summary

*This report outlines the achievements of the Senate Committees for Academic Year 2014/15 and the planned priorities for Senate Committees for 2015/16 and beyond. Senate Committees have reflected on their operation through the Senate Committees' Symposium. They consider themselves to be robust and effective and are confident that they can support their planned priorities. Senate Committees agreed their priorities and strategic direction at the Senate Committees Symposium. The work of the Senate Committees is monitored and coordinated by the Senate Committee Conveners' Forum to ensure that they maintain their strategic approach and remain effective.*

*Action requested: Senatus is invited to note the major items of Senate Committees' business from 2014/15 and to approve the ambitions proposed by each of the four Senate Committees for 2015/16 and beyond.*

### 2. Introduction

This is the sixth annual report of the four Standing Committees of Senate, hereafter referred to as the Senate Committees. The Senate Committees are Curriculum and Student Progression Committee, Learning & Teaching Committee, Quality Assurance Committee and Researcher Experience Committee.

Links to the Terms of Reference for the Senate Standing Committees:

Curriculum and Student Progression Committee: [Link](#)

Learning and Teaching Committee: [Link](#)

Quality Assurance Committee: [Link](#)

Researcher Experience Committee: [Link](#)

The report sets out the Senate Committees' achievements for the year 2014/15. It proposes their strategic ambitions for 2015/16 and beyond. These proposals arose from Committee discussions, discussion at Senate Committees Conveners' Forum and discussion at the Senate Committees' Symposium which took place on the 8 May 2015. The report also outlines suggestions made at the Senate Committees Symposium. .

### 3. Key Numbers for 2014/15

Name of Committee/Sub-Committee/Task Group	No. of meetings
Curriculum and Student Progression Committee (CSPC)	6
CSPC: Sub Group Concessions	1
CSPC: Working Group - Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy	3
CSPC: Working Group - Assessment Regulations/ Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study Review 2014/15	4
CSPC: Working Group - Assessment and Progression Tools	6
CSPC: Working Group - UG Progression Boards	3
CSPC: Working Group - Student-Led Individually-Created Courses	5
CSPC: Working Group - Tier 4 Student Attendance and Engagement Monitoring Working Group	3
QAC/CSPC: Task Group - Dual Degrees	2

Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC)	5
LTC: Working Group - Code of Practice for Taught Postgraduate Programmes	4
LTC: Task Group - Distance Education Task Group	3
LTC: Working Group - Grade Point Averages	1
Quality Assurance Committee (QAC)	6
QAC: Student Support Services Quality Assurance Framework Sub-Committee	2
QAC: Task Group - Student Representation for Distance Learners	4
QAC: Task Group - Quality Hub	2
QAC: Working Group - External Examiner Policy Development	1
Researcher Experience Committee (REC)	7
REC: Task Group - Distance PhD	1
REC: Task Group - PhD Publications Track	4

#### 4. Senate Committees' Achievements

##### 4.1 Curriculum and Student Progression Committee (CSPC) Achievements 2014/15

###### 4.1.1 Management Data on Students

Building on the principles established by the CSPC 'Use of Student Data' task group and the discussions conducted by Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) in relation to the 'Quality Hub', Student Systems and Academic Services are working with the Senate Committees to take forward this important agenda, starting with a series of workshops in May 2015. These workshops will assist Student Systems and Academic Services to develop their understanding of how management information regarding students can support Schools and Colleges to make key strategic and management decisions, and will feed into discussions at Senate Learning and Teaching Committee and Senate in May / June 2015, and subsequent developments to the provision of management information.

###### 4.1.2 Projects

###### i. Programme and Course Information Management Project (PCIM)

The PCIM project is on track to achieve its main deliverables:

- An enhanced course descriptor has been implemented, which will provide students with more comprehensive and relevant information (including enhanced information regarding feedback on assessment arrangements).
- Based on last year's work on Draft University Level Principles, a new University policy on Programme and Course Design, Development, Approval, Changes and Closure has now been developed and approved.
- The Board of Studies Terms of Reference has been updated and Boards of Studies guidance has also been developed (this will go to the June Committee meeting).

- A Programme and Course Handbooks Policy has been developed and will be considered by CSPC in June.

**ii. Assessment and Progression Tools Project**

The Assessment and Progression Tools Project is on track to achieve its main deliverables:

- CSPC has extended the policy on Informing Taught Students of their Final Programme Results so that it now also covers Course and Progression results.
- Significant systems development work now enables Schools to input progression and course awards into EUCLID, and to communicate these results to students via EUCLID / MyEd (with effect from May / June 2015).
- CSPC approved the introduction of an Undergraduate Progression Boards policy for introduction in 2015/16.

**iii. Open Content Courses/Student-Led Individually Created Courses (SLICCs)**

SLICCs are credit-bearing self-directed courses intended to help students to develop their own set of personal or professional skills and attributes. CSPC approved the arrangements for SLICC pilots which will run during the summer of 2015 and be evaluated in the autumn. The generic level descriptors that would apply to these pilots were approved, and issues relating to credit/credit levels, progression, course creation, academic support and assessment were considered.

**iv. MSc Progression Hurdles**

CSPC completed some light-touch background research in relation to internal progression hurdles within MSc PGT programmes. Research had shown that there was an element of variation but that this variation did not appear unjustified. CSPC agreed that although it may be preferential to harmonise MSc progression arrangements at some stage, there was no urgent requirement to take this forward in 2014/15.

**4.1.3 Regulations, Policies, Guidance and procedure**

This section outlines the delivery of regulations, policy, guidance and procedure that are not captured elsewhere in the report:

**i. Regulations**

- Annual review of Taught Assessment Regulations and Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees completed for 2015/16.
- Annual review of Undergraduate, Postgraduate and Higher Degree Regulations completed for 2015/16.

- A review of academic/ withdrawal and exclusion / student conduct appeal documentation and processes was conducted in March and April 2015– leading to streamlined new Student Appeal Regulations (and associated guidance).
- Revision to Code of Student Conduct, to take account of the first year of the operation of the Code, and to align with the new Support for Study Policy.

**ii. Policies**

- A dual awards policy developed as part of broader guidance on collaborative provision (see QAC).

**iii. Guidance**

- Terms of Reference for College Progression Boards for Study Abroad. These Terms provide operational guidance and include a credit for study abroad classification.
- Revised Degree Programme Specification Guidance.

**iv. Procedure**

- Revised Withdrawal and Exclusion from Studies procedure.

**4.1.4 New priorities identified and progressed during the session**

**i. Support for Study policy**

A new Support for Study policy, developed by the Mental Health Strategy Group, was approved for introduction in 2015-16 to help support students whose behaviour may give cause for concern.

**ii. Marking and assessment boycott**

During the 2014/15 academic year the Universities and Colleges Union (UCU) called on its members to take part in an assessment setting and assessment process boycott. CSPC approved temporary concessions to minimise the impact of the industrial action on students without compromising academic standards

**iii. Academic year dates and examination timings: 2015 and 2016**

Due to the academic year dates for 2015/16 and 2016/17, there will be a reduced revision period for students within the semester 1 period. CSPC has provided guidance to Colleges regarding an approach to organising teaching during week 11 which will maximise the amount of time available to students for revision within the constraints of the academic year.

**iv. Extended Common Marking Scheme**

A cross-College short-life working group was established and has made some initial proposals regarding the University's Extended Common Marking Scheme. These proposals have raised regulatory and systems issues and will need broad support across the University, and will therefore require substantial further scoping and consideration.

## 4.2 Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) Achievements 2014/15

### 4.2.1 Projects

#### i. Emerging Vision for Learning and Teaching

The Committee's key priority for 2014/15 was the development of the University's emerging vision for learning and teaching. LTC oversaw extensive consultation regarding the vision and the information gathered will be presented at the May meeting of Learning and Teaching Committee, and the June meeting of Senate.

#### ii. Enhancing Student Support Project

During 2014/15, LTC has monitored the Student Support Implementation Group (SSIG)'s work on evaluating the undergraduate Personal Tutor system and mainstreaming and enhancing the system, which includes the following developments:

- Quality Assurance Committee will be responsible for ongoing monitoring of the effectiveness of the Personal Tutor System.
- Schools will continue to have a degree of autonomy over how they implement the Personal Tutor System.
- There will be a focus on reward and recognition of individual Personal Tutors.
- A set of Key Performance Indicators will be developed to assist with reward and recognition and to facilitate annual quality assurance processes.
- Greater emphasis will be placed on enabling first year UG students to have an extra scheduled meeting with their Personal Tutor during the first semester while reducing the need for scheduled meetings in later years.

During Summer 2014/15, SSIG will evaluate the postgraduate taught Personal Tutor system.

#### iii. Leading Enhancement in Assessment and Feedback Project (LEAF)

The Committee continued to provide oversight for this Project, which is making use of the TESTA (Transforming Experience of Students through Assessment) methodology. Nine programmes across two Colleges have gone through TESTA audit. The methodology supports Schools to rationalise their assessment schedules, identify and share good practice, and map students' experiences onto everyday classroom practices.

#### iv. Information Services Learning Technology Projects

##### a. Open Education Resource Strategy

LTC welcomed and commented on the 'Vision for Open Educational Resources at the University of Edinburgh'.

b. Learning Analytics

The Committee had an initial discussion regarding the opportunities and challenges associated with learning analytics. The Convener of LTC is in the process of taking forward discussions regarding the development of University policy in this area.

c. Assessment and Feedback Tool Pilots

LTC has continued to oversee IS Technology Enhanced Learning section's work with Schools to pilot new online tools for assessment and feedback.

#### **4.2.2 Task Groups/Working Groups**

**i. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)**

Mainstreaming of all MOOCs academic governance processes and procedures has been completed during 2014/15 including establishing course approval and quality assurance processes. The University has now established a group to take forward its MOOC Strategy.

**ii. Grade Point Averages Project (GPA)**

LTC has monitored the Higher Education Academic's programme of GPA pilots, with one member of LTC representing the University on the HEA project. LTC has developed an initial position regarding potential adoption of GPA and briefed the Principal. The Committee is awaiting the outcome of the HEA report on the way forward for GPA. In addition to LTC's strategic discussions, CSPC has also undertaken an initial assessment of practical issues that the University would need to address were it to adopt a GPA model.

**iii. Online Distance Education Provision**

An LTC Task Group was established to oversee the mainstreaming of online distance education. The group has met several times and undertaken a programme of interviews and research. It will present its initial findings at the May 2015 meeting of LTC.

**iv. Curriculum for Excellence**

The Committee continued to monitor the implications of Curriculum for Excellence for the University's learning, teaching and assessment to assist the University to prepare for the first significant intake of students educated under the new curriculum in 2016. LTC also considered impending changes to A-Levels in England.

#### **4.2.3 New priorities identified and progressed during the session**

**i. Enhancement Theme – Student Transitions**

An Institutional Team was established and is responsible for developing, coordinating and (where appropriate) delivering a programme of work relating to the Theme; for communicating about Enhancement Theme developments within the constituency they are representing; and acting as key Enhancement Theme contacts. LTC has provided oversight for this work and received regular updates.

## ii. Review of Code of Practice for Taught Postgraduate Programmes

Following a review of this document, LTC agreed to replace this document with a more succinct and user-friendly document for students and staff from 2016/17.

## iii. Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR)

LTC discussed and approved some new categories of achievement for inclusion in the HEAR, and changes to existing categories of achievement.

### 4.3 Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) Achievements 2014/15

#### 4.3.1 Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) 2015 Planning

The ELIR Steering Group has put in place all necessary preparation for ELIR including:

- Drafting and consulting on the draft Reflective Analysis and Case Studies in preparation for their sign off by the Committee, Senate and University Court.
- Preparing the logistics for the ELIR visit.
- Planning the showcase session for the morning of the Part 1 visit which will cover how the University supports all students irrespective of mode of delivery or level, aspects of the student journey, use of technology to enhance the student experience and support quality assurance and enhancement processes, and how we work with students as partners in the enhancement of learning and teaching.

#### 4.3.2 Enhancing the Student Experience: Student Data

##### i. Student Data

Please refer to section 1.1.1 for more information on this achievement.

##### ii. Quality Systems Development

QAC oversaw the introduction of a new External Examiner Online Reporting System that will allow the University to maximise the benefits from information gathered in External Examiner reports so as to inform the University's strategic approach to quality assurance and quality enhancement. QAC also approved a revised policy for External Examiners for Taught Programmes and a new Handbook for External Examiners. Following a successful pilot in autumn 2014, full roll-out of the Online Reporting System is now ongoing, in time for the May/June Board of Examiner Meetings.

#### 4.3.3 Collaborative Provision

With oversight from a Steering Group, Governance and Strategic Planning, Academic Services and International Office have been continuing to work together on enhancing a framework of guidance on Collaborative Provision. The following work has been undertaken:

- Production of a suite of template Memoranda of Agreement and Understanding;

- Updating of the authoritative list of the University's collaborative arrangements;
- Revised guidance on the approval processes for introducing collaborative programmes is in the process of being discussed with Colleges.

#### **4.3.4 Course evaluation electronic system**

The Committee has overseen the development of the student survey framework including the work undertaken by Student Surveys Unit on piloting and developing the EvaSys course evaluation software, which provides a standardised approach to the gathering and reporting of course level student feedback. The level of interest and demand from Schools has been very positive and currently 15 of the University's 22 Schools have opted into the use of EvaSys. The Committee has also overseen the Student Survey Unit's work on introducing a Student Panel.

#### **4.3.5 Task groups**

##### **i. Enabling Student Representation for Distance Learners**

A short-life group investigated and advised on the technological infrastructure and meeting protocols that need to exist for the Edinburgh distance learning student voice to be heard at School, College and institutional level. QAC has approved the group's recommendations, and the task group is now working to implement a set of actions, including new web-based resources, new arrangements to assist student representatives to communicate with students, and briefings for Schools, that will deliver the following outcomes:

- A student representation system that is transparent and robust.
- Processes that are well understood and consistently implemented.
- Effective working of the representation network.

#### **4.3.6 Core Business**

##### **i. Internal Subject Review**

The Committee has continued to oversee and approve Internal Subject Review reports and responses, engaging positively with a new process for commenting on reports and responses, and monitoring the effective implementation of review recommendations as well as the dissemination of enhancements identified in reviews, and tracking emerging actions and themes. This academic year seven Teaching Programme Reviews (TPR), three Postgraduate Programme Reviews (PPR), and a combined TPR and PPR have taken place.

##### **ii. Annual Review of Student Support Service Quality Assurance Framework**

The Annual Review of Student Support Services took place in March 2015.

##### **iii. Periodic Review**

A periodic review of the Student Disability Service was undertaken in Spring 2015, commending the Services for its support, and recommending further work in some areas.

Senate Quality Assurance Committee has agreed that the student support service Periodic Review for 2015/16 should be a thematic review on student mental health, covering a range of services.

**iv. Annual Reports on Student Discipline, Student Appeals and Complaint handling**

QAC continued to monitor reports on Student Discipline and Student Appeals annually, and considered reports on Complaint Handling submitted quarterly and annually. QAC has proposed enhancements to the approach to these reports, and has requested an annual thematic report pulling together common themes across reporting in these areas of business, to take effect from December 2015.

**v. Policy development arising from UK Quality Code mapping**

Policy development and enhancement arising from mapping of the University's policies and procedures to the UK Quality Code continued to take place this session.

#### **4.4 Researcher Experience Committee (REC) Achievements 2014/15**

##### **4.4.1 Projects/new initiatives**

**i. Strategy and Vision**

The Committee developed and published its strategy and vision in November 2014. Strategic goals include raising the profile and enhancing the experience of postgraduate research students and early career researchers; ensuring training for employability for postgraduate research students and career development support for early career researchers; identifying challenges and opportunities for innovation in relation to these goals. The vision can be found at: [www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/AcademicServices/Committees/REC/VisionStrategy.pdf](http://www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/AcademicServices/Committees/REC/VisionStrategy.pdf)

**ii. Postgraduate Research Experience Project (PREP)**

Consultation on proposals for PREP was carried out over summer 2014 which informed the development of a bid submitted to the planning round. While the bid was unsuccessful for 2014/15, the Committee, Academic Services and the Institute for Academic Development (IAD) are exploring what can be delivered going forward within existing resources.

**iii. Doctoral Training Centres (DTCs)**

The Committee received reports from Colleges on DTCs and is continuing discussions on how Schools and Colleges can be supported in bidding for and setting up DTCs.

**iv. Postgraduate Research Student Induction**

The Committee agreed a pilot for ongoing induction for postgraduate research students starting throughout the year, including the development of induction cohorts. The Committee worked closely with the Student Experience Project Induction Team and IAD on developing this and has monitored progress throughout 2014/15.

**v. Postgraduate Research Space**

The Committee opened discussion with the Space Enhancement Management Group and is working on recommendations for input to policy discussion.

#### 4.4.2 Task Groups

##### i. Early Career Researcher Support

The Committee reviewed progress on the recommendations of its 2013/14 task group. Further discussions are underway with HR and the Vice Principal People and Culture on developing this area and the Committee will continue to review progress.

##### ii. PhD Study

The REC task group on PhD Publications Track delivered its report in April 2015. The Task Group made various recommendations to clarify how students can include publications as chapters of PhD theses, whilst ensuring the overall PhD remains a coherent body of interrelated work. REC approved the recommendations and fed them into the annual regulations review and the Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students update for 2015.

A REC task group reviewing distance PhDs began its work during 2014/15 and will report to REC in 2015/16. The Committee began discussion on 'What is an Edinburgh PhD' and will continue to examine this at its 2015 summer meeting.

#### 4.4.3 Core Business

REC continues to interact with student and staff experience surveys (PRES, CROS, PIRLS), academic code, policy and regulation reviews as required and other Senate Committees as part of its core business. It also continues to promote sharing best practice and reviews its membership and communications strategy as part of core business.

#### 4.4.4 New priorities identified and progressed during the session

##### i. Student record system developments to support PGR

In advance of the proposed PREP project, Student Systems has worked with the Committee to develop an online reporting mechanism for postgraduate research student annual progression reviews. This is being taken forward by Student Systems with regular reports to REC, with a view to implementation in Summer 2015

##### ii. Handbook for External Examining of Research Degrees

The Committee developed a new Handbook for External Examining of Research Degrees, pulling together guidance previously provided by Colleges and key information from the regulations, and presenting it in an appropriate format which aligns with the Handbook External Examiners for Taught Programmes.

### 5. Senate Committees' strategic objectives for 2015-16 to 2017-18

For the first time, in addition to undertaking annual planning the Senate Committees have set out their longer-term objectives. These are to:

- Develop and implement the emerging vision for Learning and Teaching.
- Coordinate and support activities to enhance the student experience in order to address issues raised by the National Student Survey and other student surveys.

- Enhance availability and ease of use of management data regarding students to support quality processes and broader work to enhance the student experience.
- Promote research-led and independently-directed learning.
- Continue the programme of activity to support programme and course design, approval, publication and navigation, and management of data on course and programme outcomes.
- Provide strategic direction to the University's IT infrastructure developments to assist the University to anticipate future learning and teaching requirements.
- Continue to develop the University's academic regulations so that they guide academic staff towards the University's key objectives while supporting and encouraging innovation.
- Enhance the postgraduate research student experience.

## **6. Senate Committees' Priorities for 2015-16**

The following are the Senate Committees' ambitions for 2015-16. The Committees will seek to deliver as many of these as possible, while adjusting them as necessary to take account of any changes in the internal and external environment.

### **6.1 Learning and Teaching Committee**

In order of priority:

1. Coordinate and support activities to address issues raised by the National Student Survey and other student surveys.
2. Develop new publication to replace Code of Practice for Taught Postgraduate Programmes.
3. Transitions Enhancement Theme –institutional oversight of activities (broadly focussed on maximising the benefit of the Theme for current priorities).
4. Feedback on assessment – implement recommendations from 2014-15 Internal Audit report, including developing quality standards for feedback.
5. Oversee the Leading Enhancement in Assessment and Feedback (LEAF) / Transforming the Experience of Students Through Assessment (TESTA) Project.
6. Support pilot activities to explore innovative learning and teaching using IT and other modern methods.
7. Online Distance Learning - Continued work to develop a strategic framework for Online Distance Learning.

8. In partnership with the Knowledge Strategy Committee, develop a University policy on Learning Analytics.
9. Promote research-led and independently-directed learning.
10. Grade Point Averages – respond to outcomes of Higher Education Academic discussions and pilots.
11. Ongoing development of Continuing Professional Development framework for learning and teaching.

## **6.2 Curriculum and Student Progression Committee**

In order of priority:

1. Deliver the next phase of work on EUCLID assessment and progression tools, including implementing the recommendations of the task group on UG progression boards.
2. Review University policy on extensions to coursework deadlines, in the context of special circumstances.
3. Enhance availability and ease of use of management information regarding students to support quality processes and broader work to enhance the student experience – complete scoping work initiated in 2014-15 and begin to implement. (QAC and CSPC leading on this, but may involve other Committees)
4. Evaluate 2014-15 pilot of Student-led individually-Created Courses (SLICCS) and consider further pilots and / or wider roll-out.
5. Review and align the University's student conduct-related policies (eg Code of Student Conduct, Codes of Practice on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, Support for Study Policy) taking account of planned review of Dignity and Respect Policy.
6. Programme and Course Information Management (PCIM) – Embed processes to enhance course descriptor information and dissemination.
7. Scope out a possible programme of work to enhance marking and feedback practices by harmonising University Common Mark Schemes and (if the University chooses to adopt Grade Point Averages) align with GPA, with a view to undertaking some initial development work in 2015-16.
8. Review University moderation policy.

## **6.3 Quality Assurance Committee**

In order of priority:

1. Enhancement-led Institutional Review – support review and follow-up, including beginning to respond to any recommendations from the review.

2. Quality assurance framework – following ELIR and conclusion of SFC review of quality, review and streamline annual and periodic review arrangements.
3. Enhance availability and ease of use of management information regarding students to support quality processes and broader work to enhance the student experience – complete scoping work initiated in 2014-15 and begin to implement. (QAC and CSPC leading on this, but may involve other Committees)
4. External Examiner Project - Complete roll-out of phases one and two of new External Examiners system and policy, introduce new role of Programme External Examiner, and undertake relatively light-touch work to evaluate new system and policy.
5. Embed quality review processes for Personal Tutor system and oversee transition from Enhancing Student Support project to mainstreamed activity.
6. Collaboration – follow up joint Governance and Strategic Planning / International Office / Academic Services Collaboration project with further guidance and support for collaborative activities.

#### **6.4 Researcher Experience Committee**

In order of priority:

1. Enhance annual progression review process - oversee implementation of the new EUCLID system tools for supporting the online annual progression review process and encourage Schools to use them; review guidelines for postgraduate research student annual progression review.
2. Develop a clearer idea of what an Edinburgh PhD should be, through benchmarking, consultation, and alignment with broader thinking in the University (eg the development of the Strategic Plan, work regarding collaborative provision).
3. Review supervisor selection and training arrangements.
4. Explore options for a Mentoring role.
5. Explore concept of Distance / Flexible Learning PhDs.
6. Support/promote career development planning for Early Career Researchers.
7. Doctoral Training Centres – monitor development of new centres and feed into the development of proposals for central coordination and support.
8. Postgraduate Research Space – identify priorities / recommendation for policy development by Space Enhancement and Management Group.

## 6.5 Cross-committee priorities

In order of priority:

1. Undertake externally-facilitated Senate and Senate Committees Effectiveness review.
2. Policies and Codes - Programme of review of policies including equality impact assessments.
3. Contribute to the development of the University's next Strategic Plan, taking account of the Committees' priorities, visions and values (for example regarding sustainability and social responsibility).

## 7. Senate Committees Symposium

The Senate Committees' Symposium took place on the 8 May 2015. Seventy people attended the symposium including Committee members, participants from EUSA, Court and Senate, staff invited from the Schools, Colleges and Student Services. The Symposium gave the Senate Committees the opportunity to reflect on their work undertaken during the academic year, and to plan activity for the forthcoming year in a coordinated manner. The predominant area identified for enhancement was communication with stakeholders. This issue will be explored further in the light-touch governance review of Senate and the Senate Committees, which is being undertaken during Spring / Summer 2014/15. Senate will consider the report of this light-touch review at its first meeting in 2015/16.

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26 May 2015

REC: 29.09.15

H/02/26/02

**REC 15/16 1G**

The University of Edinburgh

Senatus Researcher Experience Committee

29 September 2015

**Guidance for Senate Committee members on authoring papers and other aspects of Committee business**

**Executive Summary**

The purpose of this paper is to remind the Committee of the guidelines on authoring committee papers and on managing the communication, implementation and evaluation of committee decisions, which the Senate Committees approved in September 2014.

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

**Action requested**

For information.

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

The paper is only of direct relevance to Committee members, and therefore no further communication activities are required.

**Resource / Risk / Compliance**

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

Yes. Streamlined committee papers will reduce the resource implications involved in committee participation.

**2. Risk assessment**

No. The proposals will support greater consistency in applying good practices in academic governance, and do not create any significant risks.

**3. Equality and Diversity**

*Has this been considered?* Yes – there are no equality and diversity implications.

**4. Freedom of information**

*The paper is open*

**Key words**

**Originator of the paper**

Tom Ward, Director of Academic Services

## Guidance for Senate Committee members on authoring papers and other aspects of Committee business

### Description of Paper

- 1 The purpose of this paper is to remind the Committee of the guidelines on authoring committee papers and on managing the communication, implementation and evaluation of committee decisions, which the Senate Committees approved in September 2014.

### Authoring succinct committee papers

- 3 As part of broader changes in its operation, in August 2014 Court introduced new guidelines on preparing Court committee papers. These guidelines aim to ensure that Court receives succinct stand-alone papers, in order to reduce the volume of papers and assist Court with its governance role. For further information on these Court changes see:

<http://edin.ac/1uwsphQ>

- 4 In producing committee papers (including task group reports) please could authors take account of the Court guidance on producing papers ([Court and Committees - guidelines for authors](#)) and on house style ([House style - guidance notes](#)).

### Senate committee paper cover sheet

- 5 In addition to providing guidelines on producing papers / house style, Court also produced a template for authors to follow in producing papers (ie rather than complete a standard cover sheet, Court papers authors write their reports using standard headings and structures). Given the different nature of the Senate and Court business, Senate Committee paper authors do not need to follow the Court paper template. We have however revised the Senate Committees paper cover-sheet to take account of the headings in the Court paper template. The latest version of this cover-sheet is available at:

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

### Communicating and implementing Senate committee decisions

- 6 In September 2014 the Senate Committees agreed to adopt the following approach to managing the communication and implementation of decisions:
  - All papers that seek Committee approval for a decision should explain how that decision would be communicated and implemented. In many cases this is likely to be very straightforward (for example, “College representatives will be responsible for informing School Directors of Learning and Teaching or equivalent of change in policy”.)
  - All reports from task groups should include a communication and implementation plan.

- Where it appears likely that implementation would be complex or challenging, authors should consult with key College administrative and academic staff, and relevant support services, when developing communication and implementation plans.
- Academic Services will continue to use the Senate Committees Newsletter to communicate developments to stakeholders.
- At the end of each academic session, Academic Services will publish a list of all significant changes to regulations, policies and codes, and will bring them to attention of staff. (For 2015 example see [www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/policies-regulations/new-policies](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/policies-regulations/new-policies))

7 Academic Services continues to be happy to assist with communication / implementation of Senate Committee decisions, for example by holding briefing meetings for relevant stakeholders, or introducing items at School or College Committee meetings.

### **Evaluating the impact of the implementation of committee decisions**

8 Where the Committee makes a significant decision, it would be appropriate for the Committee to decide when and how it would evaluate whether a decision has been implemented and the impact it has had. Approaches to evaluation can include:

- Committing to the Committee reviewing a new policy x years after implementation.
- Colleges to review whether Schools have consistently implemented a significant regulatory change.
- For major developments, conducting a formal review (eg including staff and student surveys) after x years

9 In September 2014 the Senate Committees agreed that, when committee papers seek Committee approval for significant developments, the papers should set out plans for evaluation.

### **Further guidance for committee members**

10 The Senate Committees members' guidance provides further information on other aspects of the role of Committee members. The latest version of this guidance is available at:

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

Tom Ward  
Director of Academic Services  
19 August 2015