The University of Edinburgh

Minutes of the Senatus Curriculum and Student Progression Committee (CSPC) held on Thursday 31 May 2018 at 2.00pm in the Board Room, Chancellor's Building, Little France

Present:

Professor Graeme Reid (Vice-Convener)	Dean of Learning and Teaching (CSE)
Dr Paul Norris	Associate Dean (Academic Progress), CAHSS
Dr Lisa Kendall	Head of Academic and Student Administration (CAHSS)
Alexandra Laidlaw	Head of Academic Affairs (CSE)
Professor Neil Turner	Dean of Undergraduate Learning and Teaching (CMVM)
Dr Jeremy Crang	Dean of Students (CAHSS)
Bobi Archer	Vice President Education Students' Association
Gin Lowdean	Advice Place Manager, Students' Association
Dr Adam Bunni	Head of Governance and Regulatory Framework Team
Anne-Marie Scott	IS Learning, Teaching and Web

In attendance:

Mr Gavin Douglas	Deputy Secretary, Student Experience (item 3 only)
Ms Amy Partridge-Hicks	Timetabling / Service Excellence Programme (item 4 only)
Mr Tom Ward	Director, Academic Services
Ms Diva Mukherji	Incoming Vice President Education, Students' Association
Dr Charlotte Matheson	Academic Policy Officer, Academic Services

Apologies for absence:

Professor Alan Murray (Convener)	Assistant Principal, Academic Support
Dr Cathy Bovill	Institute for Academic Development
Ms Nicola Crowley	Head of Medical Teaching Organisation (CMVM)
Mrs Lisa Dawson	Director of Student Systems and Administration
Dr Juliette MacDonald	Edinburgh College of Art
Dr Antony Maciocia	Dean of Students (CSE)
Dr Geoff Pearson	Dean of Students (CMVM)
Professor Susan Rhind	Assistant Principal, Assessment and Feedback
Professor Lesley McAra	Assistant Principal, Community Relations
Ms Ailsa Taylor	Academic Policy Officer, Academic Services

The meeting was convened by the Vice-Convener Professor Graeme Reid.

1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on Thursday 22 March 2018 and the exceptional meeting held on 13 April 2018 were **approved** as an accurate record.

2. Matters Arising

The Committee noted that it had conducted electronic business by correspondence between 23-27 April 2018 to approve the remit and membership of an exceptional CSPC concessions sub-group related to the industrial action.

3. Service Excellence Programme – Special Circumstances Update

Gavin Douglas updated the Committee on the Service Excellence Programme (SEP) strand of work relating to special circumstances (SC) and coursework extensions. He noted that, since the Committee's last meeting, SEP had convened a meeting of a range of stakeholders to explore how the proposed University-level unit could approach the role of reviewing whether SC applications are complete and valid, and determining the impact of the special circumstances, prior to the Board of Examiners determining the appropriate action. SEP plans a further discussion in late June 2018 to explore proposals in more detail, with a view to presenting proposals to College Learning and Teaching Committees in early Semester One 2018-19 and then Senate Curriculum and Student Progression Committee in November 2018. The Committee confirmed that no changes to SC or coursework extensions processes will be implemented for 2018-19.

Gavin Douglas also reported that CMVM is at early stages of discussion regarding a possible pilot of involving professional services staff in aspects of the consideration of SC applications.

4. Shared Academic Timetabling Policy and Guidance

Amy Partridge-Hicks introduced Paper 6A, which set out proposals for a revised Policy. In relation to section 3.14 (Equality and Diversity) she noted that the Timetabling and Examination Services team have an online form that allows students to request alternate tutorial allocations to accommodate religious observation (or other considerations) and that the team accommodates requests where possible.

The Committee **approved** the revised Policy subject to the following revisions:

- Clarifying that the rule that rooms may not be booked across 11 am and 4pm except for bookings of at least 3 hours applies only to general teaching space, rather than specialised space such as studios and laboratories;

- Clarifying that a small proportion of teaching activities are scheduled to take place in staff offices, and that these could not be incorporated in timetable information;

- Clarifying that the statement in 3.11 (not 3.2) is the correct approach to room conflict resolution;

- Reformatting the document in the standard Senate Committes' Policy template, incorporating a succinct version of the preamble (Sections 1 and 2).

In addition to approving the Policy, the Committee **agreed** that Dr Jeremy Crang would liaise with Space Strategy Group to discuss appropriate arrangements to enable student parents to access suitable space for child feeding.

> **Action:** Dr Jeremy Crang to liaise with Space Strategy Group to discuss appropriate arrangements to enable student parents to access suitable space for child feeding. Dr

Jeremy Crang to also bring this point to the attention of the thematic review of support for mature students and student parents and carers.

Action: Amy Partridge-Hicks to liaise with Academic Services to agree a final version of the Policy for launch with effect from 2018-19.

5. Postgraduate Taught Assessment and Progression Task Group Report

Dr Adam Bunni introduced Paper 6B. The Committee discussed all aspects of the paper in considerable detail, given the significance of some of the proposals.

Masters programme without a dissertation / research project

The Committee **approved** the recommendation that the University should allow the creation of Master's degrees without compulsory substantial dissertation/research project elements, where there is a strong academic rationale to do so, but that the Models for Degree Types policy will not change, and that CSPC will approve requests for divergence from it on a case-by-case basis. In general, the Committee's view was that the normal pattern would be for Masters programme to continue to include a dissertation / project element, but that it is likely to become more common for a minority of programmes (eg online, professionally-focussed and modular Masters models) to have academic rationales for not including this element, and that the Committee should be sympathetic to cases where there is a strong academic rationale. It did however emphasise that cases made solely on the basis of logistical or resourcing rationales would not be supported.

The Committee had reservations regarding the idea that Masters programmes which do not contain a dissertation or research project element should carry a different Master's degree title to those currently utilised in the University. It sought further benchmarking information regarding the degree titles that other institutions are using, and the types of programmes involved.

Resubmission of Masters dissertations/research projects

The Committee **approved** the recommendation that Boards of Examiners should offer Masters students one opportunity to submit a revised version of the dissertation or research project, on the basis of the eligibility rules set out in the paper, subject to the following points:

- There would be no borderline arrangements in relation to the proposed threshold of 45%;

- The Regulation / guidance would clarify the Tier 4 monitoring arrangements that Schools would need to operate while students are resubmitting their dissertation (it would be necessary to define a small number of contact points);

- The student's transcript will record the mark achieved following resubmission (but capped at 50%), unless it is possible to record a Pass (in which case, this option will be used instead);

- The students will be recorded on EUCLID as 'Interrupted: assumed completed and result assumed pending', although planned work involving the Senate Researcher Experience Committee and Student Systems in relation to doctoral students may lead to an alternate way of recording them;

- The new arrangements would take effect for students submitting dissertations in 2018-19 (rather than those who are submitting their dissertations in summer 2018 and whose Boards of Examiners are due to issue results for them during Semester One 2018-19);

- Academic Services would revise the proposed regulations to address these points.

In approving the recommendation, the Committee noted that by setting the threshold at 45%, it was very likely that students eligible for resubmission would be able to achieve a Masters level pass mark on the basis of minor revisions with no need for additional research.

The role of the dissertation/research project supervisor

The Committee **approved** the recommendation that text be added to the Programme and Course Handbooks Policy providing information regarding expected content for inclusion regarding supervision of PGT Master's dissertations and research projects, subject to the following amendments to the draft text:

- "Feedback you receive from your supervisor is intended as guidance, and must not be interpreted as an indication that your work will receive a particular final mark / outcome";

- "You may be allocated a supervisor whose area of expertise is not a precise match for your chosen area of research, but who has the required expertise to supervise a dissertation/research project in this area."

- Add an additional bullet point asking Schools to provide information regarding the expected timescales for the main interactions between the student and supervisor (for example, when the supervision starts and finishes).

Award of Merit and Distinction where students have failed courses

The Committee approved the recommendation that the University should allow students to qualify for the award of Master's with Merit or Distinction in spite of receiving fail marks in up to 40 credits worth of courses, provided they meet any other criteria for the award of Merit or Distinction as outlined in programme or course handbooks. It confirmed that these new arrangements would take effect for all students on programme in 2018-19 (ie not just those commencing their programme in 2018-19), but not for students whose final programme Boards of Examiners meet in Semester One of 2018-19.

Progression and Pass Marks

The Committee discussed the recommendations and the consultation responses in depth. It was very supportive of removing the elevated hurdle of 50% for Master's awards (meaning awarding Master's degrees passed on the award of credit as a result of the attainment of a pass mark of 40%), and of removing the existing progression hurdle following the taught component of most PGT programmes, allowing students to undertake a dissertation if they wished. It was particularly supportive of removing the latter arrangement. However, the Committee recognised that consultation responses were divided on the proposals, with roughly half of Schools not supporting the removal of the progression hurdle. The Committee also recognised that it would be necessary to undertake careful systems and regulatory analysis prior to implementation, for example regarding the consequential implications for the regulations (and systems) of removing the progression hurdle without also removing the elevated hurdle. It therefore concluded that it would not introduce any of these changes for

2018-19. It did however **agree** to work towards implementing both aspects of the recommendations for 2019-20 – and that with this in mind it would undertake further consultation activities and technical analysis during 2018-19 with a view to making a final decision during 2018-19.

Action: Academic Services to undertake further benchmarking regarding the use of alternate Masters titles.

Action: Academic Services to clarify with Student Systems whether it would be possible to record a resubmission of a dissertation / project as Pass (when the course had been set up on the basis of a 101 point scale).

Action: Academic Services to revise the relevant Taught Assessment Regulations for 2018-19 to reflect the agreed changes regarding resubmission of dissertations and the award of Merit and Distinction. Academic Services would also make some further clarifications to the draft regulations (offering the Committee a chance to comment by correspondence if the revisions are material).

Action: Academic Services to add the relevant text to the Programme and Course Handbooks Policy.

Action: Academic Services to scope out the work required to support the planned progression and pass marks work (including considering if a task group would be required).

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6. Authorised Interruption of Studies Task Group Report

Dr Paul Norris introduced Paper 6C, which set out proposals for a new Policy. The Committee **approved** the Policy subject to the following revisions:

- In 4.2, in both sentences it should state 'College or School';

- The paragraph in section 7 should be numbered;

- In section 7, explain that when considering applications, the College / School should take a permissive approach to considering applications, and therefore support them if the student has provided a good reason for the interruption unless doing so would not be compatible with the student achieving a successful outcome to their studies (and as long as the interruption is within the maximum periods for interruptions of studies set out in section 2.3);

- In 8.1 delete "current";

- Clarify that the provisions in 9.3 are only likely to be relevant to students who have interrupted their studies for medical reasons that have led them to not be fit to study;

- Add a statement that, in the event that the School or College rejects an application for Authorised Interruption of Studies, the student would be able to ask the School or College to reconsider. Schools / Colleges would be required to publicise their processes for handling appeals.

The Committee also **agreed** to delete the PGR authorised interruption or extension of study document.

In relation to 9.3 of the draft Policy, the Colleges **agreed** to liaise with Legal Services during the summer to clarify the circumstances in which there may be a legal reason for the University to need to ask students to provide evidence of their ability to return to study.

> **Action:** Academic Services to finalise the new Policy for launch for 2018-19, taking account of the Comitttee's comments. Academic Services will also make some further clarifications to the draft Policy (offering the Committee a chance to comment by correspondence if the revisions are material).
>
> **Action:** Academic Services to create a template form for Authorised Interruption of Studies applications.

7. Timing of Final Assessment for Semester 1 Courses

The Committee discussed Paper 6D. It felt that, in general, where Schools are holding final assessments for S1 courses in the S2 examination diet, they are doing so for carefully considered reasons. The Committee **agreed** to take no further action.

8. Academic Misconduct- Update Paper and Revised Procedures

The Committee discussed Paper 6E, which contained a proposed plan for future University-level activities in relation to academic misconduct, and proposed revisions to the procedures for investigating academic misconduct.

The Committee **endorsed** the plan, subject to amending the final row (it should read 'College Administrators' rather than 'College DOPs'). The Students Association reported that they were aware that some students have been paying plagiarism checking companies to check their essays prior to submission to the University, and that some of these companies subsequently sell their essays to other students (thereby leaving students at risk of being accused of plagiarism). Anne-Marie Scott **agreed** to explore whether it would be possible to allow students to get direct access to Turnitin, so that they would have no reason to use other companies. If this were possible, the Committee would then discuss the desirability of making this service available to students.

The Committee discussed the revisions to the procedures (which were largely intended to re-present existing procedures, with a view to a more fundamental review in 2018-19). The Committee **approved** the Policy subject to the following points:

- Academic Services planned to undertake some further redrafting of the document, with a view to improving the presentation and clarity;

- Delete the unnumbered paragraph after 3.1 ("The SAMO may wish to check…");

- In 3.2, refer also to direct entry students into UG years three or four;

- In 6.1 (and 4.8) clarify the arrangements for informing the student and Personal Tutor of the decision (the Committee agreed that it was important to inform the student and Personal Tutor, but doubted that Conveners of Boards of Examiners are currently responsible for doing this, or that they should be in the future);

- In section 13.1 refer to the Advice Place as a source of independent advice to students.

> **Action:** Anne-Marie Scott to explore whether it would be possible to allow students to get direct access to Turnitin.
>
> **Action:** Academic Services to finalise the new Policy for launch for 2018-19, taking account of the Comitttee's coments, and also making some further clarifications to the draft Policy. Academic Services will consult the College Academic Misconduct Officers and Advice Place on the final version of the Policy, and, if the revisions involve significant material changes, it will also consult the Committee by correspondence.

9. Taught Assessment Regulations 2018/19

The Committee discussed the proposals set out in Paper 6F. It **agreed** the revisions to the Regulations subject to the following point:

- Regulation 28.4 should be amended to indicate that professional services staff could also approve requests for extensions (as has been allowed during the recent industrial action), for example by adding "…or equivalent member of academic or professional services staff assigned this responsibility by the School". The Committee noted that feedback suggested that some Schools may already be operating on this basis in practice.

> **Action:** Academic Services to revise the Regulations for launch for 2018-19, taking account of the Comitttee's comments. Academic Services will also make some further clarifications to the Regulations (offering the Committee a chance to comment by correspondence if the revisions are material).
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> **Action:** Academic Services will consult the Conflict of Interest Policy and propose to the Committee how students can ensure that a School is taking appropriate action to ensure that no member of staff with a conflict of interests in relation to a student is involved in any assessment or examination related to that student.

10. Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees 2018/19

The Committee discussed the proposals set out in Paper 6G. It **agreed** the revisions to the Regulations.

> **Action:** Academic Services to revise the Regulations for launch for 2018-19, taking account of the Comitttee's comments. Academic Services will also make some further clarifications to the Regulations (offering the Committee a chance to comment by correspondence if the revisions are material).

11. College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences – Assessment Requirements for ANTHUSIA Joint PhD candidates

The Committee noted Paper 6H.

12. Publication of results for Semester 1 Postgraduate Taught Courses

The Committee discussed Paper 6I. It **agreed** that the publication date for results of Semester One courses whose assessment was complete during or immediately following S1 should be 22 February 2019. It emphasised that when communicating this decision to Schools, and when restating the broader position that all UG and PGT courses whose

assessment was complete during or immediately following S1 should be confirmed by a Board of Examiners early in S2 and published in January or February, the rationale for these arrangements should be highlighted.

The Committee recognised that the new date of 22 February would be after the 31 January deadline for students to withdraw from their programmes if they are to be entitled to a partial refund of fees, and emphasised that students who choose to withdraw as a direct result of academic failure in relation to S1 course results that are not communicated to them until after 31 January should be allowed a fee refund (as long as they take swift action once they have their results). Academic Services noted that it is not possible to make a definitive commitment to this without changing the Tuition Fee Policy, but **agreed** to seek formal confirmation from the Fees team that they would use their discretion in relation to students in this situation.

> **Action:** Academic Services to liaise with Student Systems to amend the relevant key date and to communicate to Schools the position regarding 2019-20
>
> **Action:** Academic Services to seek confirmation from the Fees team regarding the position on students who wish to withdraw after 31 January.

13. Withdrawal and Exclusion from Studies Procedure

The Committee discussed Paper 6J. While supportive of changes within the document, it considered that further work was required. For example, it commented that:

- The arrangements in Section A did not reflect current arrangements in the Colleges;

- Para 10 should refer solely to those students recommended for exclusion rather than all students who have not met the criteria for progression;

- Para 12 should clarify that the provision only applies where the student does not attend the interview "without good reason";

- Sections 21 and 22 should clarify that Schools are responsible for setting out requirements for attendance for their programmes and courses;

The Committee **agreed** that Academic Services would liaise with Colleges and the Students Association to undertake a further stage of revision, with a view to seeking approval for the revised Procedure before the start of session 2018-19 (noting that it is important to have the revised Procedure in place by then, given that the Code of Practice for Researchers and Supervisors will no longer have relevant provisions regarding exclusion for unsatisfactory progress for PGR students).

> **Action:** Academic Services to liaise with Colleges and the Students' Association to undertake a further stage of revision, with a view to seeking approval from the Committee by correspondence.

14. Programme and Course Handbook Policy – Update

The Committee **agreed** the proposed changes to the policy subject to the following points:

- On p2, Delete the first clause of the first sentence ("When they are available to prospective (or current) students";

- The Students' Association has suggestions for revisions to the text on student well-being.

Action: Academic Services to liaise with the Students' Association, and the Director of Student Well-being to finalise the Policy.

15. Course Organiser: Outline of Role – Update

The Committee **approved** the updated guidance subject to adding a statement in the 'General Course Management' section that Course Organisers are responsible for ensuring that their students are notified regarding which of their lectures will be recorded or not in line with the Lecture Recording Policy.

16. Annual Review of Effectiveness of Senate Committees

The Committee noted Paper 6M.

17. Review of the Code of Student Conduct

The Committee approved the arrangements for the review set out in Paper 6N. It noted that, when considering training and support for conduct investigators, Academic Services should also consider training and support for Student Discipline Officers, Discipline Committee members, and note-takers.

18. Student Appeal Committee and Student Fitness to Practise Appeal Committee 2018/19

The Committee **approved** the membership of the Committees, and thanked Prof Reid for his long period of service as a member of the Appeal Committee.

19. General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

The Committee **approved** Academic Services' plan to add a paragraph to each relevant policy to highlight the importance of staff handling personal data with due regard to confidentiality and security, and empowered Academic Services to make the relevant changes without reference to the Committee. Academic Services also **agreed** to refer to the Complaints Investigation Manager the importance of applying the same principles to the procedures for complaint investigations.

Action: Academic Services to add a paragraph to each relevant policy.

Action: Academic Services to refer the issue to the Complaints Investigation Manager.

20. Knowledge Strategy Committee Report

The Committee noted Paper 6P.

21. CSPC Meeting Dates 2018/19

The Committee noted Paper 6Q.

22. Any Other Business

Tom Ward, Academic Services 1 June 2018