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

**Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 5 December 2019
at 2pm in the Torridon Room, Charles Stewart House**

Present:

Professor Tina Harrison **(Convener)**	Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance
Dr Shereen Benjamin	Associate Dean (Quality Assurance) College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Brian Connolly	Academic Policy Officer, Academic Services
Dr Gail Duursma	School Representative (Engineering), College of Science and Engineering
Nichola Kett	Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team, Academic Services
Dr Linda Kirstein	Dean of Education Quality Assurance and Culture, College of Science and Engineering
Dr Claire Phillips	Dean of Quality Assurance, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine
Dr Inger Seiferheld	School Representative (Business), College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Steph Vallancey	Vice President (Education), Students' Association
Paula Webster	Head of Student Data and Surveys (Student Systems), co-opted representative for Student Systems.

In Attendance:

Melissa Highton	Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Services and Assistant Principal Online Learning
Sue MacGregor	Director, Academic Services
Stuart Nicol	Head of eLearning Services / Section Head, Educational Design, Educational Design and Engagement

Apologies:

Brian Green	Deputy Associate Principal (Learning & Teaching), University of Strathclyde
Dr Jeni Harden	School Representative (School of Molecular, Genetic and Population Health Sciences), College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine

Sarah Moffat   Edinburgh University Students' Association Representative

Dr Sara Shinton   Head of Researcher Development, Institute for Academic Development

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Convenor welcomed **Melissa Highton** (Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Services and Assistant Principal Online Learning) and **Stuart Nicol** (Head of eLearning Services / Section Head, Educational Design, Educational Design and Engagement) attending to present on Paper D, and **Sue MacGregor** (Director of Academic Services) attending to present on Papers F to J.

The Convenor reported that **Katie Scott** (Peer Support Manager, Students' Association) would be joining as a co-opted member with expertise relating to the student voice from February 2020.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 18 September 2019

The Committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting.

3. Matters Arising

The Committee discussed the following matters arising:

3.1 School Annual Quality Reports – Actions

The Committee considered the School responses to the Committee's requests for further information in relation to the School Annual Quality Reports. The Committee was content that the responses met the original requests. The following actions were agreed:

- **Literature, Languages and Cultures – Widening Participation**
  The Committee noted that the School was seeking additional funding to support its Widening Participation initiatives, specifically in relation to the training for student volunteers, recruitment into Modern Languages, and administrative support.

  Action: Committee Secretary to refer to Student Bursaries with a request to liaise with the School to discuss funding options.

- **Biological Sciences – Data Monitoring**
  The Committee noted the School response regarding student data on entrants, progression rates, course pass rates, completion rates withdrawal rates, widening participation and black and minority ethnic (BME) students. It was noted that data trends and monitoring would be a key item for discussion at the next meeting in February.

  Action: Committee Secretary to refer findings on data trends and monitoring from the QA annual reporting process, and the February meeting, to the Vice Principal Students for consideration in relation to the curriculum review.

- **Biological Sciences – Student Representation**
  The Committee noted that the School's concerns in relation to the move to a programme based representative system, and in particular the concern that a smaller

number of representatives would result in a narrower perspective and less diversity of student voices being presented.

Action: Committee Secretary to refer issue to the Students' Association.

It was noted that some responses had been delayed due to the industrial action.

Action: Committee Secretary to circulate the outstanding responses when ready.

3.2   Degree Classification Outcomes CLOSED PAPER

The Committee considered the School responses to the Committee's requests for further information in relation to Degree Classification Outcomes. The Committee was content that the responses met the original requests.

3.3   Internal Audit of Assessment

The Convenor reported on discussions with the Deputy Secretary Student Experience regarding plans to maximise the value of quality processes and the use of data. It was noted that this would be a focus of the February meeting.

For Discussion

4.   Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) Annual Update 2018-19

The Committee received and discussed an update on the University's portfolio of existing and proposed MOOCs including: portfolio summary data; new courses launched in 2019; courses completing development; courses approved at the May 2019 strategy board; and enrolment and certificate data for all courses.

The Committee agreed that MOOCs should be included in the annual quality reporting process. It was also agreed that the MOOCs data must include information on new sign-ups.

Action: TH, NK, PW, MH, SN to discuss what MOOCs data should be made available on Power BI and what guidance should be provided to Schools.

5.   College Annual Quality Reports 2018-19

The Committee considered the annual College Quality Reports for 2017-18. The Committee discussed the reports, with particular attention to section 3, 'Themes for SQAC forward planning'.

5.1   College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

The College Dean of Quality thanked Alastair Duthie (Academic Administrator, Enhancement and Quality) for his work on the report. It was noted that the College had implemented a new process, encouraging collaboration across a broader range of staff which had resulted in greater awareness of and engagement with the annual report.

The following was noted for action at University level:

- **Data and Power BI**

The College reported that it was looking at ways of utilising the PowerBI data to support strategic planning particularly in the area of student support for Widening Participation. To facilitate this initiative the College requested additional support and training for key users of the Power BI Dashboards to enhance the ability of staff to analyse and evaluate the qualitative and quantitative data.

- **Course Enhancement Questionnaires**
  The College requested that the role of Course Enhancement Questionnaires (CEQs) be considered alongside other modes of student feedback and the role of each in staff appraisal as part of the impending review. The College also requested that Student Systems consider how appropriate training, guidance and enhanced data sets could be provided to appropriate staff in Schools and Colleges.

- **Feedback Turnaround (15-Day Turnaround)**
  The College reported that the 15-day feedback turnaround had had a negative impact on staff and students. The College expressed support for the planned review of the 15-day turnaround.

- **Impact of Estates on Learning, Teaching and Community Building**
  The College reported that problems with its estate were now at a critical point and were directly impacting on the staff and student experience. It was noted that community building among students and staff was a key strategic priority and therefore inadequate and poorly configured teaching and social spaces act as a significant barrier to effective student community building. The College requested that careful and transparent consideration be given to immediate concerns, with investment in additional space and carefully coordinated redevelopment of existing space.

5.2 College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine

The College Dean of Quality thanked Victoria Bennett (Quality Officer) for her work on the report.

The following was noted for action at University level:

- **Postgraduate Taught (PGT)**
  The College requested a review of the technology and technical support for the online programmes and a review of recruitment through a widening participation lens.

- **Fees**
  The College noted that its competitor's fees are often lower. It was noted that while the programmes can ensure marketing highlights the teaching and research excellence at Edinburgh, it would help if fees remained the same once the student had signed up for the programme and if there was a freeze in the 5% increase in fees per annum.

5.3 College of Science & Engineering

Dean of Education Quality Assurance and Culture thanked Heather Tracey (Deputy Head of Academic Affairs) for her work on the report.

The following was noted for action at University level:

- **Assessment and Progression Tool**
  The College reported concerns that the current lack of capacity in the Assessment and Progression Tool (APT) required schools to set up spreadsheets to manually calculate results where the structure of resit assessment differed from the original structure. It was noted that this significantly increased administrative effort around the resit diet, increased the risk of human error in the calculation of marks and reduced the ability to audit the input and amendment of marks during resits. The College requested that work to address this be prioritised as the current situation, with resits largely having to be administered outside APT, was neither acceptable or sustainable.

- **Graduate Apprenticeships**
  The College reported that the development of Graduate Apprenticeships was an emerging area of activity, with two programmes currently in place (one UG, and one PG) both linked to Skills Development Scotland along with a number of industrial partners. The College requested that the University clarify the overall strategic direction in relation to Graduate Apprenticeships (i.e. whether this activity should be prioritised and, if so, who is responsible for developing a framework for supporting this activity) given the high level of support required to develop and deliver them.

- **Feedback**
  The College reported ongoing difficulty in some Schools in returning timely feedback for coursework within the publicised 15 day feedback turnaround time, as evidenced by student survey scores. It was noted that this was particularly challenging for Schools with large numbers and was linked to the broader discussion about capacity, size and shape. Schools had observed that the 15 working day turnaround time did not necessarily ensure quality of feedback and there were concerns that with the implementation of the new process for approving extensions, it would be difficult to guarantee a 15 day turnaround time as it is expected that, at least in the short-term, there will be an increase in the number of extension requests.

- **Capacity for Computer-Based Examinations**
  The College expressed support for the idea of rolling out computer-based examinations, particularly in relation to the benefit this could bring to examinations through greater use of online assessment and feedback techniques. It was noted that the College is interested to understand what appetite and capacity there might be across the University to develop computer-based examination.

- **Course Enhancement Questionnaires**
  The College expressed support for the proposed review of the purpose and context of CEQs. It was noted that the current CEQ format is not perceived to be fulfilling the intent or need for course-related feedback in contrast with mid-course feedback, which is seen as a valuable and less onerous exercise. It was suggested that the

placement of CEQs within the broader context of feedback mechanisms within the University should be addressed.

- **Timetabling**
  The College requested that the University continues to monitor the impact of timetabling changes and works toward identifying actions that can ensure consistency of experience and communication across all schools.

- **MScR Marking Scheme**
  The College requested that the University level guidelines for the award of MScR bands be reviewed to clarify the criteria for markers and External Examiners.

The Convenor commended the Colleges on the quality of the reports.

Action: Academic Services to direct College issues to relevant individuals/areas for consideration and ensure that responses are disseminated to the College as part of the 2019-20 annual quality reporting process.

6.   **Annual Reports 2018-19**

6.1   **Undergraduate Taught External Examiner Reports: Thematic Analysis**

The Committee considered an analysis of data from the External Examiner Reporting System (EERS) covering undergraduate programmes for the academic year 2018-19.

The Committee noted the high number of commendations across the University and the low number of issues requiring attention, with no significant issues escalated to University-level.

The main theme of commendation across all three Colleges was the assessment process and the most commendations of a single sub-theme was for good practice and innovation (in the Programme Development theme).

Of the issues highlighted by External Examiners the most frequently mentioning were in relation to the provision of information and issues raised in a previous report. The Committee noted that while schools should reflect on and response to External Examiners' comments they are not required to take the action that an External Examiner recommends and a lack of understanding on this point may be a source of dissatisfaction.

The Committee noted that the number of issues remained relatively small in the context of the size of each college. It was agreed that the annual report should also include total numbers as well as percentages in order to provide greater context. However, even where the numbers were small it was important that the Committee was assured that there was no local concentration or pattern of issues at subject or course level that may be hidden in the College level analysis.

Action: Academic Services to include (a) total numbers and (b) more contextual analysis to determine if any patterns or clusters of issues have emerged in specific local areas.

The Committee noted that a number of reports were still outstanding. The Committee had previously asked for the annual analysis to include information on External Examiners terms of office to determine how many of the outstanding reports could be attributable to External Examiners coming to the end of their term of contract. Academic Services confirmed that this data was not held on the central External Examiner Reporting System.

Action: College Deans of Quality to ensure that the outcomes of the Committee's discussions in regard to the External Examiner Reports are made available to and considered by the relevant College committee(s).

6.2 Academic Appeals **– CLOSED PAPER**

The Committee considered the annual report on academic appeals from academic year 2018-19.

6.3 Student Discipline **– CLOSED PAPER**

The Committee considered a report on the number of breaches of the Code of Student Conduct over the course of the academic year 2018/19.

6.4 Complaint Handling

The Committee considered a report on the handling of complaints to the University for the academic year 2018-19.

The Committee noted that there were no readily discernible trends in the complaint handling cases or the range of issues complained about.

The Committee noted that the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) had contacted institutions across Scotland with a consultation document on proposed changes to the Model Complaint Handling Procedure (CHP). Any changes would most likely be implemented from April 2020 and will be covered in next year's report.

6.5 Annual Review of Student Support Services

The Committee considered a report on the review of Student Support Service annual reports for 2018-19, highlighting areas of good practice and themes for consideration in the next reporting cycle.

The Committee noted the issue of recruitment ratios and the suggestion that Student Recruitment and Admissions (SRA) consider the scope for partnership working with Schools to ensure that the level of new student recruitment was sustainable and manageable within existing School resources.

Action: Committee Secretary to refer recruitment ratios issue and suggestion to SRA for consideration.

The Committee discussed the theme of affordability and specifically the financial challenges faced by students and the resulting barriers to participation which had emerged as a key concern for students. The review noted that there was a need to help develop student financial literacy and understanding of the full cost of their time at Edinburgh. Also, work was required to help overcome the stigma associated with financial problems and encourage students to report problems early.

The Committee approved the report and the areas identified for further consideration by the student support services.

Action: The Convenor to include the themes identified in the annual report to the University Executive.

7.   **Students' Association School Reports**

The Committee considered the reports detailing School engagement with the Students' Association.

The Committee welcomed the reports and agreed that they would provide each College with useful insight into their student population at a local level. It was noted that the full reports were available on the Committee wiki:
https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/SQAC/Thursday+5+December+2019

Action: EUSA to include an institutional-level report and an executive summary/overview with next year's set of reports.

8.   **Course Enhancement Questionnaires – Review Proposals**

The Committee considered the proposed framework for a fundamental review of Course Enhancement Questionnaires (CEQs) in the 2019/20 academic year.

The Committee noted the relative success of mid-course feedback but agreed that it could not provide a holistic understanding of the student experience of each course as a whole (particularly in relation to programme level QA and external accreditation requirements). It was also agreed that the CEQ review must ensure that there is appropriate student representation (i.e. College and School level) on the review group and during the consultation process.

Action: Head of Student Analytics and Insights (Student Systems) and Vice President Education (Students' Association) to address student engagement with the review.

The Committee **approved** the governance framework and the Terms of Reference for the CEQ review group.

9.   **UK Quality Code for Higher Education - Advice and Guidance Mapping**

The Committee considered the following set of mappings of the University's policies and practices to the advice and guidance that underpins the UK Quality Code for Higher Education: Admissions, recruitment and widening access; Assessment; Concerns, complaints and appeals; Course design and development; External expertise; Learning and teaching; Monitoring and evaluation; Research degrees; Student engagement

The Committee **approved** the Advice and Guidance Mapping.

10.   **Associated Institution Policy – Minor Amendments**

The Committee considered the proposal Senate Quality Assurance Committee replace Senate Researcher Experience Committee as the academic advice body for the Associated Institution nomination and approval process, and the approving authority for the Associated Institution Policy. It was noted that the proposal reflected the incorporation of postgraduate research degree training into the Committee's remit. It was also noted that, in line with the

provisions in the Delegated Authority Schedule, the paper proposed that the Head of College has responsibility for the nomination and signing process (which reflected current practice for collaborative agreements under the terms of the Delegated Authority Schedule).

The Committee **approved** the amendments to the Associated Institution Policy.

11. **Consultation on Quality Enhancement of UK HE Transnational Education**

The Committee considered the draft response to the consultation on future approaches to the external quality enhancement of UK Higher Education transnational education. The following was agreed:

- Question 12 – important to strike a balance between the costs and impact of reviews – must be proportionate.
- Question 16 – change to strongly disagree with opt-out.
- Question 18 – the number of Transnational Education (TNE) arrangements should be top of the priority list (followed by students, and then number of countries).

Action: Members to send any further comments to the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team, Academic Services by Tuesday 10 December 2019.

12. **Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Third Party Credit Rating Policy**

The Committee considered the updated version of the University's SCQF Third Party Credit Rating Policy.

It was noted that Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC), formerly Curriculum and Student Progression Committee, had been responsible for overseeing the operation of the Policy. However, given the quality-related aspects of the Policy, it was proposed that it may be more appropriate for the Committee oversee the Policy (although APRC may need to be consulted about aspects of the Policy's operation on occasions).

The Committee **approved** the transfer of responsibility for overseeing the SCQF Third Party Credit Rating Policy transfers from Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC) to Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC).

The Committee also noted that, in line with the University's schedule for reviewing policies, the Third Party Credit Rating Policy had been reviewed by Academic Services, in consultation with colleagues from Moray House School of Education and Sport. It was noted that minor changes had been made (primarily changes to Committee names), but that a more substantial review may be undertaken once the ongoing review of the SCQF Quality Assurance Model had been completed in March 2020.

The Committee **approved** updated version of the University's SCQF Third Party Credit Rating Policy.

13. **Student Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) Principles and Operational Guidance**

The Committee discussed the revised Student Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) Principals and Operational Guidance.

It was noted that the principles and of the guidance would receive a 'soft' launch with optional adoption during current academic session to allow for any issues to be identified and addressed before they became mandatory from 2020-21.

The Committee commended the author, Gillian Mackintosh (Academic Policy Officer, Academic Services), for her work on the document.

The Committee **approved** the Principles and Operational Guidance with the proviso that references to 'should' (in section 6.1) be removed from the Guidance document.

For Information and Formal Business

14.   **Internal Periodic Review**

The Committee confirmed that it was content with progress implementing the recommendations from the following internal periodic reviews:

* Postgraduate Programme Review of Edinburgh College of Art (ECA)
* Teaching Programme Review of Engineering
* Teaching Programme Review of History of Art
* Teaching Programme Review of Philosophy

The Committee also noted the forward schedule for Internal Periodic Reviews 2020/21 – 2024/25.

15.   **Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR)**

The Committee noted an update on preparations for ELIR 2020.

The Committee also noted a paper produced by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Scotland identifying the key themes arising from the recommendations and commendations of the first seven reviews completed in the ELIR 4 cycle and a comparison between the ELIR 4 outcomes and the themes identified in the ELIR 3 cycle.

16.   **Subject Benchmark Statements**

The Committee noted that the QAA had also published updates to Subject Benchmark Statements in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects.

Action: Committee Secretary to circulate benchmark statements to relevant Heads of School, Directors of Teaching, and Directors of Professional Services.

17.   **Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

18.   **Date of Next Meeting:**

Thursday 27 February 2019 at 2pm in the Liberton Tower Room, King's Buildings.