Senate Committees'
e-Newsletter

Introduction

Welcome to the first issue of the Senate Committees' Newsletter for 2022/23. This publication aims to keep the University community informed about discussions and decisions occurring within Senate (the University's supreme academic body) and its Standing Committees (the three Committees to which Senate has delegated its authority in particular areas). We hope you find it interesting and informative.

The first issue covers the period August – December 2022, though future issues will be produced on a more regular basis to allow the community to remain up to date with discussions and decisions being taken at Senate and its Committees.

Meetings covered by the August - December 2022 edition:

Date	Committee
11 August	Special Meeting of Senate
8 September	Senate Education Committee (SEC)
13 September	Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC)
14 – 28 September	E-Senate
22 September	Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC)
25 – 31 October	E-Business Meeting of APRC
12 October	Senate
10 November	SEC
18 – 29 November	E-Business Meeting of APRC

Meetings were conducted by electronic business where indicated, or as a Hybrid or Teams Meeting.

Overview of Senate Committees changes

Senate has agreed a series of amendments to Committee membership and management of Committee papers.

Consideration of Resource Implications in Standing Committee Papers
Senate Standing Committees have agreed to ensure that resourcing considerations, particularly issues around staff workload, are factored into discussions and recommendations of Committees.

Guidelines for Committee Papers
Senate approved guidelines for Committee Papers which set out the process for handling closed Committee papers, see Paper F: https://edin.ac/3ETq5KL

Senate Standing Committee Membership
Senate agreed to add three of its elected academic members, nominally assigned to each College, to each of the Senate Standing Committees. The updated memberships are available on each Committee page: https://edin.ac/3H2aYkW

Senate Exception Committee Membership
Senate agreed to increase the representation of elected academic members from two to six positions. Nominations for these positions are open until 12 December, and the process is expected to conclude soon after this date. https://edin.ac/3VsVMl1

Report from Senate

Overall responsibility for regulating and superintending teaching and discipline, and promoting research.

Documentation for the E-Senate meeting held from 14 – 28 September 2022 and the Senate meetings held on 11 August and 12 October 2022 are available at http://edin.ac/1FL8RrJ

Key items covered by these meetings included:

External Effectiveness Review

Under the Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance, the University is required to commission an external effectiveness review of Senate and its Committees at least every five years.

Senate agreed to bring forward the next External Effectiveness Review to 2022/23. An update on the external review will be provided to Senate members by email once available. The externally facilitated review is expected to advance prior to the next Ordinary meeting scheduled for 8 February 2023, and the external reviewer is expected to produce a report, summary of findings and recommendations for presentation at the Senate meeting on 24 May 2023.

Code of Student Conduct
(https://edin.ac/3iuXEuQ, Paper F)

Following in-depth discussion at APRC, Senate commented on proposed revisions to the Code of Student Conduct. The changes are designed to equip the Code to deal more appropriately with allegations of serious misconduct. Senate members' comments were fed forward into the presentation of the Code to Court on 5 December 2022. The revised version of the Code has now been approved by Court.

Sustainable Travel Policy
(https://edin.ac/3iuXEuQ, Paper G)

Senate considered a paper outlining concerns regarding the Sustainable Travel Policy, and the Principal subsequently fed the views of Senate into the November 2022 meeting of University Executive.

Senate endorsed the paper's analysis of the negative impact of aspects of the policy, and endorsed the proposals that those with primary executive oversight should seek to address these issues, including removing the single supplier rule for academic travel.

For further information about Senate matters, please contact SenateSupport@ed.ac.uk

Report from Senate Education Committee (SEC)

Responsible, on behalf of Senate, for taught and research student matters, particularly strategy and policy concerning learning, teaching and the development of curriculum.

Documentation for the meetings of SEC held on 8 September and 10 November 2022 is available at https://edin.ac/2oR9kfB.

Key items considered were:

Assessment & Feedback Principles & Priorities
(https://edin.ac/3GYhRmZ, Paper B)

SEC considered and approved a final version of University 'Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities'. The document sets out key principles and priorities to guide practice in assessment and feedback for all taught provision. The principles set the baseline expectation for quality, ensuring a degree of consistency of practice across Schools. The priorities set the strategic direction for enhancement of assessment and feedback.

In the current academic year, Schools are being asked to focus on reviewing existing practice against the principles and priorities and to identify areas for action with a view to demonstrating full alignment with the principles and significant action against the priorities from 2023-24. However, the following elements of the Principles and Priorities should be applied in full from 2022-23: 1.4, 2.5, 4.2, 4.3, 6.1 and 6.4.

Edinburgh University Students' Association Vice President Education Priorities 2022/23
(https://edin.ac/3GYhRmZ, Paper C)

The EUSA Vice President Education set out their priorities for the year. These are:

- Increasing academic transparency and student academic support
- Working towards a more accessible and inclusive curriculum
- Improving staff and student engagement with the student voice

Academic and Pastoral Support Policy for Academic Year 2022/23
(https://edin.ac/3GYhRmZ, Paper F)

SEC reviewed and approved a revised version of the Academic and Pastoral Support Policy for academic year 2022/23. The Policy has been updated to take account of the fact that in the current academic year, the Personal Tutor system and the new Student Support Model are running in parallel. The Policy will be reviewed and updated again ahead of academic year 2023/24 to cover the next phase of implementation of the new Student Support Model.

Examination Format
(https://edin.ac/3AZuZ7D, Paper B)

The EUSA Vice-President Education shared the findings of a survey seeking students' views on the move to the majority of exams being closed-book and in-person in 2022/23. SEC agreed to ask Schools to consider the issues raised in the paper; to engage in open and detailed discussion with students about why particular forms of assessment are being used in the 2022/23 exam diets; and to ensure that students are adequately supported and prepared to undertake these assessments.

A sub-group of SEC will also meet in December to consider arrangements for the August 2023 resit diet, with a view to informing Schools of these arrangements in advance of meetings of January 2023 Exam Boards. Finally, SEC committed to undertaking a review of the December 2022 exam diet early in 2023.

Futures for our Teaching Spaces: Principles and Visions for Connecting Space to the Curriculum
(https://edin.ac/3AZuZ7D, Paper C)

The Committee discussed and endorsed a paper raising issues around the relationship between space and the curriculum, and the way in which physical environments support pedagogy, and vice-versa. The paper took account not only of internal aspirations, for example around the student experience and curriculum transformation, but also of issues around sustainability, planetary health and a desire to create architectures of enduring value to the world.

Curriculum Transformation Update
(https://edin.ac/3AZuZ7D, Paper F)

Following the update provided to Senate on 12 October, SEC received a further update on the development of a proposed Curriculum Framework, which will be considered via the appropriate University governance channels (including Senate and other groups) early in 2023.

The paper provided information about progress with the main elements of the programme, namely development of the Edinburgh Student Vision, Curriculum Design Principles and Programme Archetypes. It also included a first attempt at articulating some of the rules and guidance for applying and using the Curriculum Framework.

National Student Survey 2022 and 2023
(https://edin.ac/3AZuZ7D, Paper H)

The Committee discussed the outcomes of the 2022 NSS at its September meeting. At its November meeting, SEC approved the two banks of optional NSS questions that will be put to University of Edinburgh students in 2023: 'Welfare Resources and Facilities', and 'Assessment'.

For further information about any SEC matter, please contact Philippa.Ward@ed.ac.uk

Report from Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC)

Responsible, on behalf of Senate, for the University's framework of academic policy and regulation, apart from those aspects which are primarily parts of the Quality Assurance Framework.

Documentation for the 22 September 2022 meeting and October and November e-business meetings is available at http://edin.ac/2pAaOv7

Key items covered by these meetings included:

Academic Misconduct Procedure
(https://edin.ac/3EUPMu9, Paper A)

Following consultation with School and College Academic Misconduct Officers, the Committee approved revisions to the Academic Misconduct Procedure to take effect from January.

The revised Procedure has given SAMOs new powers to apply penalties in minor specific cases including meeting students to discuss good academic practice. SAMOs can meet with a student before deciding how to proceed with a case, and a fifteen working day turnaround has been introduced for SAMOs to complete handling of cases. Further amendments have been made to address inconsistencies in practice relating to the award of face value marks and the ratification and publication of marks.

The revised Procedure will be published in January at: Academic misconduct | The University of Edinburgh

Online exam arrangements for 2022/23 – Closed Paper

The Committee approved guidance on practical arrangements for managing submission deadlines for online exams during centrally-scheduled exam diets in the 2022/23 session, including the resit diet. College Offices will disseminate the guidance to Schools in advance of the December 2022 exam diet. Academic Services produced guidance which has been circulated to Colleges and Schools.

These guidelines only apply to on campus programmes, and the Committee agreed to revisit the practical arrangements for online exams ahead of the 2023/24 session.

Coursework Extensions and Special Circumstances Task Group (https://edin.ac/3EUPMu9, Paper E)

In May 2022 the Committee established a task group to review the Coursework Extensions and Special Circumstances policies. The task group has met twice so far and is due to conclude its work by the end of the academic year.

Discussions to date have highlighted that achieving a balanced policy which equally promotes staff and student wellbeing is likely to be challenging and it may prove ambitious to deliver a revised policy within the relevant timeframe.

For further information on APRC matters, please contact Olivia.Hayes@ed.ac.uk
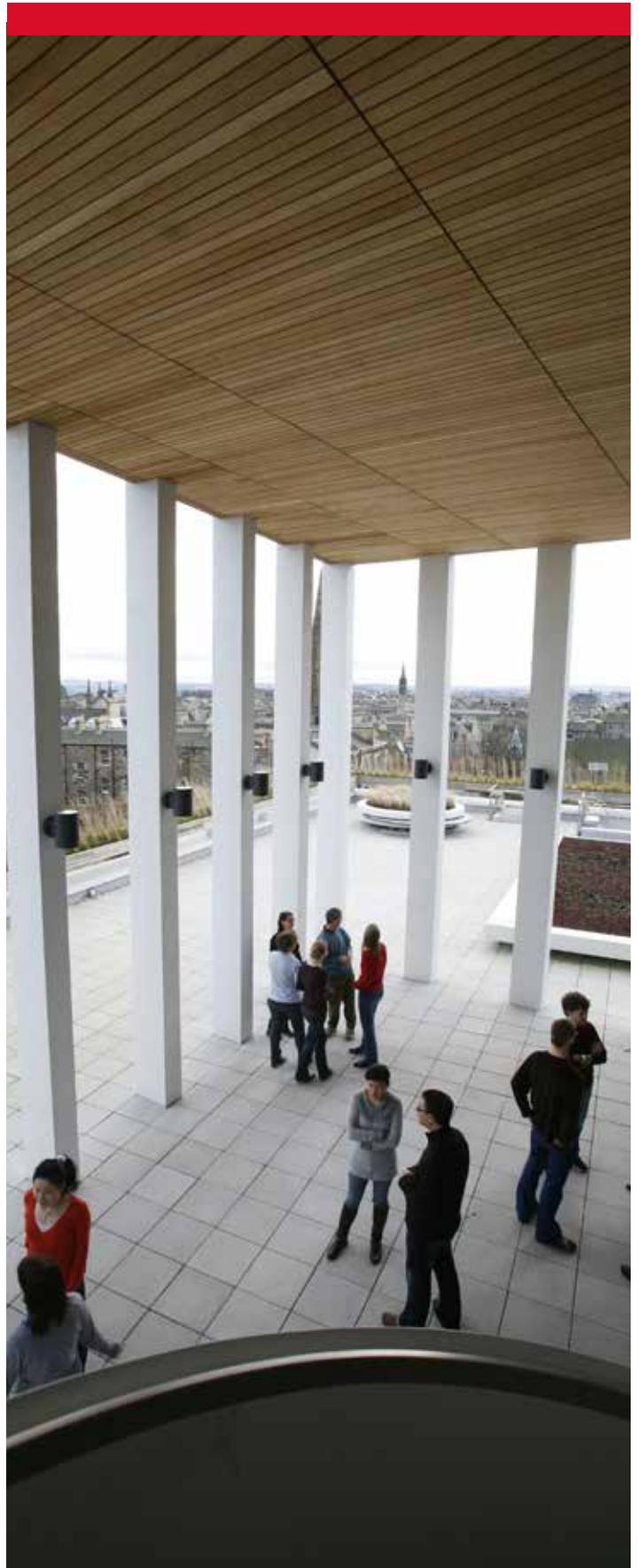
Report from Quality Assurance Committee (QAC)

Responsible, on behalf of Senate, for the framework which assures standards and enhances the quality of the student learning experience.

Documentation for the meeting held on 8 September 2022 is available at http://edin.ac/1MUwq8L

Key topics discussed included:

School Annual Quality Reports 2021-22
(https://edin.ac/3EW4lOj, Paper B)

The Committee considered the School Annual Quality Reports for 2021-22 and confirmed that the reports had evidenced the quality of provision and academic standards across the University. The following areas were referred for further action at University level: Extensions and Special Circumstances; Resourcing; On-Campus Transition; and the Student Voice Policy.

The Committee agreed that the streamlined process that had operated in 2021-22 in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic had worked well, and commended the Directors of Quality and all the School/Deanery staff who had collaborated in the process for their excellent work once again under very challenging circumstances.

Internal Periodic Review Themes 2021-22
(https://edin.ac/3EW4lOj, Paper C)

The Committee considered the areas of good practice and further development arising from Internal Periodic Reviews held in 2021-22. The following themes of good practice were identified across a number of reviews: the dedicated commitment, collegiality, and support shown by both academic and professional services staff; student support and learning support; community building; and approaches to listening and responding to the student voice.

Areas for further development at University level were identified as: staff support and development, in particular guidance, training and support for postgraduate tutors and demonstrators, and fora for sharing practice; equality, diversity and inclusion in relation to attainment gaps, widening participation, and accessibility requirements; allocation of staff workload; and the student voice, in particular closing the student feedback loop and proactively engaging students.

Personal Tutor (PT) System Oversight Group
(https://edin.ac/3EW4lOj, Paper E)

The Committee discussed an update on the activities of the Personal Tutor System Oversight Group, in particular the annual review of the School Personal Tutoring Statement (SPTS). The 2022-23 academic session will be a transitional year for student support across the University with the Personal Tutor system and the new Student Support Model running in parallel. The Student Support Project Board will continue beyond September 2023 to monitor consistency of implementation and evaluate the impact of these changes on the student experience. Beyond this, SQAC anticipates that it will have a central role in monitoring the quality and effectiveness of the new student support arrangements.

For further information about any QAC matter, please contact Brian.Connolly@ed.ac.uk

Remaining Senate & Standing Committee Dates 2022/23

Senate	E-Senate	SEC	APRC	QAC
-	-	-	-	8 Dec 2022
8 Feb 2023	11-25 Jan 2023	19 Jan 2023	26 Jan 2023	23 Feb 2023
-	-	9 Mar 2023	23 Mar 2023	27 Apr 2023
24 May 2023	26 Apr – 10 May 2023	11 May 2023	25 May 2023	18 May 2023