Senate Committees'
e-Newsletter

Introduction

Welcome to the final edition of the Senate Committees' Newsletter for 2018/19. This publication aims to keep the University community better informed about discussions and decisions occurring within Senate (the University's supreme academic body) and its Standing Committees (the four Committees to which Senate has delegated its authority in particular areas). We hope you find it interesting and informative.

Report from Senate

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

Documentation for the E-Senate meeting held from 7 to 15 May 2019 and the Senate meeting held on 29 May 2019 is available at http://edin.ac/1FL8RrJ

The theme for the presentation and discussion section of the Senate meeting was **widening participation**. The meeting focussed on the University's Widening Participation Strategy and ways in which colleagues from across the institution are implementing its four strands: *Aspiration and Early Engagement; Support to Get In; Support to Succeed;* and *Support to Progress.*

Senate also considered and responded to recommendations stemming from the recent externally-facilitated review of Senate (https://edin.ac/2I6aDhV Paper B) and internal review of the structure of the Senate Committees (https://edin.ac/2I6aDhV Paper C). It agreed the following changes to the Senate Committees:

- Researcher Experience Committee (REC) will be dissolved.
- Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) will be renamed 'Education Committee' and its remit and membership will be extended to include strategic postgraduate research student matters (formerly the responsibility of REC).
- Responsibility for early career research matters will pass from REC to Research Policy Group (RPG).
- Minor changes will be made to Curriculum and Student Progression Committee (CSPC) including renaming it 'Academic Policy and Regulations Committee'.
- No substantive changes will be made to Quality Assurance Committee (QAC).
- Arrangements for the long-term governance of the broader student experience will require further consideration. However, decisions around this will be deferred for a year in recognition of the fact that a sub-committee of the University Executive is currently fulfilling this role by overseeing the development and implementation of the Student Experience Action Plan.
- Research Policy Group will have dual reporting lines into both Senate and the University Executive going forwards.

Revised terms of reference and memberships for the three Senate Committees will be drawn up in the coming months.

For further information about any Senate matter, please contact philippa.ward@ed.ac.uk

This newsletter is produced by Academic Services.

Please direct any queries or suggestions to Philippa.Ward@ed.ac.uk.

Further information on Senate and its Standing Committees is available at http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/committees.

Report from Learning & Teaching Committee (LTC)

Responsible for undergraduate, taught postgraduate and other forms of academic provision, apart from postgraduate research and higher degrees.

Documentation for the meeting held on 22 May 2019 is available at http://edin.ac/1tHNcjB

Key topics considered included:

Careers and Employability Update
(https://edin.ac/2I4yApS Paper C)

LTC received an update on progress with careers and employability, and noted that the most recent development was the completion of a light-touch mapping of current practice within Schools. The mapping identifies an encouraging range of activity and examples of best practice. 'Enterprise Education' and 'Reflection' are areas for improvement, and there is a need for Schools to be more explicit about the employability-related aspects of their curricula to ensure that both staff and students are fully aware of these. Priorities for 2019/20 include reviewing the University's graduate attributes framework, and undertaking an additional piece of work to gather student views on careers and employability. Employability will be central to any future discussions around curriculum review and reform.

Enhancing Doctoral Training Provision
(https://edin.ac/2I4yApS Paper D)

The landscape for Postgraduate Research (PGR) training is changing and in this context, there is a need for the University to be able to present a coherent picture of its provision. LTC therefore approved a proposal for a working group to develop a 'Doctoral College' providing a cross-cutting approach to communication between Colleges and Support Groups around PGR matters.

Mid-Course Feedback
(https://edin.ac/2I4yApS Paper F)

An evaluation of mid-course feedback was undertaken in March 2019, and LTC received a report of the findings. Staff responses were broadly positive, with use of mid-course feedback being high amongst respondents and it being valued by those who used it. Over a third of those who responded noted that the feedback had brought to their attention issues that they would otherwise not have been aware of, and the majority of the issues raised were being resolved within the course timeframe.

In light of these findings, LTC agreed the following:

- Mid-course feedback should also be used in taught postgraduate (PGT) courses. This will be encouraged from September 2019, whilst recognising that colleagues will need time to adjust and put appropriate systems in place.

- Academic Services would coordinate the production of additional guidance on what constitutes mid-course feedback, and would share examples of best practice.

- Mid-course feedback should be standard for courses running for 10 or more weeks.

- The term 'mid-course feedback' should be used consistently, and the term 'mid-semester feedback' should be avoided.

Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) – Principles
(https://edin.ac/2I4yApS Paper H)

LTC approved a set of principles which will be applied when the University is considering whether or not an activity should be included in Section 6.1 of the HEAR (the section which records information about students' wider achievements). The principles will be published on the University's HEAR website in the near future.

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

Report from Curriculum & Student Progression Committee (CSPC)

Responsible for the academic regulatory framework, apart from those aspects which are primarily parts of the Quality Assurance Framework.

Documentation for the meeting held on 30 May 2019 is available at http://edin.ac/2y83LIO

Key points discussed included:

Assessment Regulations
(https://edin.ac/2ItABuS Papers I and J)

The Committee approved the draft Taught Assessment Regulations for 2019/20. Changes include a number of clarifications regarding resit assessment, covering entitlement to resit for Visiting Students and students on Tier 4 visas, and the use of "null sits" where students have special circumstances.

CSPC also approved revised Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees, which include provision for Masters by Research students to resubmit their dissertation or research project where they have marginally failed at the first attempt.

Support for Study (Closed paper)
The Committee approved changes to the Support for Study Policy, which include the introduction of a third stage to the process. In rare cases, this may lead to a student being required to take an interruption of studies where all other options have been exhausted. The Committee had originally considered proposals for changes to the Policy in January 2019, and noted the revisions which had been made to these in response to feedback from the Students' Association.

Postgraduate Taught Assessment and Progression
(https://edin.ac/2ItABuS Paper G)

CSPC had conducted a consultation with Colleges and Schools regarding proposals to remove the progression hurdle between the taught and research components of the standard taught Master's model. The Committee considered the feedback received, noting strong reservations from some areas about the impact upon supervisors of supporting students whose performance in the taught component had been weaker, and the risk to students of undertaking research for which they may not be adequately prepared. The Committee agreed that the current arrangements with regard to progression and award criteria should remain unchanged for now.

Academic Misconduct
(https://edin.ac/2ItABuS Paper A)

The Committee approved proposed changes designed to clarify and streamline the Academic Misconduct Investigation Procedures, for introduction from 2019/20. The Committee also endorsed a proposal to conduct further work to produce guidance on aspects of academic misconduct, including: definitions of academic misconduct offences; the difference between proofreading and editing; and the use of text-matching software such as Turnitin. Academic Services will begin work on the guidance over the summer.

For further information about any CSPC matter, please contact adam.bunni@ed.ac.uk

Report from Quality Assurance Committee

Responsible for the University's academic quality assurance framework

Documentation for the meeting held on 23 May 2019 is available at http://edin.ac/1MUwq8L

External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy
(https://edin.ac/2IwkcWF Paper C)

The Committee approved changes to the Policy, which has been reviewed in consultation with Colleges, for consistency with the revised UK Quality Code and with UK employment and data protection law. The review has simplified the Policy to be more user-friendly and removed redundant or replicated content. Academic Services will communicate the approved Policy as part of the annual policies and regulations communication in June 2019.

Providing Summaries of Student Feedback to School Representatives
(https://edin.ac/2IwkcWF Paper G)

The Committee discussed and approved a proposal to provide student School Representatives with access to reports on the main student surveys (National Student Survey, Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey and Postgraduate Research Experience Survey). This is being done as part of activity to support the current Enhancement Theme, 'Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience'. Providing School Representatives with a summary of the student survey data is a key way of helping them to develop understanding and tools to effectively represent their cohort, both in committees and in a wider context.

Student Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) Escalation of Issues
(https://edin.ac/2IwkcWF Paper D)

The Committee discussed different approaches to escalating issues that cannot be addressed within SSLCs: at present there is no clear or consistent way for issues which are relevant to the student experience but cannot be addressed at programme or School-level to be escalated to College or University-level.

The Committee noted that while it is important to have a clear process in place for escalation, it may not be appropriate to have the same approach in place in every School. Colleges and Academic Services will work with Schools to ensure that they have an approach in place that is appropriate for their particular context.

Report from Researcher Experience Committee (REC)

Responsible for postgraduate research degree training, higher degrees and provision for the training of other, early career researchers.

Documentation for the meeting held on 14 May 2019 is available at
http://edin.ac/1Q528n5
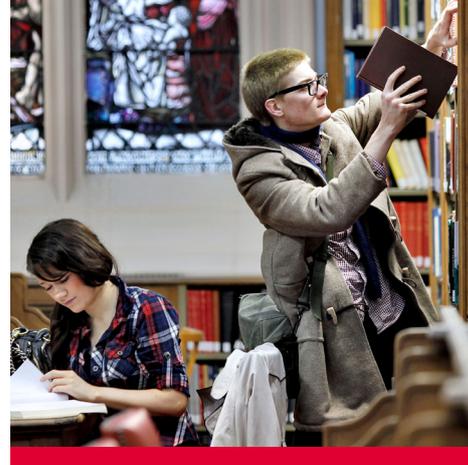
Research Staff Scoping Project
(https://edin.ac/2IxFvab Paper A)

The Institute for Academic Development (IAD) has surveyed research staff to identify how they are engaging with and benefiting from University support and systems. The key findings are that while research staff know support is available, they do not always know where to find it. Career development is also a recurring theme in the responses.

REC supported a recommendation for IAD to work with Communications and Marketing to develop a single, web-based information hub for research staff. The Committee also supported a proposal for IAD and the Careers Service to develop a case for University support for a specialist careers adviser for research staff.

Excellence in Doctoral Training and Career Development
(https://edin.ac/2IxFvab Paper B)

The Excellence in Doctoral Education and Career Development Programme is a comprehensive programme of work approved and governed by REC. Launched in January 2017, it has focussed on three specific and interrelated areas of the postgraduate research experience: supervisor support and training; mentorship and wellbeing; and personal and professional development record. More information on the programme is available on the Academic Services' website: https://edin.ac/2Ix4wSX

REC received an update on the Programme and noted that:

- A new working group will look at developing online supervisor training.

- A PhD intern is continuing to work on peer mentoring for PhD students, with oversight from IAD and the Students' Association.

- The Service Excellence Programme will take forward recommendations around a personal and professional development record for PGR students, also referred as the 'PGR Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR)'.

May / June 2019
Meetings covered by the May / June 2019 Edition

Date	Committee
7-15 May	E-Senate
14 May	REC
22 May	LTC
23 May	QAC
29 May	Senate
30 May	CSPC