



Academic Services  
November to December 2017

# Senate Committees' *e-Newsletter*

## Introduction

Welcome to the second edition of the Senate Committees' Newsletter for 2017/18. This publication aims to keep the University community better informed about discussions and decisions occurring within Senate and its Standing Committees. We hope you find it interesting and informative.

## Report from Curriculum and Student Progression Committee (CSPC)

Documentation for the meeting held on 23 November is available at <http://edin.ac/2y83LIO>

Key points discussed included:

### **Service Excellence Programme** (<http://edin.ac/2yOJwU8>, Paper D)

The Committee received an update on the Student Administration and Support strand of the Programme. In relation to the special circumstances, extensions and concessions strand, the Committee received a verbal update which highlighted some potentially significant policy changes associated with the Service Excellence Programme. The Committee will consider policy proposals in March 2018.

### **Coursework Extensions and Special Circumstances: Employment Commitments and Caring Responsibilities** (<http://edin.ac/2yOJwU8>, Paper E)

The Committee agreed that, from 2018/19, valid reasons for coursework extensions will include exceptional and significant change in employment commitments, where this is beyond a student's control, and exceptional (i.e. non-routine) caring responsibilities. Students will also be able to cite exceptional caring responsibilities for the consideration of special circumstances.

### **Academic Misconduct – an overview and future planning** (<http://edin.ac/2yOJwU8>, Paper F)

The Committee considered an overview of current practices and preventative measures taken in relation to academic misconduct,

including a discussion of recommendations provided by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in relation to contract cheating, and agreed to develop proposals for further activities to promote good academic practice and to address academic misconduct.

### **Academic Year Dates 2019/20 and Provisional Academic Year Dates 2020/21** (<http://edin.ac/2yOJwU8>, Paper K)

The Committee approved academic year dates for 2019/20 and provisional academic year dates for 2020/21. Current projections indicate that the period for revision in Semester 1 of 2020 will be truncated. Further modelling of examinations and discussion of options to mitigate pressures on the revision period will be considered before 2020/21 dates are fully approved by the Committee next year.

### **Data Science, Technology and Innovation Distance Learning Programme** (<http://edin.ac/2yOJwU8>, Paper A)

The Committee approved the proposed governance and operating model for this suite of distance learning programmes, which will be managed by the College of Science and Engineering.

For further information about any CSPC matter, please contact [ailsa.taylor@ed.ac.uk](mailto:ailsa.taylor@ed.ac.uk)

This newsletter is produced by Academic Services.

Please direct any queries or suggestions to [Philippa.Ward@ed.ac.uk](mailto: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)

Documentation for the meeting held on 15 November is available at <http://edin.ac/1tHNcjB>

Key topics considered included:

## Timetabling

The Head of Timetabling and Examination Services provided LTC with a presentation on the Global Offline Timetable Modelling Project. This Project is aiming to model a more flexible and dynamic timetable that works well for all. Further information about the scope of the Project can be found in the draft minutes of the meeting (<http://edin.ac/2AbRuaK>). It should be noted that the Project is evaluative only at this stage.



## Course and Programme Design

(<http://edin.ac/2hrH8ZM>, Paper B)

Recognising its importance to feedback quality, LTC discussed course and programme design and the resources currently available within the University to support this. It was agreed that, from this academic year, support for Boards of Studies Conveners will be strengthened to offer training in both the mechanistic aspects of course and programme approval and the underlying pedagogy.

## Class Representatives System

(<http://edin.ac/2hrH8ZM>, Paper C)

LTC considered proposals brought to the Committee by the Students' Association Vice-President (Education) to reform the University's class representatives system. These proposals would involve a programme-level system under which the number of class representatives would be reduced, but the service offered would be more consistent and of a higher quality. The Committee supported these proposals, and encouraged the Students' Association to open discussion with Colleges and Schools about how to take them forward. The University is strongly committed to listening to the student voice, and it is hoped that a revised class representatives system, in combination with recently introduced mid-Semester feedback, will lead to further enhancement in this area.

## Lecture Recording Policy

The Committee approved a draft of the Lecture Recording Policy to be circulated for consultation in January. Responses will be sought from all Schools and Colleges, and the Policy will come into effect at the start of academic year 2018/19 to coincide with the integration of the lecture recording and timetabling systems. The Policy is intended to support a consistently good experience for students and to provide clarity so that lecturers can use the service with confidence.

## University-Wide Courses Task Group

(<http://edin.ac/2hrH8ZM>, Paper E)

LTC considered the final report of the Task Group which, in line with the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy, was established to map current University-wide courses; identify gaps in provision; produce a framework for the development of new courses; and explore ways in which courses might be resourced.

LTC welcomed the report, and wider consultation on the recommendations contained within it will now be undertaken. Findings will be presented at the University's Learning and Teaching Conference scheduled for June 2018.

## Virtual Learning Environment

(<http://edin.ac/2hrH8ZM>, Paper F)

LTC approved a proposal to undertake a project to review the current use of the University's main virtual learning environment, Blackboard Learn, with a view to adopting a minimum standard course presentation across the institution.

## Computer-Aided Assessment

(<http://edin.ac/2hrH8ZM>, Paper G)

The Committee considered the specific feedback and assessment tools that are currently supported by Information Services. It agreed that additional governance will be introduced in this area to ensure that the University continues to maintain an appropriate balance between innovation and proliferation of systems.

## Learning and Teaching Strategy

(<http://edin.ac/2hrH8ZM>, Paper H)

The University's Learning and Teaching Strategy, launched in March 2017, contains many strands. Priorities for implementation in 2017/18 and 2018/19 have been identified under the following headings: working in partnership with students; nurturing a learning community that supports students; recruiting and nurturing excellent teaching staff; and developing our curriculum. The work will be taken forward by the relevant Assistant Principals.

## Widening Participation Strategy

LTC considered a second draft of the University's Widening Participation Strategy. This will now be taken to meetings of Central Management Group and Court in the New Year, and will be launched in March or April 2018.

## Student Mental Health and Academic Policy

(<http://edin.ac/2hrH8ZM>, Paper P)

The Committee considered a discussion paper on the relationship between student mental health and academic policy. Members recognised the importance of considering the potential mental health implications of any new policy introduced, and also noted the complexities around mental health and academic work and assessment. Schools and Colleges are encouraged to reflect on the implications for student mental health when developing their curricula and academic policies and procedures.

For further information about any LTC matter, please contact [Philippa.Ward@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Philippa.Ward@ed.ac.uk)

November / December 2017  
Meetings covered by the  
November / December 2017 Edition

Date	Committee
15 November	LTC
23 November	CSPC
30 November	QAC
7 December	REC

# Report from Quality Assurance Committee

Documentation for the meeting held on 30 November is available at <http://edin.ac/1MUwq8L>

Key points discussed included:

## **Student Voice Policy and Guidance for Student Staff Liaison Committees (SSLCs)** (<http://edin.ac/2y7N14i>, Papers I and J)

The Committee approved a new Student Voice Policy which consolidates existing policies and formalises mid-course feedback as a policy requirement for undergraduate courses. The Committee also approved a revised version of the guidance regarding Student Staff Liaison Committees (SSLCs). The Policy and guidance are available on the Academic Services and Student Voice webpages at <http://edin.ac/2yOQIVK>

## **UK Quality Code for Higher Education – Consultation** (<http://edin.ac/2y7N14i>, Paper B)

The Committee discussed the joint University and Students' Association draft response to the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment (UKSCQA) consultation on a new approach to the Expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Whilst welcoming the proposals for simplification, which will help students and staff engage with the Quality Code, the Committee was disappointed with various aspects of the proposals. The University has now submitted its response, following discussion at University Court.

## **Annual Monitoring, Reporting and Review – Minor Changes** (<http://edin.ac/2y7N14i>, Paper C)

The Committee approved minor changes to the Annual Monitoring, Reporting and Review Policy and associated templates in response to an evaluation of the first cycle of this process, and in order to place greater emphasis on ensuring that courses and programmes remain sustainable. Work to support Schools with the annual monitoring, review and reporting processes continues across the academic year.

## Further Information

### **Learning and Teaching Conference**

The first University of Edinburgh Learning and Teaching Conference will take place on Wednesday 20 June 2018 in the John McIntyre Conference Centre, Pollock Halls. Please save the date.

## **Undergraduate Taught External Examiner Reports: Thematic Analysis 2016/17** (<http://edin.ac/2y7N14i>, Paper D)

The Committee considered an analysis of data from the External Examiner Reporting System (EERS) covering undergraduate programmes for the academic year 2016/17. The report noted a high number of commendations across the University and a low number of issues that require attention. Of the issues highlighted by External Examiners the most frequently mentioned were in relation to internal moderation and induction of External Examiners.

## **Annual Reports on Academic Appeals, Student Discipline, and Complaint Handling** (<http://edin.ac/2y7N14i>, Papers E, F & G)

The Committee considered the annual reports on Academic Appeals, Student Discipline and Complaint Handling. It noted some early signs of a plateauing in the volume of academic appeals, following an upward trend in recent years, and also an increasing number of student conduct cases related to allegations of sexual violence. Guidelines have been developed and published for students who have experienced sexual violence, and training and guidance for staff (including Conduct Investigators) to help with these cases.

## **Internal Periodic Review: University Remit, Reflective Report template and guidance 2018/19** (<http://edin.ac/2y7N14i>, Paper K)

The Committee approved revised versions of the University Remit and Reflective Report template and guidance to ensure compliance with the Scottish Funding Council guidance to higher education institutions on quality from August 2017-2022. The Schools/subject areas to be reviewed in 2018/19 and other relevant stakeholders will be advised of the revised remit and reflective report guidance and template. The documents will be made available on the Academic Services webpage.



## **Oversight of the Personal Tutor system** (<http://edin.ac/2y7N14i>, Paper L)

The Committee noted that the PT system oversight group had agreed actions to examine ways to improve the communication of School Personal Tutoring Statements and devise an easy reference guide for PTs akin to the 'Here to Help' guide currently available to students.

## **Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) Accreditation Committee 2016/17** (<http://edin.ac/2y7N14i>, Paper M)

The Committee noted a report from the College of Science and Engineering Accreditation Committee for Scotland's Rural College (SRUC).

## **Internal Periodic Review Responses** (<http://edin.ac/2y7N14i>, Paper P)

The Committee confirmed that it was content with progress in relation to the Taught Programme Reviews for Asian Studies, Design, and Ecological and Environmental Sciences.

For further information about any QAC matter, please contact [b.connolly@ed.ac.uk](mailto:b.connolly@ed.ac.uk)

# Report from Researcher Experience Committee (REC)

Documentation for the meeting held on 7 December is available at <http://edin.ac/1Q528n5>

Key topics discussed included:

## Excellence in Doctoral Research and Career Development (<http://edin.ac/2y7ZZ23>, Papers B, C & D)

The Committee was updated on the three key strands of this programme of work.

**Supervisor Training and Support:** the Committee noted good progress in setting up a PGR supervisor network and revising the IAD webpages to include dedicated Postgraduate Research supervisor pages, and that IAD plans to pilot an enhanced programme of support for supervisors in 2017/18. The Committee agreed to appoint a short life Task Group to explore the development of a CPD framework for PGR supervisors.

**Mentoring and Wellbeing:** the Committee noted that the Students' Association and IAD are appointing a joint six-month post to explore the expansion of peer mentoring to postgraduate research students, and supported the plan to draw up guidance for staff acting as a mentor for a PGR student in a pastoral capacity. The Committee discussed a detailed and thorough report into student wellbeing strategies for PGR students, and agreed to refer a range of recommendations to the University's Mental Health Strategy Group and other relevant areas.

**Personal and Professional Development Record:** the Committee considered the final report from the Task Group on the PGR Personal and Professional Development Record. The Committee supported the Group's recommended adoption of an achievement record for postgraduate research students, to be called a Postgraduate Research Higher Education Achievement Record (PGR HEAR), and supported the more specific recommendations regarding the content of this record. It agreed to pass these recommendations to the Service Excellence Programme, so it could consider how to implement them as part of the planned PGR lifecycle strand. The Committee recognised that wider consultation with Schools and Colleges regarding the recommendations would be required at that stage.

## Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) 2017

The Committee considered responses from each College to the PRES 2017 results. While response rates are lower than for the National Student Survey, they are higher than in the 2015 PRES. The Committee noted the following key themes:

- the availability of space for PGR students;
- building communities of PGR students; providing opportunities for students to interact with academic staff; and providing wider opportunities for training.

The Committee agreed to convene a meeting of Heads of Graduate Schools from across the University to address specific topics that have emerged from the PRES 2017 results, and other strategic issues associated with PGR students.

## Postgraduate Research Student Representation (<http://edin.ac/2y7ZZ23>, Paper I)

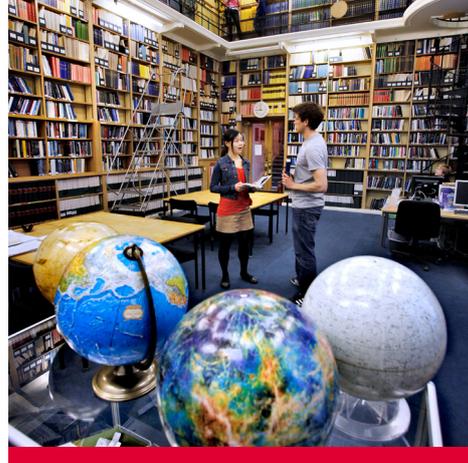
The Committee discussed current student representation opportunities available for PGR students. It recognised that challenges to providing effective student representation included inconsistency in organisation and management of provision between Schools; the tensions felt by PGR students in being both students and staff members; and difficulties in PGR representatives communicating with students.

The Committee discussed a range of initial recommendations presented by the Students' Association to address these challenges, and agreed to support the Students' Association in developing these ideas further.

## PhD with Integrated Study (<http://edin.ac/2y7ZZ23>, Paper J)

The Committee considered the summary of current models of four-year PhDs with Integrated Study. It recognised that the number of programmes has increased substantially in recent years, and that some Schools are highlighting issues regarding the practical operation of these programmes. Since the volume of PhDs with Integrated Study is likely to continue to increase, the Committee agreed that Academic Services should seek feedback from Schools and Colleges on their experience of these programmes, including student feedback where possible, with a view to learning from success, and identifying any challenges where guidance or amendments to regulation would be helpful.

For further information about any REC matter, please contact [susan.hunter5@ed.ac.uk](mailto:susan.hunter5@ed.ac.uk)



## Remaining Senate Committee Dates for 2017/18

Senate	E-Senate	LTC	CSPC	REC	QAC
7 Feb 18	16-24 Jan 18	24 Jan 18	25 Jan 18	16 Jan 18	8 Feb 18
		14 Mar 18	22 Mar 18	13 Mar 18	18 Apr 18
30 May 18	8-16 May 18	23 May 18	31 May 18	15 May 18	24 May 18