Senate Committees'
e-Newsletter

Introduction

Welcome to the first Senate Committees' Newsletter of 2021. 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 three 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 19 to 27 January 2021 and the Senate meeting held on 10 February 2021 is available at http://edin.ac/1FL8RrJ

Senate received a presentation on 'Adaption and Renewal: Research and Innovation', by Senior Vice-Principal Professor Jonathan Seckl, and Dr Sara Shinton, Head of Researcher Development at the Institute for Academic Development. Professor Seckl spoke on 'Research in the Time of Corona', including emergency funding support given to research students and staff, the scale of COVID-19 related research activity, and a brief update on REF 2021 . Dr Shinton spoke on the implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, and the resulting action plan to support an inclusive research culture, effective policies and procedures, and researcher development and career management.

A recording of the presentations and discussions above is available on request from: SenateSupport@ed.ac.uk

Further information on the Adaptation and Renewal programme can be found at: Adaptation and Renewal

Information and resources on Researcher Development is available at: The Institute for Academic Development The Edinburgh Research Office

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.

Meetings covered by the February 2021 edition:

Date	Committee
18 Nov; 27 Jan	SEC
17 December	QAC
21 January	APRC
19-27 January	E-Senate
10 February	Sentate

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all meetings were conducted via Microsoft Teams.

Titles for Teaching-Dominated Roles at Grades 8 and 9 (https://edin.ac/3bcQ2pI Paper B)

Senate discussed a proposal to introduce new job titles for recognising positions that are primarily of a teaching nature. The proposal is that the title 'Lecturer' be used for Grade 8 roles and the title 'Senior Lecturer' for Grade 9 roles. Senate discussed the value of making this specific change to job titles in the short term, versus the value of delaying any changes in favour of a larger scale review of titles and grades. There was strong support for measures to promote equity in recognition of staff contributions to the University. The Senate Convener and Vice-Principal Students will review the collated comments of Senate and will take this issue forward through University Executive.

Senate Elections (https://edin.ac/3bcQ2pI Paper D)

Senate formally opened nominations for the election of academic and research staff to Senate. Nominations can be made online, with a deadline of 10 March 2021 at 12 noon. Full information on eligibility and the nomination process can be found on the Senate website: Senate Elections 2021

For further information about any Senate matter, 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 held on 18 November 2020 and 27 January 2021 is available at https://edin.ac/2oR9kfB

Key discussion items were:

Curriculum Review and Transformation

The Convener provided the Committee with a presentation on curriculum review and transformation. Members discussed a number of issues including:

- the complexity of the University's current offer;
- whether or not the University's offer reflects its philosophy and embraces fully the diversity of its applicants;
- whether the University currently over-teaches and examines;
- ways in which students might be given opportunities to undertake major and minor subjects, and in which the first and second years of study might provide more skills development and 'scaffolding', with the third year providing greater focus, and the fourth year, stretch;
- the importance of co-design and embedding 'soft skills' in the curriculum;
- and the importance of not overreaching in any changes that are made.

Space, Place and Pedagogy: 'Beyond Digital' Learning and Teaching (https://edin.ac/3ubD6sD, paper B)

This paper advocated for continued pedagogical innovation (alongside the recent Covid-induced 'digital-first' response) by using our campus and its surroundings to provide spaces and places for successful and stimulating hybrid approaches to learning. Education Committee expressed 'in principle' support for the paper's recommendations, and the work will be taken forward as part of the curriculum transformation agenda.

Learning Experiences for International Students (https://edin.ac/3ubD6sD, paper D)

The paper set out current challenges in providing excellent learning experiences for the University's international students. It provided examples of best practice and suggested possible action for further improvement. Members discussed the importance of:

- undertaking more work to understand underlying cultures and to offer an inclusive curriculum;
- ensuring diverse student involvement in discussions around curriculum transformation;
- ensuring that we do not assume that 'Western' ways are best;
- and improving the coordination of market intelligence and forecasting tools to assist with issues around variation in cohort sizes.

Student Mental Health Strategy Update (https://edin.ac/3ubD6sD, paper F)

The Director of Student Wellbeing advised members that the University's student mental health services had responded very well to the COVID-19 pandemic, primarily because of excellent collaboration across the institution. Services have never been more accessible, including to international students in different time zones. Work is being undertaken, not only to address the consequences of the pandemic, but also to continue developing the University's mental health services strategically. Education Committee thanked the Director of Student Wellbeing and his team for the very high quality work they are undertaking in difficult circumstances.

Expectations Around Teaching in 2021/22

The Committee agreed that, as at 27 January 2021, the University should be planning for students to be on-campus in 2021/22 (while recognising that provision will still need to be in place for students who find themselves unable to travel or needing to self-isolate). Members discussed a number of issues and challenges linked to 2m physical distancing, and noted that it might be beneficial to consider prioritising particular cohorts of students, such as Honours-level and PGT, for access to in-person teaching. The Committee agreed that the University should retain flexibility to allow it to pivot at short notice if required.

Lessons from the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program
(https://edin.ac/3pSjYfW, paper B)

The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program provides full undergraduate and postgraduate scholarships to young people from Africa with great potential and few educational opportunities. It provides both full financial and pastoral support, and a transformative leadership programme.

An extensive review has been undertaken to assess the impact of and learnings from the Program. The paper provided information about learnings of relevance to the University as a whole. Members noted that the Program provides an outstanding example of leading by values. The lessons learnt from the Program are highly transferable and could potentially help the University to realise its aspirations around Strategy 2030, global access, equality and diversity, and curriculum transformation.
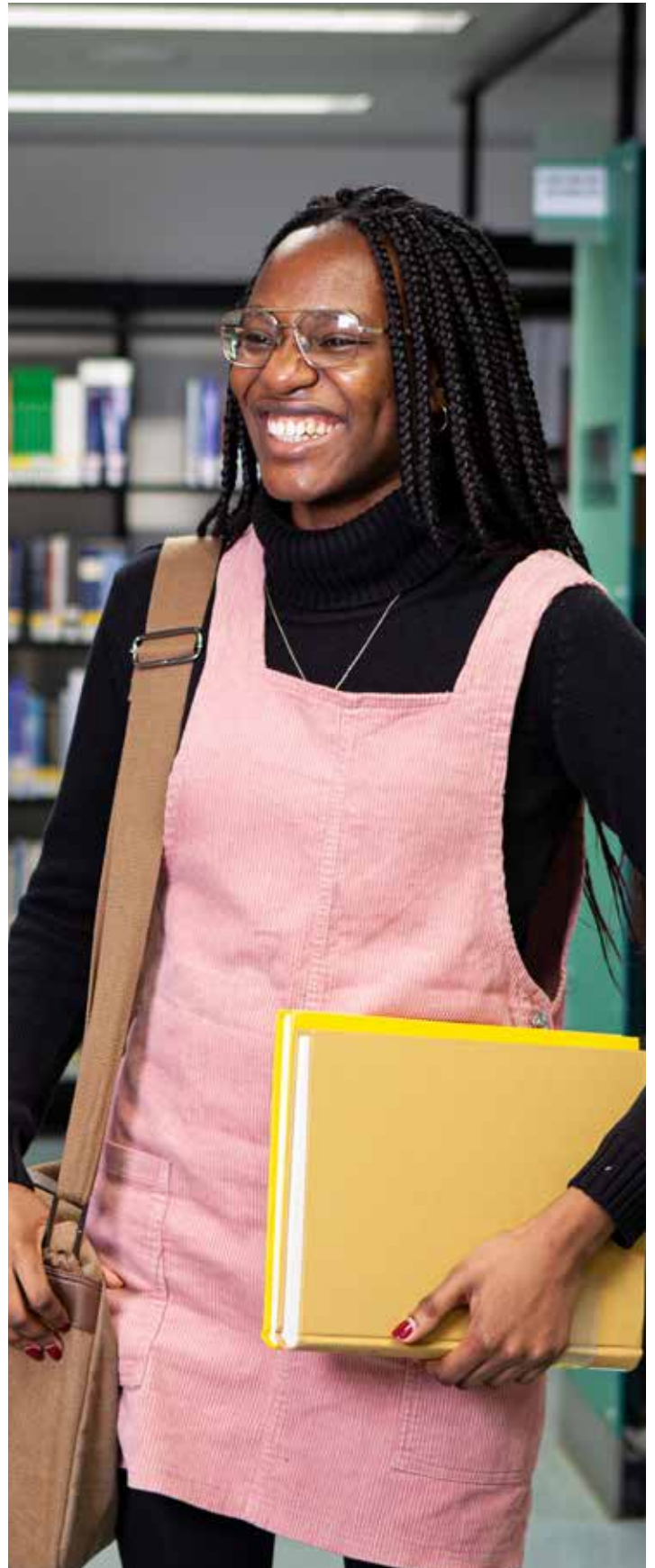
Fully Taught Masters Degrees
(https://edin.ac/3pSjYfW, paper C)

Although a small number of fully taught Masters degrees already exist within the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine, most Masters programmes require students to produce a 60 credit, academic dissertation. This may not be the most valuable form of learning for all students. The Committee gave 'in principle' support for the paper's proposal that the University increase flexibility by offering more fully taught Masters programmes. The proposals will now be taken to relevant committees for detailed consideration.

Edinburgh Futures Institute (EFI) PGT Model
(https://edin.ac/3pSjYfW, paper C)

The Committee considered EFI's proposed PGT model - a fusion model which allows students to be taught on and off campus as a single cohort, without the need for double-teaching. The model involves three spatiotemporalities: on campus; remote in real time; and remote in alternate time. Education Committee was highly supportive of the model, noting that it could have significant benefits both for EFI and beyond.

For further information about any Education Committee 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 meeting held on 21 January 2021 is available at http://edin.ac/2pAaOv7

Key points discussed included:

Board of Examiners 2020 Resilience Survey Analysis (https://edin.ac/3rX25yi, Paper B)

The Committee discussed the survey analysis and approved the paper, subject to some cross-checking with proposals to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on student assessment. The Committee welcomed the information on the impact of 2019/20 academic mitigation measures for COVID-19 on staff in Schools, regarding it as vital evidence to inform discussions about measures to be introduced in the current session.

Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19 on Student Assessment (Closed paper)

This paper (and a second paper circulated by the Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance in advance of the meeting) outlined a range of options to mitigate the ongoing impact of the pandemic on students' performance in assessment in 2020/21. Members from the Colleges provided comments on behalf of their constituent areas. The Committee noted the short time allowed for consultation, but recognised the urgency of providing students and staff with clarity around measures to be taken.

The papers were approved, subject to minor amendments, and covered approaches to extensions; special circumstances; pre-Honours, Honours, PGT and PGR-specific measures; an expanded borderline; and a reiteration of existing Board of Examiners' powers. Further information can be found at: https://edin.ac/37sf8js

Virtual Boards of Examiners – Amendment to the Taught Assessment Regulations (https://edin.ac/3rX25yi, Paper C)

The Committee approved a permanent amendment to the TARs from 2021/22, permitting meetings of Boards of Examiners to be held in-person or virtually, as considered appropriate by the relevant convener.

Academic Year Dates (https://edin.ac/3rX25yi, Paper F)

The academic year dates for 2022/23, and provisional academic year dates for 2023/24 and 2024/25 were approved: http://edin.ac/2pWCrvq

For further information about any APRC matter, please contact Ailsa.Taylor@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 17 December 2020 is available at http://edin.ac/1MUwq8L

Key topics discussed included:

Annual Quality Reports
(https://edin.ac/3aziwuQ, Papers B - F & M)

The Committee considered the annual School and College quality reports, and the outcomes of annual reports from the Student Support Services. The reporting process had been streamlined to focus on the impact of and learning from the pandemic, while also allowing for optional reflection on other aspects of academic standards, student performance and the student experience. The Committee identified examples of positive practice and issues for further development at institutional level including:

• staffing and workload pressures;

• central communications to students and staff;

• equality, diversity, and inclusion issues arising from the pandemic;

• the implementation of the new Extensions and Special Circumstances (ESC) service;

• the performance of the various online teaching platforms;

• access to on-campus space and resources;

• and issues with Assessment and Progression Tools (APT).

The Committee has requested a response to each issue from relevant areas, and progress will be reviewed later in the academic year. A report on these issues will also be considered by University Executive.

No Detriment Policy (https://edin.ac/3aziwuQ, Paper H)

The Committee considered an analysis of the University's 'No Detriment' Policy, implemented in response to the pandemic. Some Schools have seen increases in the proportion of UG students achieving first class or 2:1 degrees, but the increase is modest across the University as a whole. However, the attainment gaps for BAME and Widening Participation students have widened. The Committee agreed that further analysis is required to understand what has driven these differential levels of attainment.
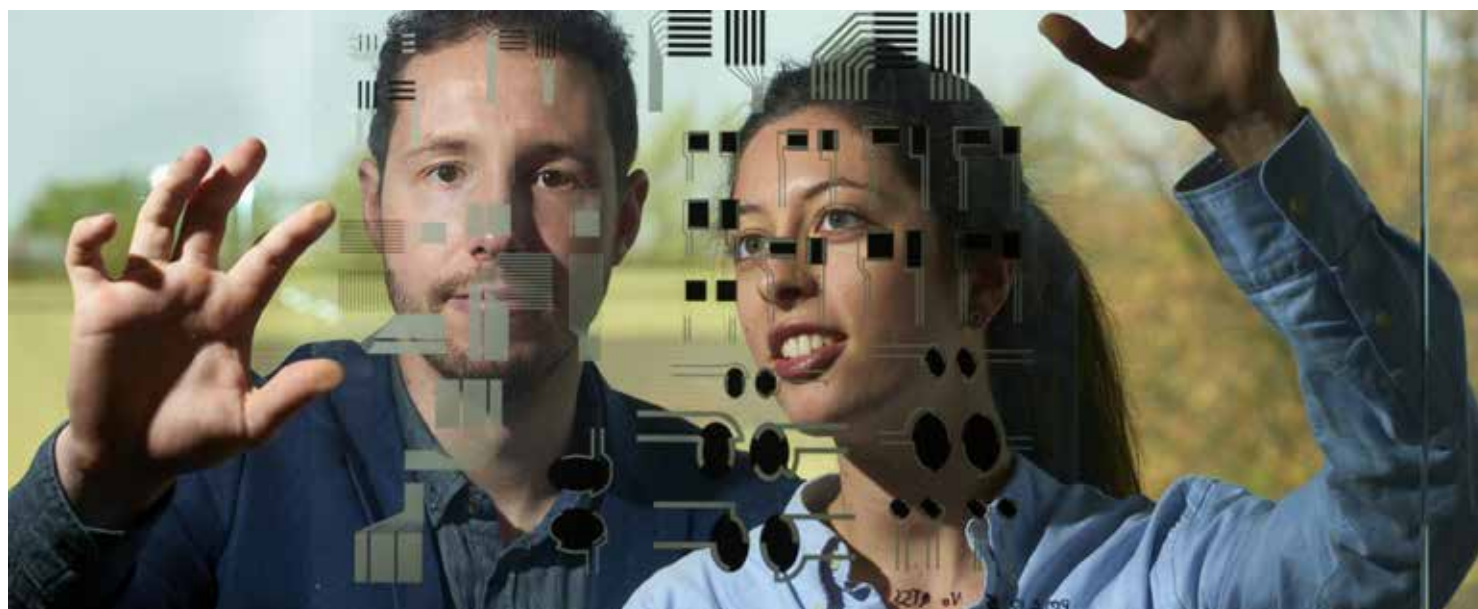
Undergraduate Taught External Examiner Reports
(https://edin.ac/3aziwuQ, Paper I)

The Committee considered an analysis of data from the External Examiner Reporting System (EERS) covering UG programmes in 2019/20. The report noted a high number of commendations across the University and a low number of issues requiring attention. Of the issues highlighted by External Examiners, the most frequently mentioned was the provision of information relating to issues raised in previous reports.

Annual Reports

The Committee considered the annual reports on academic appeals, student discipline and complaint handling. There continues to be an upward trend in the volume of student discipline cases and a slight decrease in academic appeals, although the numbers remain small relative to the overall student population. There was a significant increase in complaints due to the pandemic.

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

Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR)

The planning visit for the University's ELIR took place on 3 February 2021. Preparations are now underway for the Review visit (22 - 26 March 2021).

During the Review visit, the ELIR team will meet with students and staff to explore themes identified through their reading of the Reflective Analysis and accompanying Advanced Information Set.

Further information is available at http://edin.ac/2tBdhaZ

Remaining Senate Committee Dates for 2020/21

Senate	E-Senate	Education	APRC	QAC
–	–	–	–	25 Feb 2021
–	–	03 Mar 2021	25 Mar 2021	22 Apr 2021
02 Jun 2021	11-19 May 2021	12 May 2021	03 Jun 2021	20 May 2021