<u>The University of Edinburgh</u>

Senate Quality Assurance Committee
Thursday 3rd April, 2pm –5pm
Hybrid meeting: Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House & Microsoft Teams

A G E N D A

1.	**Welcome and Apologies**	
2.	**Minutes of the previous meeting** To approve: • 22nd February 2025	SQAC 24/25 4A
3.	**Matters Arising** • Convener's communications	Verbal Update
	SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS	
4.	**Complaints Annual Report 2023/24** To discuss.	SQAC 24/25 4B **CLOSED PAPER**
5.	**Student Voice** - Student Voice Update - Closing the Feedback Loop To note and to approve.	SQAC 24/25 4C SQAC 24/25 4D
6.	**Student Data Monitoring Task Group: Sector Analysis** To note and comment.	SQAC 24/25 4E
7.	**Digital Badges Governance** To discuss.	SQAC 24/25 4F
8.	**External Examiners** - EERS Thematic Analysis UG & PGT - EE Exceptional Appointments To discuss.	SQAC 24/25 4G SQAC 24/25 4H
9.	**Committee Priorities 2025/26** To approve.	SQAC 24/25 4I
10.	**Any Other Business**	
11.	**Date of next meeting** Thursday 15th May 2025, Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House and Microsoft Teams	

The University of Edinburgh
Senate Quality Assurance Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on
Thursday 20th February, 2-5pm
Hybrid meeting: Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House
and Microsoft Teams

1. Attendance

Present:	Position:
Professor Tina Harrison	Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) (Convener)
Professor Jake Ansell	Senate Representative
Professor Matthew Bailey	Dean of Quality, CMVM
Dr Michael Barany	Senate Representative
Marianne Brown	Head of Academic Planning, Registry Services
Brian Connolly	Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement, Academic Quality and Standards, Registry Services
Dr Anne Desler	School Representative of CAHSS
Faten Adam	School Representative of CSE
Olivia Eadie	Co-Director, Institute for Academic Development
Professor Nazira Karodia	Deputy Vice Chancellor and Vice Principal of Learning & Teaching, Edinburgh Napier University
Dr Neneh Rowa-Dewar	School Representative of CMVM
Professor James Hopgood	Dean of Quality and Enhancement, CSE
Callum Paterson	Academic Engagement and Policy Coordinator, Students
Dr Emily Taylor	Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Validation, CAHSS
Dylan Walch	Vice President (Education), Students' Association
Professor Patrick Walsh	Senate Representative
Sinéad Docherty	Committee Secretary, Academic Quality and Standards, Registry Services
Apologies:	
Professor Laura Bradley	Doctoral College Representative of CAHSS (PGR)

2. Welcome and apologies

The Convener welcomed members to this meeting of the Committee. Apologies were noted for Professor Laura Bradley.

3. Minutes of December meeting and e-business (SQAC 24/25 3A)

The draft of the December minutes had been made available for consultation ahead of this meeting. Edits were incorporated into the final draft by the Committee Secretary.

A query had been received in relation to the moderation policy review, referenced in section 7 of the December minutes, where it was started that CAHSS seek commitment from the University to address concerns around the moderation policy within the academic year 2024/25.

The Convener clarified that the updated moderation policy and guidance will not be implemented until 2025/26. It is due for discussion at the Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group and subsequently Senate Education Committee (SEC). It was noted that CAHSS have experienced particular issues with conflation of secondary marking and the requirements of the Taught Assessment Regulations (TAR), and an interim review of the policy to address current issues would be helpful to resolve these issues and take effect from the next academic year.

Action: Committee Secretary to update December minutes to note ongoing work on the moderation policy this year and implementation next academic year.

The minutes were approved pending the above changes.

A note of the December e-business was also approved by the Committee.

4. Matters Arising

- **IPR – SPS 14-week response**

Following review of the IPR 14-week response from the School of Social and Political Science (SPS), the Dean of Quality CAHSS raised a question to the Committee around assessment deadlines falling within the easter break period. It was flagged that assessment deadline bunching is an issue within CAHSS, as SPS had highlighted, and avoiding the easter break is a contributing factor. Staff continue to mark assessments during that period and the University does remain open, unlike the winter closure.

The Committee recognised the distinction between the formal closure period and other times of year when deadlines are to be avoided. It was commented that even if deadlines were permissible in the easter break, Schools would have choice as to when to set their deadlines and can seek to protect the breaktime of students whilst looking to smooth out clusters of deadlines.

The Committee were informed that the Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC) is undertaking some work and consultation on this issue. The value of APRC leading on this matter, as part of the review of the Taught Assessment Regulations (TAR), was recognised by the Committee. There was discussion of the quality assurance consideration needed, and noted that the strategy for Learning and Teaching is relevant to SQAC and it remains important that there is a QA voice included in the consultation and discussions.

- **School Director of Quality Network**

The Committee were informed that invites have been sent to the Directors of Quality network. The next meeting will be held on Thursday 3 April 2025 at the Playfair Library, Old College. The meeting will focus on this year's annual QA reporting process. Alastair Duthie, Quality Assurance

Agency (QAA) Head of Scotland will be in attendance to discuss Scotland's new Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) and other QA developments across the sector.

The Committee are supportive of efforts to increase understanding amongst colleagues as to the framework developments in the broader sector. It was noted that the Convener is planning to circulate communication to all colleagues and Senate in relation to the sector changes and their effect on quality processes.

5. Student Support Services Annual Review 2023/24 (SQAC 24/25 3C)

The Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement, Academic Quality and Standards presented this paper and outlined the process which had taken place within the Student Support Services Annual Review (SSSAR). The Committee were informed that a newly appointed external member from the University of Glasgow participated in the review activity, in line with sector expectations of external input to QA practices. Detailed feedback was provided to each of the services on their individual submission.

The key themes identified across the reports were highlighted to the Committee:

- Staff concern around the financial context of the University;
- Services looking for strategic guidance on the activities which should be prioritised;
- Employment opportunities for students;
- The use of KPIs;
- Collaborative work across services, and the concern around capacity to look for new collaborative opportunities.

Members observed that the key themes mirror concerns and questions across the University. It was noted that the SSSAR is a process for surfacing examples of good practice and culminates in a good practice event for the services to attend, and therefore the tone of the report is positive. Members requested that key themes and concerns are amplified in the report before it is shared with University Executive, in order to ensure that appropriate focus is given to these areas. It was noted, as an example, that the Chaplaincy Service had made a strategic decision to reduce some of its activities as a result of reduced resource. Members of the Committee agreed it would be helpful to have more detail on examples such of these, to understand clearly the changes that have been necessitated and what the expected impact will be. There is a concern that the student experience will be affected by inconsistency if local areas try to bridge gaps left by reduced central services.

Action: Academic Quality and Standards to surface specific impact examples from the service reports and include in report to University Executive.

It was emphasised to the Committee that the service reports are written in the first semester of the academic year and take a retrospective look against the year that has passed. It was acknowledged that the next set of reports will include the content reflecting on the current University circumstances and their impact on student services.

The Committee discussed student employment opportunities within the University. There was a concern that student employment is seen as a solution to financial hardship experienced by some students. In response to this, it was noted that job opportunities are not intended to replace University hardship funds, and can provide valuable experience to students within better pay and conditions than general employment elsewhere. Information Services was highlighted as a particular area with varied and valuable opportunities available to students.

There was a comment from EUSA representatives that the collaboration between EUSA and ACE as detailed in the report is not reflective of the current working arrangements and it was requested this be removed. It was also noted that the Information Services Group (ISG) section would have benefited from further detail. The presenter acknowledged the challenge of reporting on a large service such as ISG and welcomed suggestions for how departments and services can be better reflected in reporting activities.

The Committee discussed the different approaches for sharing annual review report. There was recognition that it is important for services to be transparent and candid during the process, and encouraged to identify areas for development as well as good practice. The Committee were informed that Napier University shares their equivalent report in SSLCs with the aim to share good practice, involve student representatives in the discussions and help to develop partnerships throughout their institution.

It was noted during discussion that the services review is an element of the QA framework, but the framework does not mandate a specific approach to the review. Some institutions have incorporated the services review into their Internal Periodic Review process. However, the University of Edinburgh has taken the approach of the SSSAR running as a standalone process that has student experience at the forefront. This approach is aligned with the QA framework, and Academic Quality and Standards will monitor the process to ensure continued alignment as the sector framework develops.

6. Annual Monitoring: Reporting Templates 2024/25 (SQAC 24/25 3D)

The Committee were asked to discuss and approve the Annual Monitoring templates for the 2024/25 reporting cycle. Minor changes had been agreed at the September meeting of the Committee when the previous cycle was discussed. These changes were incorporated and highlighted in the drafts of the templates. It was acknowledged that annual monitoring activity is time sensitive, and agreed that the revised templates would be approved via e-business to allow for circulation to Schools ahead of the next full meeting of the Committee.

The Head of Academic Planning noted that the student support question has a role in informing the evaluation of the Student Support Model, and proposed that the language used in this section be refined.

Action: Academic Quality and Standards to agree updates to Student Support section with the Head of Academic Planning.

In relation to the student voice section, it was suggested that the question should refer to the effectiveness of student voice opportunities, as well as insight into the opportunities themselves. This would align with Committee's support for shifting the emphasis to effectiveness and evidence within quality processes. It was also proposed that the section should include reference to student voice culture within Schools and how that operates. It was felt that the feedback loop references allude to this but it could be more clearly articulated in the questions.

It was requested that the guidance within the programme templates refer only to assessment challenges, in order to keep the question open and to encourage greater reporting in response to this. The guidance should also clearly outline the need for analysis of student surveys to gather greater insight and evidence for the assessment section of the reports. Additionally, it was proposed that the student outcomes section be revised to include a prompt about PGT students from the previous academic cycle, to ensure that the cohort which has most recently graduated is not overlooked.

The Committee discussed the proposal to include a section on Generative AI as an institutional priority. There was agreement that this should be included, although the templates should be amended to clarify that the Generative AI Guidance for Staff and Students is not policy but guidance. It was agreed that it would be appropriate to ask Schools and programmes to reflect on how useful they have found the Generative AI Guidance to be.

The views of Senate elected members were shared with the Committee. There was a request for the financial context of the University to be referenced in the templates, to allow Schools to provide comment as to where financial constraints have had an impact. It was felt that the proposal to remove the industrial action question was premature, and Senate elected members would propose to keep the question. As a final point, Senate elected members had noted that there is much variation in how different areas engage with the student voice, and they would be supportive of a question to explore staff voice and governance, with a view to creating a staff opportunity to establish priorities and processes in their area.

The Committee recognised that the financial context and other challenges have an impact across the institution. It was agreed that an additional question be included to directly ask about the challenges which have impacted delivery of quality teaching in the past academic year. This will allow for reporting on a range of challenges and recognises that some Schools may be impacted to a greater or lesser degree. Further additions to the template include a box for Head of School sign-off and their commentary on the process, specification that roles of contributors should be included as well and names and a question within the assessment and feedback section to ask whether assessment criteria and rubrics are now applied across all courses.

It was highlighted that the templates and guidance must be in line with accessibility requirements. It was agreed that all templates would be reviewed and updated to be made reader accessible, prior to circulation throughout the University.

Action: Academic Quality and Standards to update the templates with the edits agreed during the discussion and circulate to Committee members as e-business.

Action: Academic Quality and Standards to update all templates and guidance to ensure alignment with reader accessible standards.

The Committee discussed the appropriate level of transparency for the annual monitoring reports. Requests to view and share the reports has ordinarily been managed on a case-by-case basis by either College Quality officers or Academic Quality and Standards. The Committee were supportive of making the reports more widely available, and agreed that a SharePoint site would be the most suitable way to make the reports visible to colleagues. It was acknowledged that some reports are already shared as good practice within SSLCs and samples of the reports also are considered as part of the external review process. As such, the reports do have a wider audience than the respective Colleges and this Committee.

Action: Academic Quality and Standards will develop a SharePoint site for storing and sharing the reports.

There was discussion of the timeline for the full annual monitoring process. It was highlighted that programme reports require reflection on data and survey results although some survey results are not available until mid-July, which impacts the timing for programme reports to feed into the School report. It was proposed that deadlines for each stage of the annual monitoring cycle be reviewed with the Colleges to ensure that the activity feeds into College cycles at the appropriate time.

Action: Academic Quality and Standards to liaise with College Deans of Quality on the Annual Monitoring timeline.

7. Internal Periodic Review: University Standard Remit (SQAC 24/25 3E)

The Committee were advised of the minor amendments proposed for the University Standard IPR remit, to ensure alignment with the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF). It was noted that an area with refined focus in the TQEF was that of student partnership and the emphasis on the continuous nature of student engagement.

The Committee discussed the non-credit bearing element of the University IPR remit and the requirements in the TQEF. The Committee were advised that the understanding within the sector is that non-credit bearing provision is aimed at Colleges and FE institutions. However, it was recognised that non-credit bearing provision is relevant to some areas within the University, such as the Centre for Open Learning (COL). The CAHSS Dean of Quality advised that COL wish to remain included in Internal Periodic Review activity and the correct terminology to capture their provision is "short courses". The Committee agreed that the standard remit should be updated to reflect the inclusion of all provision within the scope of the review.

There was discussion of the term "externality" after a question as to its definition in the context of the sector. It was clarified that this is a Scottish Funding Council (SFC) term and refers to external references and sector benchmarks.

Further edits to the standard remit were agreed by the Committee, which included the addition of "governance" within the strategic section, the removal of a bullet point referencing forward direction and the expansion of the learning environment point to include systems, processes and infrastructure.

Action: Academic Quality and Standard to update University Standard Remit with agreed changes and publish on the IPR webpages.

8. Mid-year update on progress against SQAC priorities (SQAC 24/25 3F)

This item was presented for information on the mid-year priorities updates and there was an additional request for the Committee to consider the priorities for the upcoming 2025/26 academic year.

The Committee were informed that this update had already been presented to full Senate at its February meeting and little feedback was received. There was discussion of which updates are of most value to Senate and what Senate would like to see and engage with. It was reported that Senate members find focussed discussion workshops to be useful, such as the Curriculum Transformation discussion held last academic year. It was commented that the Committee has not build the capacity in Senate for full engagement in QA matters, and it was suggested that this may speak to the broader challenges of engaging the staff body with QA processes, and the perception that QA happens elsewhere. The question was raised of how to shift the University culture at School/Deanery, programme and course level to embed QA as a core element.

Projects with the Student Experience programme board and the University Initiatives Portfolio Board (UIPB) were identified as areas where Senate and its committees would value the opportunity to enhance understanding of arrangements and effectiveness. The Convener agreed to approach the Deputy Secretary, Students to explore the possibility of a discussion workshop.

Action: Convener to discuss Student Experience and UIPD workshop(s) for Senate members with Deputy Secretary, Students.

In relation to the priority of Responding to the 2023 Quality Enhancement & Standards Review (QESR), the Convener provided an update of the various ongoing activities to meet each recommendation. The oversight group is focussing on the areas which require further progress, including the recommendation around the promotion of academic staff based on teaching. The Convener advised that a meeting is due to be held during the week of 3rd March 2025 to focus on this recommendation.

In relation to the Assessment and Feedback recommendation, it was recognised that progress has been made against turnaround times and now the focus is shifting to quality of feedback and use of rubrics. The Convener advised that the Data Monitoring Task Group is continuing in its work to address the recommendation about the awarding gap and has a focus on identifying improvements to the use of outcomes data.

In relation to the priorities detailed in point 10 of the paper, it was raised that the activities set out had been undertaken on behalf of the Committee, rather than by the Committee, and requested that the Committee itself be more involved in this work. In response to this, the Convener advised that each of the standing committee conveners have collaborated with the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group to draft revised Terms of Reference (TOR) with the objective to address the priority set out in 10.i. The work on TORs and committee remits is being driven by the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group, rather than by the standing committees.

9. Self-Evaluation Action Plan (SEAP) (SQAC 24/25 3G)

It was noted that this item had returned to the agenda as there had not been time for discussion in the December meeting. The Committee were informed that the University is still awaiting feedback from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) on the submitted SEAP. There will be a meeting between the SFC and the University in March as standard practice for external quality oversight, although it is not yet known who will be involved and the remit of that meeting.

The Committee were advised that the University had been involved in the pilot year of the new external reporting arrangements, but no feedback had been received following the pilot. It was recognised that there are concerns within the sector that adjustments to the reporting process will be made later in the academic year, which will prove to be a challenge if the requirements of the SEAP submission are changed at short notice. Whilst the intention is to work with students before the summer, late changes to the process may mean that newer sabbatical officers are asked to feed into the report when they are new to their role.

This was acknowledged as a risk to the reporting process, and a risk of student involvement becoming less meaningful as students will not have had the time to build up the relevant expertise in their role. The Committee agreed that it is important that student representatives have the opportunity and timeframe to feed in and shape the report. It was noted that the VP Education is working with the Senate Education Committee (SEC) to ensure the Student Partnership Agreement work feeds into the SEAP.

The Committee were informed by its external member that Napier University has proposed to its Student Association that a Learning and Teaching Student Consultant role be developed. The intention is that this role would act as a bridge for the new student representatives and sabbatical officers coming into their role. This would allow for continuity and ongoing experience within student representative roles, and would be a paid position.

The Committee were advised that Senate elected members provided positive feedback on the SEAP and acknowledged the strong account of Assessment and Feedback activity within the report. There were concerns from this cohort around the description of the Curriculum Transformation Programme governance which was felt to be misleading. It was clarified that Senate has not yet approved the full business case for the PGT framework and the approval process remains as ongoing business.

The Committee did question the percentage of students from SIMD backgrounds as identified in the report, and whether this referred to all UG students or SFC funded students. There was

concern that the statistic may be misinterpreted and it should be made clear whether it relates to the full UG population or a section of that population.

The Committee were advised of the variety of activities which feed into the report, including IPR and annual monitoring processes, institution led review and student outcomes data. The sections of the report are prescribed by the SFC and the University must respond accordingly. Progress against the actions identified in the 2023/24 report must be reported in the next SEAP and will be tracked going forward. The Committee endorsed the report submitted for academic year 2023/24.

10. AOB

On behalf of CSE, The Dean of Quality and Enhancement raised the matter of rubrics within the College. It was stated that CSE does not have the minimum standards document that CAHSS has produced for its Schools. The rubrics provided by the Institute for Academic Development have been helpful to some extent, but there are complexities in CSE relation to lab-based assessment and computerised marking assessment. The CSE Dean raised this item for discussion to better understand the implementation timeline and status for rubrics across the University.

The Convener shared relevant updates from the work of the Student Experience Delivery and Monitoring Board (SEDaMOB) and the Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group. These groups have also held discussions on rubrics and it was confirmed that the University is not looking to develop a single rubric to fit all Schools, but also recognises that a multitude of rubrics is not helpful to students. There is awareness that there is a need for different types and scales of rubrics, and more conversation is needed with colleagues to understand what is required. A small bank of rubrics with consistent format and information was felt to be an appropriate approach. It was acknowledged that the different stages of a programme of study must also be considered, with more detailed rubrics called for in early years.

The Committee were in agreement that different requirements will be needed for different subjects in and across Colleges. Benchmarking the use of rubrics across the University may be helpful but the rubrics themselves cannot be prescriptive and must allow flexibility for Schools to adapt the framework for their own specifics, such as technical competencies. It was proposed that grade descriptors at an institutional level would be helpful, with local levels then providing more detail and focus relevant to the subject.

The Committee were informed that CAHSS has its own minimum standards framework and their schools have been actively working on their own rubrics. A key message within this work is that the quality of information contained within the rubric is crucial. It was reported that CMVM faces challenges with aligning qualitative assessment of work to a scale that is quantitative, and so the College has the approach of using bandings to assign quality of work rather than percentage grade scale. The Dean of CMVM highlighted this as an opportunity for the University to consider its approach to marking assessments and moving towards a model with focus on graduate attributes and competencies.

The Committee went on to discuss the overall usage of the 70+ grade band and it was proposed that the University should have an institutional strategy on making better use of the full mark

scale. There was concern that it may have a negative impact on prospective students who compare the University with other institutions which make fuller range of the marking scale. It was also noted during this discussion that the University does not use consistent terminology when talking about the marking scale and the 70+ band, yet it was felt that consistency would aid university-wide understanding and use of the full mark scale.

11. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 3rd April 2025, 2-5pm.

Senate Quality Assurance Committee

3 April 2025

Student Voice Update

Description of paper
1. This paper outlines planned activity to improve how student voices are listened to and acted upon across the University. This work supports the University's strategy for enhancing the student experience, through ensuring student voices are valued and embedded across the institution.

Fit with remit

Quality Assurance Committee	Y/N
Oversee the delivery and enhancement of the University's quality assurance framework, ensuring that it meets external requirements.	Y
In partnership with Edinburgh University Students' Association, ensure effective student engagement and representation of student voices in the University's quality framework.	Y
Identify areas for innovation and enhancement of the student experience and ensure that these inform Senate Education Committee's policy development.	Y

Action requested / recommendation
2. The committee are asked to note the activities outlined in the paper.

Background and context
3. Our students continue to identify a gap in how they perceive we value and respond to their feedback. Surveys and focus groups indicate that students feel their opinions are not valued, and there is a lack of clarity on how their feedback is acted on. The satisfaction with the student voice at the University is notably lower compared to our sector peers, with a 5.9% deficit against the Russell Group and Universities UK peers, according to the NSS 2024. Specifically, only 45.3% of our students feel clear on how their feedback is acted upon, which is 14% lower than Russell Group peers and 13.7% lower than Universities UK peers.
4. Postgraduate taught students express higher satisfaction levels than undergraduates in terms of "how feedback on my course is listened to", with a notable difference of 15.8%. However, this remains the area of lowest satisfaction for postgraduates, with only 61.2% expressing contentment in the January 2025 Student Life Survey.
5. Current analysis focuses on taught students, given the different mechanisms for gathering postgraduate research feedback. To better understand and improve the postgraduate research student experience, further in-depth analysis is needed.

6. Student Voice and partnership are key considerations in the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework. The University's Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP), which is co-signed by the University and Students' Association, commits us to "continue work of the Student Voice Continuous Improvement Group, review the implementation of various student voice policies and develop a shared vision for student voice."

Discussion

7. To understand the experience of taught students further, a baselining exercise was undertaken to learn more about student voice activity within Schools. Each School provided information on the delivery of course level feedback, Student Staff Liaison Committees (SSLC), School mechanisms such as Townhalls/Student Forums and communications to student about feedback actions. The key insights from this work were:

   - There is variation in student voice practice across all core student voice mechanisms, including what mechanisms are used and who is responsible for them;
   - There is a lack of visibility, across and within Schools, of student voice practice, feedback outcomes and themes and methods for communicating to students about feedback;
   - There is a lack of clarity about what is expected across student voice practices and a lack of clarity across governance and escalation routes, in particular where feedback relates beyond the School (e.g. to the College or a central service);
   - There exists a skills gap in analysing feedback and effectively communicating the themes and actions derived from it. While efforts are being made to improve how feedback actions are communicated to students, there remains a lack of understanding about what constitutes effective communication in this context. Addressing this gap is crucial for ensuring students feel their voices are valued and their feedback leads to tangible changes.

8. To respond to this feedback from students and staff a package of work has been identified to support the enhancement of student voice across the University. This work aims to provide clarity, consistency and visibility across the collection of feedback, reporting on feedback and communication to students in response to feedback.

9. This work will be developed using the insights gathered through engaging with staff and students and will be developed in partnership with Colleges, Schools, central services, students and the Edinburgh University Students' Association.

Student Voice Framework

10. A Student Voice Framework will be developed to provide clarity and consistency across core student voice practices, from data collection to communication to students. This will:

- Establish minimum requirements for each School and Professional Service in student voice practices, setting clear expectations for staff and students;
- Establish roles and responsibilities across mechanisms, ensuring there is clear accountability across all parts of the process and at all levels of the University;
- Establish clear reporting and escalation routes to enable the identification of key feedback themes and to ensure timely responses to feedback;
- Enable timely, effective communications to students about feedback outcomes.

Student Voice Policies

11. The Student Voice Framework will outline the practical application of institutional student voice policies. To ensure the framework and policies are aligned, current policies will be reviewed and updated to ensure they are fit for purpose. This will include ensuring appropriate measures are in place to monitor and evaluate adherence to the policy and framework.

Student Voice Guidance

12. Guidance will be developed to support the implementation of the framework, ensuring staff and students have the appropriate training and skills to fulfil their roles across student voice activities effectively. This guidance will be developed in collaboration with Edinburgh University Students' Association and with Schools and Professional Services, building on existing areas of good practice.

13. These activities will be developed alongside on-going work within Registry Services to review central student voice mechanisms (sector surveys, Student Life Survey, ad hoc survey processes) and student voice governance, ensuring a holistic approach to student voice across the University.

Resource implications

14. Resource to progress and coordinate this work has been secured for one year through Student Experience Services and will be led through Registry Services. Development of policy, framework and guidance will be undertaken in consultation with the Student Lifecycle Management Group – Student Voice Continuous Improvement Group to draw on expertise from Schools, Colleges and central services.

Risk management

15. This work responds to the reputational risk of continued low student satisfaction with student voice activity and broader student experience.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

16. n/a

Equality & diversity

17. This work aims to ensure that the voices from all students are heard, listened to and responded to. This objective will be embedded within the design of the policies, framework and guidance which are developed.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

18. A communication will be shared with Colleges, Schools, central services and the Edinburgh University Students' Association to update on this work when the Design Lead is in post. A communication to students will be shared at the end of the current academic year to update them on this work.

Author

Marianne Brown
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Callum Paterson
Academic Engagement and Policy Coordinator

March 2025

Presenter

Marianne Brown

Freedom of Information
Open

Senate Quality Assurance Committee

3 April 2025

Closing the feedback loop

Description of paper

1. This paper outlines a proposed commitment to improve how the university responds to student feedback. This work supports the University's strategy for enhancing the student experience, through ensuring student voices are valued and embedded across the institution.

2. The proposal also responds to the QESR 2024 directive regarding "oversight and implementation of policy and practice … recognising the decentralised nature of university structures, the institution should establish a systematic approach to enable effective institutional oversight and evaluation of the implementation of policy and practice. As part of this, <u>the University is asked to increase the range and use of institutionally determined baseline requirements to ensure consistency and accountability</u>. The institution should ensure that mechanisms are put in place to adequately evaluate the consistency of implementation of strategic objectives across the institution and act when Schools deviate from institutional expectations."

Fit with remit

Quality Assurance Committee	
Oversee the delivery and enhancement of the University's quality assurance framework, ensuring that it meets external requirements.	**Y**
In partnership with Edinburgh University Students' Association, ensure effective student engagement and representation of student voices in the University's quality framework.	**Y**
Maintain oversight of the outcomes of the quality assurance framework, ensuring that actions are addressed, and support the sharing of good practice.	**Y**
Promote the quality assurance framework as an important part of the University's activities and ensure that the outcomes inform relevant University business.	**Y**
Support the University's engagement with external quality requirements and activities, including: Enhancement-Led Institutional Review, the UK Quality Code, and responses to consultations and initiatives.	**Y**

Action requested / recommendation

3. To approve the proposals set out in this paper.

Background and context

4. School quality reports in 2024 highlighted difficulties in getting a response to feedback that went beyond the school, e.g. timetabling, room bookings. This meant that some feedback did not get responded to or was responded to inadequately, leading to frustration for schools and students.

5. This observation was supported by multiple comments in NSS and PTES referring to being given multiple opportunities to give feedback but not receiving a response.

NSS and PTES 2024 quotes

> Teachers rarely implement the feedback of students in our course.

> Many students wanted to report some exams or feedback on the course and had no idea where or who to go to. More than 4 only learned about the student advisor on the second semester

> it is hard to see how feedback has been taken into account

> Although there is ample opportunity to provide feedback, there is no follow up as to how this is implemented. Additionally, when multiple members of the cohort have made requests e.g., for diverse viewpoints to be added into the curriculum, we have been given feedback as a whole that this is too difficult to do in a short time frame. It often feels as though requests for feedback or suggestions are more tokenistic than actually meant.

> Whilst feedback opportunities have been provided, they haven't always been addressed or acted upon by staff. It would be nice for the feedback to be better acknowledged by staff across all modules.

6. This document sets out a proposal for closing the feedback loop as it relates to student feedback. It does not introduce new methods for gathering feedback or prioritise specific feedback routes, but instead focuses on ensuring that when students provide feedback they receive a timely and adequate response.

Terminology.
7. Feedback refers to specific issues that students raise and which they seek an individual solution to, e.g. not receiving marks and feedback on a specific assessment on time, and also to general feedback elicited through mechanisms such as SSLCs that can be compiled into themes, e.g. the quality of teaching spaces. In this document we refer to these respectively as 'specific issues' and 'thematic feedback', and collectively as 'feedback'.

Discussion
8. The university has a Have Your Say scheme in which students can post anonymous feedback on any university matter. Although it has low visibility, students have been using it. The key issues it has encountered are:
    a. Administratively burdensome to operate – triaging the feedback and following up on a timely response takes time
    b. Difficult to get feedback from central services – there is no service agreement to respond or a timeframe for any response
    c. Many of the issues raised were course-related – it seems student may not have known who to direct their issues to

      d. Anonymity means that students cannot get a direct response to their feedback so the response, if there is one, may be too generic or not seen by the reporting student

      e. There is no means for staff to feedback on behalf of students

9. The scheme operates in a context of significant over-surveying of students, so is one of many feedback mechanisms that are not well-coordinated at the moment. There is a risk of students mis-directing feedback, feedback getting lost, and students being passed around between individuals and services whilst seeking a resolution.

10. The current plan is to close this scheme as part of a wider review of student feedback processes in the university, led by SAIM over the next 12 months. At college level, CAHSS has been reviewing how SSLCs function to optimise closing the feedback loop. This will feed into a larger piece of work being led by SAIM.

Proposal

11. SQAC establishes an expectation that all services, including schools and all non-academic services that contribute to service delivery for current students will be required to respond to feedback within a certain period of time.

      a. We note that a response does not connote resolution of the problem, as this may not always be possible, but at a minimum is an acknowledgement and an explanation of what steps are being taken to solve the problem.

12. The same schools and services must identify key contacts in each service with responsibility for receiving and responding to feedback.

Resource implications

13. We recognise that a centralised reporting system (at college or university level) is not currently possible, demanding a high level of resource without clearly contributing to efficiency or effectiveness.

14. The requirement to respond within a certain timeframe is already established in schools although there is no documented requirement to support this, and timeframes may not be the same. A single documented expectation would harmonise practice across the university and allow a clear communication about expectations to students. The resource implication for schools are therefore small. There will be a great resource implication for services that do not currently have an internally set standard for responding to students.

15. Schools and services should identify their own triaging system, key contacts and communication methods to ensure that all students and staff know how to escalate specific issues and thematic feedback within and beyond the school, that course-level issues are resolved within the school, and that central services know who to contact in each school.

16. College offices and SAIM will work with schools to help them develop this, to harmonise processes between schools as far as is practicable, and to ensure that the communication pathway between schools and central services is operational. This work will be done over summer 2025 and semester 1 of 2025-26.

Risk management

17. This work responds to the reputational risk of continued low student satisfaction with student voice activity and broader student experience.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals
18. n/a

Equality & diversity
19. This proposal should ensure that all student feedback is responded to and that students have more confidence in their feedback being heard and responded to. This therefore may improve the experience for students with 'quieter' voices, who may belong to minoritised demographics.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed
20. An agreed standard would be communicated to all part of the university with a timeframe for implementation (by beginning AY 2025-26). Initial feedback would be sought from schools and SSLCs during semester 1 as to the success of the scheme and to address problems at an early stage. Successful implementation should be visible in NSS and PTES ratings and comments within the year.

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26/03/25

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Senate Quality Assurance Committee

3 April 2025

Student Data Monitoring: Sector Analysis Update

Description of paper
1. This paper provides an update on the sector analysis work undertaken by the Student Data Monitoring task group.

Fit with remit:

Quality Assurance Committee	Y/N
Oversee the delivery and enhancement of the University's quality assurance framework, ensuring that it meets external requirements.	X
Maintain oversight of the outcomes of the quality assurance framework, ensuring that actions are addressed, and support the sharing of good practice.	X
Support the University's engagement with external quality requirements and activities, including: Enhancement-Led Institutional Review, the UK Quality Code, and responses to consultations and initiatives.	X
Identify areas for innovation and enhancement of the student experience and ensure that these inform Senate Education Committee's policy development.	X
Consider the implications of the Committee's work and its decisions in the context of external initiatives and compliance and legal frameworks, particularly in relation to equality and diversity.	X

Action requested / recommendation
2. The Committee are asked to note the sector analysis update from the Student Data Monitoring Task Group and comment on the interventions detailed at point 13.

Background and context

3. In May 2024, the Committee approved the establishment of a task and finish group to explore methodological options and make recommendations for a new systematic approach to monitoring student data at University level.

4. It was also agreed that the initial focus of the group will be to ensure that the new approach will also address the Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR) 2021 and the Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) 2023 recommendations regarding equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in the student population.

5. The short-life task and finish group has the remit to: benchmark approaches to monitoring student data; identify the different student groups and the key stages in the student lifecycle that should be overseen at University level; identify the relevant data required and any gaps in current data sets; and then make

recommendations to SQAC for a new systematic approach to monitoring student data.

6. The group has held 3 meetings to date, and sub-groups have met separately to undertake particular research and to work on particular activity streams, focussing on sector analysis and data analysis.

7. The data analysis will be presented to the Committee in its May 2025 meeting.

Discussion

8. The UK higher education sector has reduced the ethnicity awarding gap from 13.2% (2017/18) to 8.8% (2020/21) for UK domiciled undergraduate students. However, a significant gap still exists, particularly for Black students, with a 19.3% gap in First class degrees. (Source Universities UK – Closing ethnicity degree awarding gaps).

9. In addition to the ethnicity awarding gap, the group seeks to understand the gap for WP students and students who have a disability. Meetings have been held with colleagues from the Disability and Learning Support Service (DLSS) and the Widening Participation Team to understand our student population and the definitions, markers and characteristics which relate to our students.

10. Our most significant awarding gap (reported in our SEAP) is between black and minority ethnic students and white students: 11.6% for first class degrees and 7.3% for high classification degrees. There are also smaller awarding gaps for students with a disclosed disability and widening participation students.

11. The sector-focussed sub-group has been working to identify good practice across the sector and to identify initiatives that have been tested and/or adopted elsewhere. Initiatives which seek to develop a sense of belonging, which include mentoring, and which raise the visibility of minority groups (for staff as well as students), are reported to be effective mechanisms for addressing the gap.

12. While there is much written about awarding gaps, a lot of it has focused on interventions aimed at access and transitions through university, with a focus on retention and, in some cases progression. There is currently very little robust evidence of tested and evaluated interventions that have an impact on degree outcomes. It is clear from the research that a variety of methods must be tested to assess their effectiveness for different student groups and their impact in different subject areas.

13. **The sector analysis sub-group has identified the following initial promising actions/interventions.** The group is continuing to review other promising interventions.

a) <u>Leadership</u>: Prioritising closing the awarding gap at the highest level of leadership. The London Metropolitan university has established institutional KPIs to address this.

b) <u>Agreed use of appropriate terminology:</u> The term BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic) is increasingly seen as unacceptable, including by those it aims to represent. A YouGov survey found that only 28% of ethnic minority Britons feel the term represents them well. Another possible term created by National Museums Liverpool, is GEM (Global Ethnic Majority). This is something that the Task Group could take forward.

c) <u>Facilitating conversations on race</u>. Kings College London "Conversations about Race" has encouraged open dialogue that fostered discussions that informed policy and practice. A recommendation would be to collaborate with the REAR and EDI committee to understand their approach.

d) <u>Improving (visibility of) diversity among staff:</u> A common issue for disabled, minority ethnic and WP students is lack of visible representation among staff, which directly impacts students' sense of identify and belonging. The 'first in family' badges are one way of staff identifying themselves as from WP backgrounds. Understanding the barriers to creating a racially diverse staff is crucial and was a recurring theme in interviews with minority ethnic students at the University, who highlighted the lack of representation among staff as a significant factor affecting their experience. In the HE population in general, 81.3% of staff are white, whereas 68.1% of students are white. The biggest disparity is among black staff (2.5%) and students (9.6%).

e) <u>Data Driven approaches:</u> It will be important to collect and analyse data on student retention and awarding gaps at a much more granular level. This data will need to be aligned with university funded pilot projects to assess what works.

f) <u>Staff Training:</u> We currently have general training on EDI and bias, but this could go further to include, for example, understanding the Pygmalion effect, using scenarios that are area relevant and co-created with students.

g) <u>Strengthen Mentoring Programs:</u> We currently have successful mentoring programmes for our care experienced students. Mentoring could be extended to include MES and WPS. Auditing should be undertaken regularly to ensure they are working and how they can be improved.

14. The group will continue its sector analysis activity to benchmark against other institutions and understand how others monitor awarding gap data.

15. Data and evidence will be essential to understanding the impact of any interventions. A sub-group is focussed on understanding the data we have, the improvements needed, and how to undertake meaningful analysis on our student population. It is expected that long-term structural steps will be needed to facilitate and realise this data analysis.

16. Each of the four nations have different requirements for reporting on, and addressing, gaps. There is a framework for promoting Fair Access to higher education in Scotland that links to national targets and is overseen by the Commissioner for Fair Access.

17. The Office for Students (OfS) requires providers in England to complete Access and Participation Plans (APPs) in which providers are asked to detail how they will work proactively to address degree awarding gaps in their context, along with how they plan to evaluate the impact of proposed intervention strategies.

18. The difference in sector frameworks and reporting is important in the context of benchmarking activity. The data driven approach in England may inform SFC and QAA requirements in years to come. Also, there may be learnings we can take from the institutions which gather, analysis and submit data annually.

Resource implications

19. There are no immediate resource implications from this paper. There will be resource implications depending on the approach taken and specific interventions that may be agreed to be taken forward. Investment in systems, software and additional statistical analysis resource may be required to systematically monitor student data. The development of training course(s) is another area which would require investment.

20. Resource consideration must be given to the teams working in data analysis and planning roles, as well as staff in QA roles which will manage the systematic monitoring. Additional resource may be required as these teams roll-out data and evidence-based monitoring throughout the institution.

Risk management

21. Poor performance across the range of student experience and lifecycle metrics is a risk to the University's reputation particularly if we do not develop a better understanding of which groups of students are at higher risk of withdrawing or under-achieving and the underlying reasons.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

22. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Equality & diversity

23. Equality and diversity are integral to the development of a new systematic approach to monitoring student data.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

24. Communication will be driven by the Deputy Vice-Principal Students (Enhancement) and shared by staff working in QA roles across the institution. Action may be driven through existing and enhanced QA practices.

25. Evaluation will be a key part of any practice adopted to address the awarding gap. The task and finish group expect that interventions will be initially piloted and evaluated to understand their impact before rolling out more widely.

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Freedom of Information Open

If you require this document in an alternative format, such as large print or a coloured background, please contact academic.quality@ed.ac.uk or Academic Quality and Standards, Old College, South Bridge, Edinburgh, EH8 9YL.

Senate Quality Assurance Committee

3 April 2025

Digital Badges Proposed Changes to Approval Process

Description of paper
1. The paper asks the Committee to discuss proposed changes to the approval process for digital badges.

Fit with remit:

Oversee the delivery and enhancement of the University's quality assurance framework, ensuring that it meets external requirements.	**Y**
In partnership with Edinburgh University Students' Association, ensure effective student engagement and representation of student voices in the University's quality framework.	**Y**
Support the University's engagement with external quality requirements and activities, including: Enhancement-Led Institutional Review, the UK Quality Code, and responses to consultations and initiatives.	**Y**
Consider the implications of the Committee's work and its decisions in the context of external initiatives and compliance and legal frameworks, particularly in relation to equality and diversity.	**Y**

Action requested / recommendation
2. The Committee is asked to **discuss** proposed changes to the approval process for digital badges to inform any changes to policy and practice.

Background and context
3. Open Digital Badges have become a standard way of recognising skills and achievements outside of credit-bearing course work. Digital badges are verifiable and when added to professional profiles or digital CVs, such as LinkedIn, they can evidence transferrable skills and competencies to employers.

4. Within the University of Edinburgh, the BadgEd service was established to create consistency and share good practice in the use of digital badges. As part of the service a group from across the Colleges and Support Groups was established to review new badge proposals and ensure that digital badges offered through BadgEd align with the University badge standards including whether:

    a. The badge clearly states a value to the University AND the person earning the badge;
    b. The description of the badge would be understood by an external audience such as prospective employers;
    c. It is clear what activities are required to earn the badge; and
    d. An external audience would understand what qualities or assessment would be undertaken to confirm the badge could be awarded.

5. To date 88 digital badges have been approved, these can be viewed on the BadgED catalogue. 3537 badges have been earnt by staff, students or learners and these have been shared over 3164 times across social media platforms, predominantly on LinkedIn.

6. Over summer 2025 the University's new short courses platform will be launched and more information can be found on the Short Courses Platform hub. The initial focus is to bring together the already extensive university portfolio of non-credited short courses, including those from the Centre for Open Learning, Usher and the Law and Business Schools. The new platform brings together an expansive course catalogue, allowing short, non-credited course learners to quickly find the right courses for them, with an improved digital learning environment for those studying online or hybrid.

7. The Programme and Course Approval and Management Policy covers the approval process for both credit and non-credit rated courses: "Boards of Studies are responsible for approving all new or revised non-credit bearing courses for external release and non-credit bearing continuing professional development courses." The Policy is currently owned by Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee but this is likely to move to Senate Quality Assurance Committee because it aligns better with external quality requirements.

8. With digital badges being predominantly used as recognition of learning on non-credited short courses, the Committee are asked to discuss the proposal that Boards of Studies also consider the appropriateness and approval for new digital badges when included as part of a new short course request. The outcomes of the discussion would be used inform any change to policy and practice which would be presented to the relevant committee for approval.

Discussion

Proposed approval process:

9. For NEW or revised courses wishing to issue digital badges: As non-credit bearing courses should be reviewed by Boards of Studies the proposal is that if a course wishes to issue Digital Badges to learners they would review the following criteria which is then published on the public facing Digital Badge Catalogue:
   - **Description**: what does the badge recognise.
   - **Earning criteria**: what has the earner done to be awarded the badge.
   - **Badge Assessment**: how will the earner be assessed to ensure the badge issued demonstrates quality and value to both the earner and the University.

10. These fields can be added to the end of the Board of Studies course approval document. In order to support Boards of Studies and ensure a consistent approach to approving Digital Badge requests, Educational Design and Engagement will provide training and support for Boards of Studies.

11. For EXISTING courses: It is proposed that there would be no change and courses already approved and running would submit an Open Digital Badge New Badge Request Form as per current process. These would be submitted via a Badge Champion in the school/department and reviewed by the Governance Group. The Digital Badge Champion would then support the Issuer to add it to the BadgeEd catalogue and issue the badges.

Resource implications

12. It is anticipated this will be a minimal increase in demands of Boards of Studies, assuming they will be considering requests for digital badges infrequently. When they do so, this will be part of wider consideration of a non-credit bearing course.

Risk management

13. The University's reputation is associated with the quality of courses, rather than digital badges themselves. Digital badges add prominence to our non-credit bearing courses and therefore invite greater scrutiny of those courses. Other potential risks include Boards of Studies not feeling confident approaching decision-making around digital badges and two different processes operating for the approval of digital badges.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

14. This paper does not respond to the climate emergency or contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Equality & diversity

15. An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out for the Programme and Course Approval and Management Policy and no additional equality and diversity impacts or implications are anticipated as a result of this proposal.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

16. The outcomes of the discussion will be used to develop the final process for the approval of digital badges and to update relevant policy and process documents which will be approved by the relevant committee.

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Freedom of Information *Open*

Senate Quality Assurance Committee

03 April 2025

Taught External Examiner Reports:
Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Thematic Analysis 2023/24

Description of paper
1. The paper provides an analysis of data from the External Examiner Reporting System (EERS). It covers undergraduate (see section A) and postgraduate taught (see section B) programmes for academic year 2023/24, provides comparison with 2022/23 and trend analysis over the past five years. An overview of the total number of reports for 2023/24 is included in section C.

   Fit with remit:

Quality Assurance Committee	Y/N
Oversee the delivery and enhancement of the University's quality assurance framework, ensuring that it meets external requirements.	Y
Maintain oversight of the outcomes of the quality assurance framework, ensuring that actions are addressed, and support the sharing of good practice.	Y
Promote the quality assurance framework as an important part of the University's activities and ensure that the outcomes inform relevant University business.	Y

Action requested / recommendation
2. The Committee to note the report and identify any University-level actions (assigning to specific areas as appropriate). The Committee to note the comments in relation to resource implications.

Background and context
3. The University's External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy states that Colleges and the University's Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) use information from External Examiner reports to identify common themes to help shape their strategic approach to quality assurance and quality enhancement, and to enhance the student experience.

4. The UK Quality Code guiding principles on External Expertise state, "Providers have effective mechanisms in place to provide a response to input from external examiners and external advisers." The University's mapping to the Quality Code states in response that Academic Response coordinators in Schools are responsible for responding to External Examiner reports and that the Quality Assurance Committee receives a thematic report from Undergraduate and

Postgraduate Taught external examiner reporting. The Committee identifies any institutional actions.

Discussion
5. Analysis includes high level themes arising from commendations, suggestions and issues, items identified for institutional escalation in the External Examiners' reports, and summarises report status. The report is intended to identify trends across reports from all Colleges. The report is based on quantitative data from the PowerBI dashboard which extracts information and themes from the EERS system. The data includes External Examiner reports that contain comments; if an External Examiner did not provide any comment in the report, then these reports are not counted. Thematic analysis is attached as Appendix 1, based on data available on 3 March 2025 for both undergraduate and postgraduate taught reports. The data capture point is slightly earlier that the previous year due to the earlier timing of the Committee's April meeting. It is anticipated that detailed analysis is carried out by Schools and Colleges to identify any issues. As stated in the External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy, Actions in response to External Examiners' reports (Section 57), College is responsible for identifying issues or suggestions that have institutional level implications and raising these matters in appropriate forums at an institutional level.

Resource implications
6. The paper is a report on activity therefore there are no resource implications associated with it. Contextual analysis is done at course, programme, School and College level and report outputs are considered through annual monitoring and Internal Periodic Review. Any actions taken by Schools and Colleges as a result of External Examiner reports are expected to be met from within existing resources. Further contextual or cluster analysis at institutional level is unlikely to be achievable within current Academic Quality and Standards resources. There may be more value in targeted analysis of External Examiner reports at an institutional level, relating to specific University priorities.

Risk management
7. The paper is a report on activity and no risks are identified.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals
8. This paper does not contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals as it is fulfilling external compliance within the quality framework.

Equality & diversity
9. The paper is a report on activity and an equality impact assessment is not required. Academic Quality and Standards has not identified any major equality impacts in relation to this report.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed
10. The Committee should consider implementation and communication of any agreed action. College representatives should ensure that the outcomes of the Committee's discussions are available for consideration by the relevant College committees.

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07 March 2025

Presenter
Brian Connolly

Freedom of Information
The paper is **open**.

1. **Introduction**

1.1   This paper provides a thematic analysis of External Examiner reports for undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes. Analysis was conducted based on data available on 3 March 2025. The analysis focuses on high level themes across the University, and is compiled by Academic Quality and Standards from a PowerBI report specifically created by Student Analytics for this purpose; the dashboard provides data to School level (programme level information is not available unless this is specifically referenced by External Examiners in their comments). (See also points raised under "Resource implications" on the coversheet of this paper.) External Examiners often write "N/A" or "not applicable" in their report entries and may also repeat or make similar comments in more than one part of their individual reports. The analysis in this paper does not exclude these remarks. (As noted in the discussion section above, External Examiner reports with no text comments recorded in their report are not included in the data.)

1.2   **Action requested** The Committee to note the report and identify any University-level actions (assigning to specific areas as appropriate).

A   Undergraduate External Examiner Reports:

Thematic Analysis 2023/24

2.   **Analysis of major themes**

2.1   Analysis continues to show a high number of commendations across the University and a lower number of issues (see Figure 1). There has been a decrease in reported issues on the previous year in all Colleges. The increase in issues in the 2022/23 was likely linked to the impact of industrial action.

2.2   Trend analysis is included in Figure 2 below. The Committee should note that External Examiners can make multiple comments across categories and the analysis reflects the trends shown by the reporting system. Equally, External Examiners may flag something as a commendation, suggestion or issue but not add any narrative in their report. External Examiners may also repeat comments in different parts of their reports. Due to resourcing limitations in Academic Quality and Standards, repeated comments and entries without narrative (for example n/a comments) are not excluded from the analysis which focuses on high level themes and trends. The analysis of themes in relation to commendations, suggestions and issues below is drawn from narrative comments added in the reporting system.
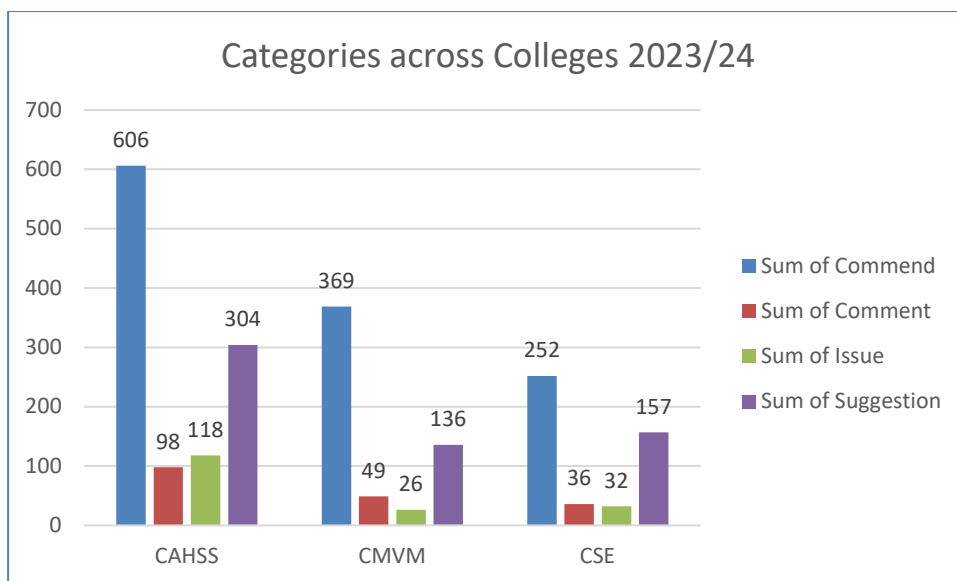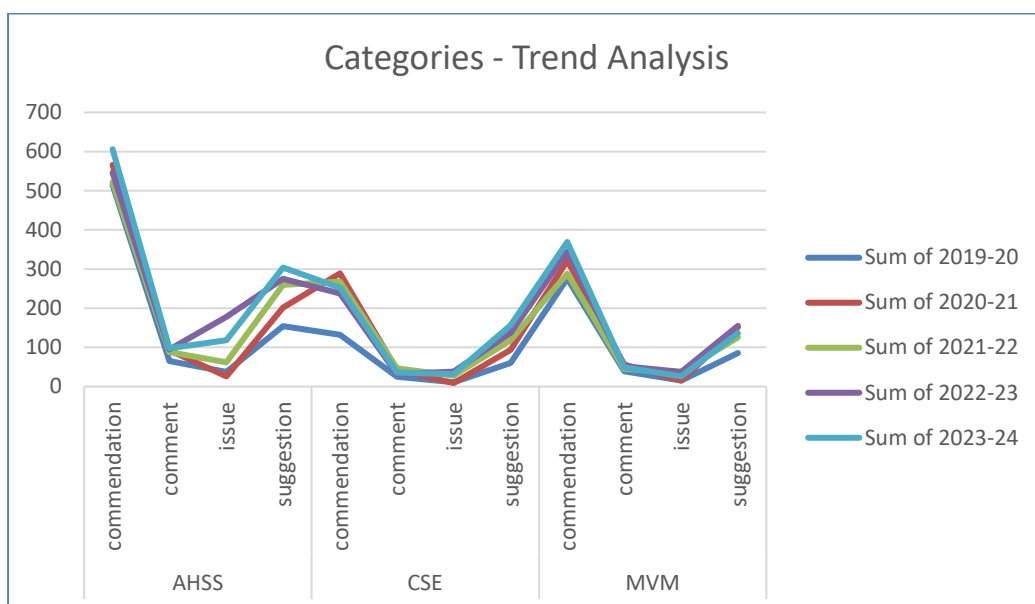
Figure 1

Figure 2 Categories trend analysis over past five years

Note: The data capture point for this year was earlier than the preceding two years. However, as categories are set within External Examiner reports once submitted, this is less likely to significantly impact the trend analysis.

AHSS (College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences), MVM (College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine), CSE (College of Science and Engineering). The number of issues, commendations, suggestions and comments are in the context of the relative size of each College.

2.3   Commendations

Consistent with the previous five years, External Examiners most often commended the main **theme** of "The Assessment Process" across all three Colleges (281, 30% of the total number of commendations). The most

commendations of a single **sub-theme** were in "Good practice and innovation" (in the Programme Development theme – total of 185 commendations). One example of External Examiners' comments from each College in that sub-theme is given below:

"I continue to be impressed by the range of modules on offer to students, the intellectual complexity and rigour of their responses, and the high standards of detailed and supportive feedback provided, guiding students through their argumentation, use of sources, contextual discussions etc. In terms of good practice, I would highlight that it is especially nice to see discussions of diverse materials relating to gender, identity, and wider 'francophonie' embedded into modules across all periods and media rather than simply isolated into their own separate modules. I have also observed that students are generally ambitious in their topic choices for assessments (i.e. they do not just opt for the suggested topics/questions but frequently create their own) and I have been impressed by this as there can be a tendency for them to be cautious and less enterprising at higher levels. As a result, their intellectual independence shines through. More generally, I was impressed by the way that students engage critically and thoughtfully with a range of challenging intellectual, literary, cultural and historical materials across their modules, especially when writing in the target language." (*School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures, CAHSS*)

"I commend the practise of having a single moderator oversee all markers as this provides consistency between markers and allows for oversight.
The course team also provide plenty of formative sessions for the various types of assessments which is useful for the students.
I also commend as good practice the use of the SLICC reflective report portfolio, which is comprised of student blogs. It is a pleasure to read the students reflection on their progress through the projects. It requires some adjustment and simplification of the learning outcomes, but the course lead has that in hand." (*Biomedical Sciences, CMVM*)

"There is a very rich set of modules across the different degree programmes and an excellent range of experiences and knowledge that students will gain from them. I see that most staff puts (sic) a lot of effort into revising material and bringing new aspects to their teaching, as well as facing the challenges of recent AI platforms towards addressing assessment to keep it fair. As always, there are some modules that face issues in one year, but will take these to improve learning and assessment going forward. There is a good level of sharing good practices across the board which is nice to see." (*School of Informatics, CSE*)

2.4   Suggestions

The Programme Development and Enhancement **sub-theme** "Enhancing student learning experience" attracted the highest number of suggestions (145, 34% of the total number of suggestions). External Examiners made suggestions in all Colleges. The majority of suggestions were specific to courses or programmes. There were 6 suggestions in CAHSS and CMVM (6% of the total in the sub-theme) relating to diversification of assessment methods.

2.5   Issues

2.5.1   Overall, 137 issues were raised compared with 253 issues in 2022/23 which represents a 54% decrease. This represents a return to a more consistent trend following the increase in issues in the previous year, when Colleges noted that in 2022/23 there were a number of repeat issues raised in relation to the marking and assessment boycott with individual External Examiners raising the same point in different parts of their reports.

2.5.2   As in the previous five years, the main **theme** was "Provision of Information" with 61 report entries made across all Colleges (44% of the total number of issues). There were 25 (41%) report entries where External Examiners reported issues around the provision of sufficient timely information in advance of the Board of Examiners meetings.

Schools have responded to or are preparing responses to all reports.

3.   Overview of the number of Undergraduate External Examiner Reports

3.1   Table 1 shows the total number of undergraduate reports by College compared with the previous academic year. Note: the data capture point was March for 2023/24 and April for 2022/23 in tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1: Number of undergraduate reports

	2023/24	2022/23
College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS)	136	124
College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine (CMVM)	62	62
College of Science and Engineering (CSE)	32	34
Total number of reports	230	220

3.3   Table 2 shows the number and stage of undergraduate reports in each College compared with the previous year.

Table 2: Number and stage of reports

	Report Stage	2023/24	2022/23
CAHSS	Response Submitted (complete)	116	61
	Draft Response (in progress)	19	63
	Cancelled	1	0
CMVM	Response Submitted (complete)	57	60
	Draft Response (in progress)	4	2
	Submitted Offline	1	0
CSE*	Response Submitted (complete)	21	25
	Draft Response (in progress)	10	9
	Draft Report (late)	1	0

*CSE continue to receive some External Examiner reports offline. The College is trying to understand better why some reports continue to be submitted offline and to encourage use of the University reporting system.

3.3   Colleges are continuing to work with Schools to ensure responses are completed as soon as possible.

4.   Comments identified by Academic Response Coordinators as Institutional matters

4.1   Academic Response Coordinators can flag comments for School, College or Institutional escalation. The Committee's primary interest in institutional escalations is to identify any issues that require institutional action. There were seven comments flagged for institutional escalation in 2023/24. These included three issues, within the School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures (LLC):

- One related to Provision of Information where the late approval of exceptional circumstances was impacting the timely provision of assessed work examples.

- One related to Board of Examiners meetings and the interaction between retrospective exceptional circumstances and misconduct when work affected by academic misconduct is discounted where there are exceptional circumstances. The same report entry also highlighted assessment design in light of concerns around Generative AI.
- One related to Issues raised in a previous report where the narrative was DPA N/A.

4.2 There were four suggestions flagged; two where the narrative was N/A (both in LLC), one relating to anonymising coursework to remove student names (GeoSciences) and one relating to problems with submitting a report in the online system (Law).

Table 3: institutional escalation themes 2023/24

Issues raised in a previous report (1 issue and 2 suggestions)	3
Provision of Information (1 issue and 1 suggestion	2
The Assessment Process (suggestion)	1
Board of Examiners Meetings (issue)	1

Table 4: institutional escalation themes 2022/23

Board of Examiners Meetings (suggestion)	2
Academic Standards, sub-theme Comparability of standards (issue)	1

B   Postgraduate Taught External Examiner Reports:

Thematic Analysis 2023/24

1. Analysis of major themes

1.1   Analysis continues to show a high number of commendations and a low number of issues across the Colleges (see Figure 3). There has been an increase in the number of External Examiner reports in the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine and slight decrease in the College of Science and Engineering (from the data capture point for this report to SQAC in March 2025). There was no change in the number of External Examiner reports in the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. As noted in the undergraduate report in section A above, External Examiners can make multiple comments across categories and the analysis reflects the trends shown by the reporting system. Equally, External Examiners may flag something as a commendation, suggestion or issue but not add any narrative in their report. External Examiners may also repeat comments in different parts of their reports. Due to resourcing limitations in Academic Quality and Standards, repeated comments and entries without narrative (for example n/a comments) are not excluded from the analysis which focuses on high level themes and trends. The analysis of themes in relation to commendations, suggestions and issues below is drawn from narrative comments added in the reporting system.
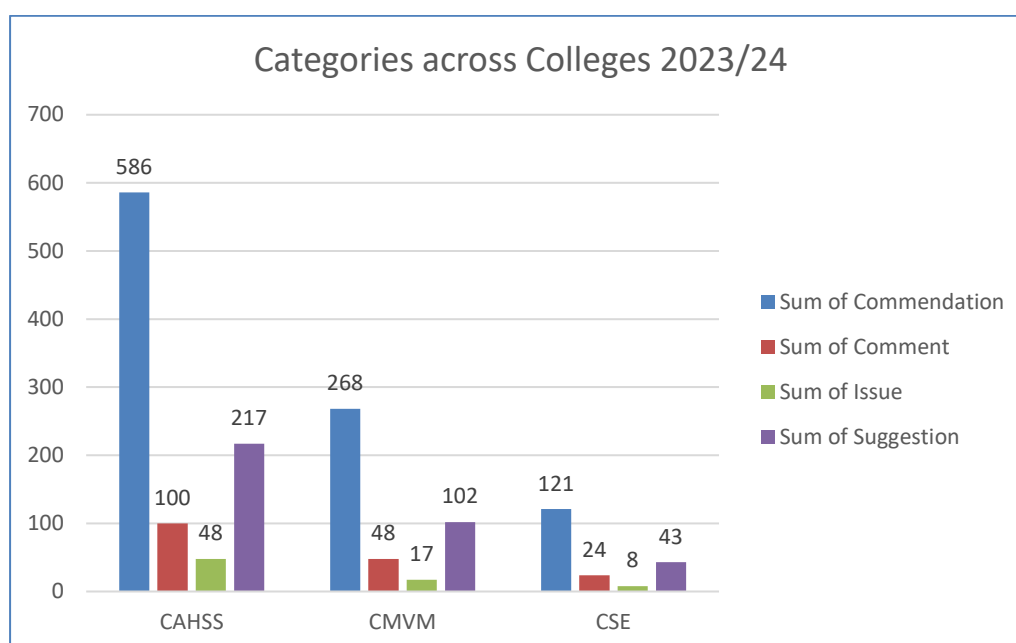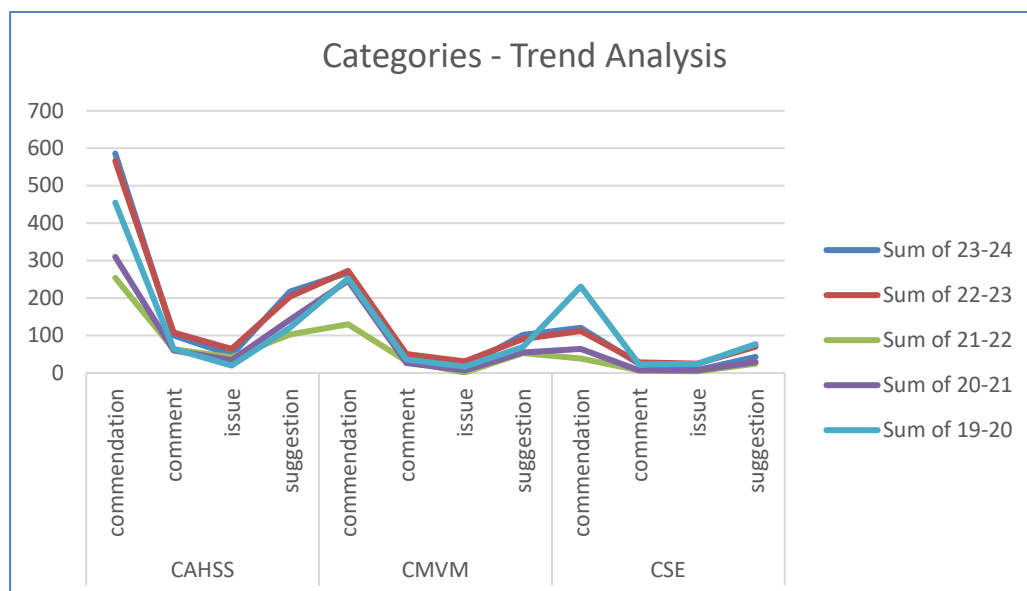
Figure 3

Categories across Colleges 2023/24

Figure 4 Categories trend analysis over past five years

Note: The data capture point for this year was earlier than the preceding two years. However, as categories are set within External Examiner reports once submitted, this is less likely to significantly impact the trend analysis

CAHSS (College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences), CMVM (College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine), CSE (College of Science and Engineering). The number of issues, commendations and so on are in the context of the relative size of each college.

1.2   Commendations

As in the previous two years, the main **theme** commended across all three Colleges was The Assessment Process (248 commendations, 28% of the total number of commendations). As in the previous year, the single **sub-theme** with the most commendations was "Good Practice and Innovation" in the Programme Development and Enhancement theme (194 commendations, 22% of the total number of commendations). One example of External Examiners' comments from each College in that sub-theme is given below:

"Critical Practices DES/11169 - The brief (Becoming Present) clearly outlines and delineates how and what the students can achieve in an exploratory and experimental manner within this module. The idea of equipping students with a "research toolkit" is to be commended and encouraged as good practice. It has to be noted that the design and layout of the MA exhibition was very professional and being housed in the main building helped integrate the programme into the complete ECA exhibition." *(Edinburgh College of Art, CAHSS)*

"1. Overall, the courses offer a well-rounded mix of topics with sufficient breadth and depth. Reflective pauses provide good opportunities for problem-solving, peer learning, critical analyses, and creative expression.

2. The programme structure is exemplary with a mix of asynchronous and synchronous elements including bite-sixed (sic) recordings and face-to-face days. This allows students from across Scotland to participate and helps them find balance with their busy work life. There are plenty of reading resources provided with many opportunities for student engagement and shared learning through prompts and generous use of discussion boards. The programme does particularly well in using guest lectures and case studies to incorporate real-world examples making the content more relevant for students.

3. When catering to a varied student cohort from health and social care sectors, it is difficult to provide all content that is relevant for all but the current material does fantastic work of covering the fundamentals that should be applicable across sectors and in different care settings. Particularly, the course on Fundamentals, HEIN11064, does an excellent job with explanation and clarification of terminology (evident from the content and student feedback), which is important for students at the start of the programme.

4. Assessment feedback provided is generally comprehensive and detailed but it is especially helpful where it highlights the areas of strengths as well as provides detailed suggestions on areas for improvement as seen in HEIN11063.

5. I would also like to highlight the excellent practice of using formative assessment and sharing general feedback for all (irrespective of submission status) as in HEIN11076. Formative assessment affords students the opportunity to gather early feedback and improve their work and the general feedback means it remains inclusive with everyone receiving useful guidance to help prepare for the summative assessment.

6. Lastly, a very strong point of the programme is student and staff voice. Weekly student input (in the form of 3 stars and a wish or similar), which is open for everyone to see and comment on, together with the final survey demonstrates the care of the programme team by listening to the students and trying to continually improve their courses. It also helps with identifying good practices that should be continued and can be adopted by other courses within the programme as well as beyond. Obtaining staff feedback through reflections serves as a good starting point in helping them think about the next steps to consider for improvement but also enables them to have a voice and identify issues from course development and delivery perspective. "
(*Molecular, Genetic and Population Health Sciences, CMVM*)

"The technical content of the modules, the delivery methods and the assessment are of high quality, making the courses a very appealing offer. One of the things that the students have praised consistently is how approachable the staff is, and this is something you don't hear too often in 1st class universities where academics often repeat the mantra that they are very busy and can't deal with the students. The staff involved in the course have a genuine interest to maintain the quality of the course and support the students. Regarding the delivery of the courses, some courses follow a conventional -yet effective- method with regular lectures and problem classes; whereas others also use online tests and prerecorded (sic) content. The smart grids module has been praised by the students because of its guest talks from industry. I think this is an excellent addition and international students in particular appreciate talking to people from industry directly to get advice about job prospects and other matters. " (*School of Engineering, CSE*)

1.3 Suggestions

As in the previous year, the Programme Development and Enhancement **theme** attracted the highest number of suggestions at 141 (45% of the total number of suggestions) across all Colleges. The majority of External Examiner suggestions in this theme specifically related to programmes or courses. There were a small number of suggestions in relation to consistency of feedback to students on assessed work (10 suggestions, 7% of the number of suggestions in this theme).

1.4 Issues

Overall, 72 issues were raised (a 60% decrease on the previous year's report). As noted in the undergraduate report above, this change may be attributable to the impact of industrial action in 2022/23. As in the previous year, the main **theme** was Provision of Information with 34 issues (47% of the total number of issues) and was raised in the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine. The most common issue raised in this theme was the late receipt of material with 9 report entries (26% of the total in this theme).

Schools have responded to or are preparing responses to all reports.

2 Overview of the number of External Examiner Reports

2.1   Outlined in the tables below are the number of postgraduate taught (PGT) reports by College compared with the previous academic year. The data capture point was March for 2023/24 and April for 2022/23 and reflects information available in Academic Quality and Standards' PowerBI dashboard.

Table 4: Number of postgraduate taught reports by College

	2023/24	2022/23
College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS)	152	152
College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine (CMVM)	64	54
College of Science and Engineering (CSE)	28	30
Total number of reports	244	236

2.2   Outlined in the figures below are the number and stage of postgraduate taught reports in each College for 2023/24 and 2022/23.

Table 5: Number and stage of reports by College and academic year

	Report Stage	2023/24	2022/23
CAHSS	Response Submitted (complete)	110	115
	Draft Response (in progress)	42	37

	Allocation*	1	0
CMVM	Response Submitted (complete)	53	40
	Draft Response (in progress)	11	14
CSE**	Response Submitted (complete)	14	20
	Draft Response (in progress)	13	10
	Draft Report (late)	1	0

* Reports at allocation stage may be reports allocated in error, duplications or not expected due to External Examiner resignation.

**CSE continue to receive some External Examiner reports offline. The College is trying to understand better why some reports continue to be submitted offline and to encourage use of the University reporting system.

2.3 Colleges are continuing to work with Schools to ensure any outstanding draft reports are received and that responses are completed as soon as possible.

3 Items identified by Academic Response Coordinators as Institutional matters

3.1 Two suggestions were identified for institutional escalation in 2023/24; one related to personalised feedback to students on their assessed work and one to combining progression and award boards. Two suggestions were identified for institutional escalation in 2022/23.

Table 6 institutional escalation themes 2023/24

The Assessment Process (suggestion)	1
Board of Examiners Meetings (suggestion)	1

Table 7 Institutional escalation themes 2022/23

Issues raised in previous reports (suggestion)	1
Provision of Information (suggestion)	1

C   Total reports for 2023/24

In 2023/24 the External Examiner Reporting System recorded a total of 230 reports from 228 Undergraduate External Examiners, and 244 reports from 243 Postgraduate Taught External Examiners. Report status is monitored by Colleges and followed up with Schools at course and programme level as required.
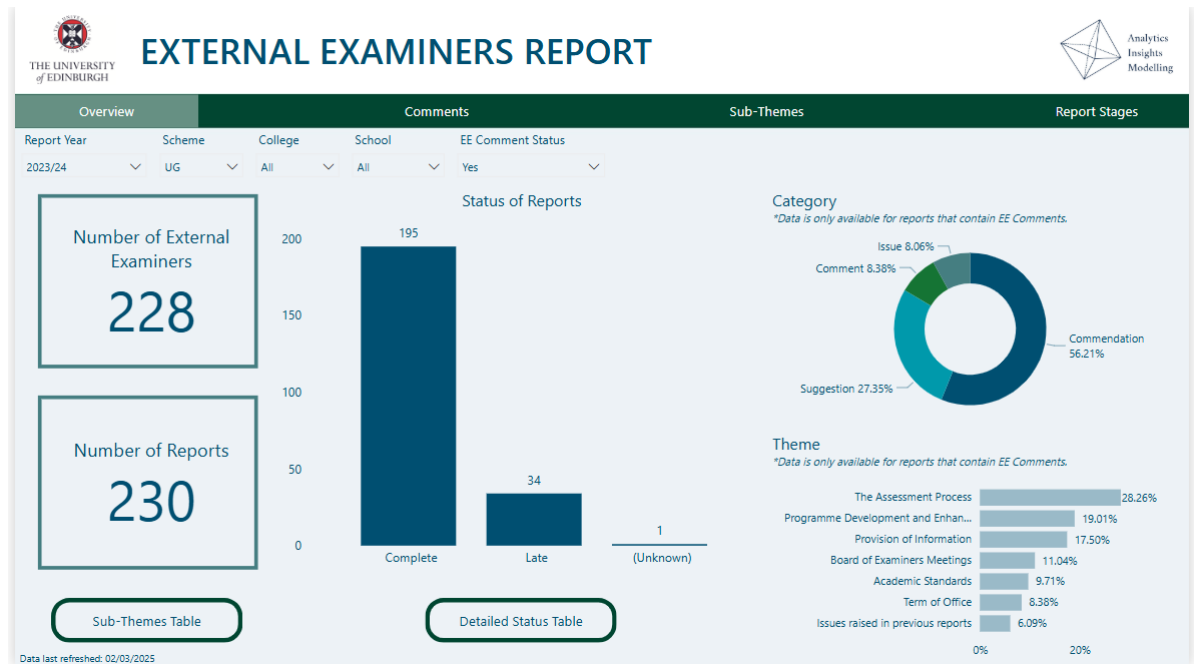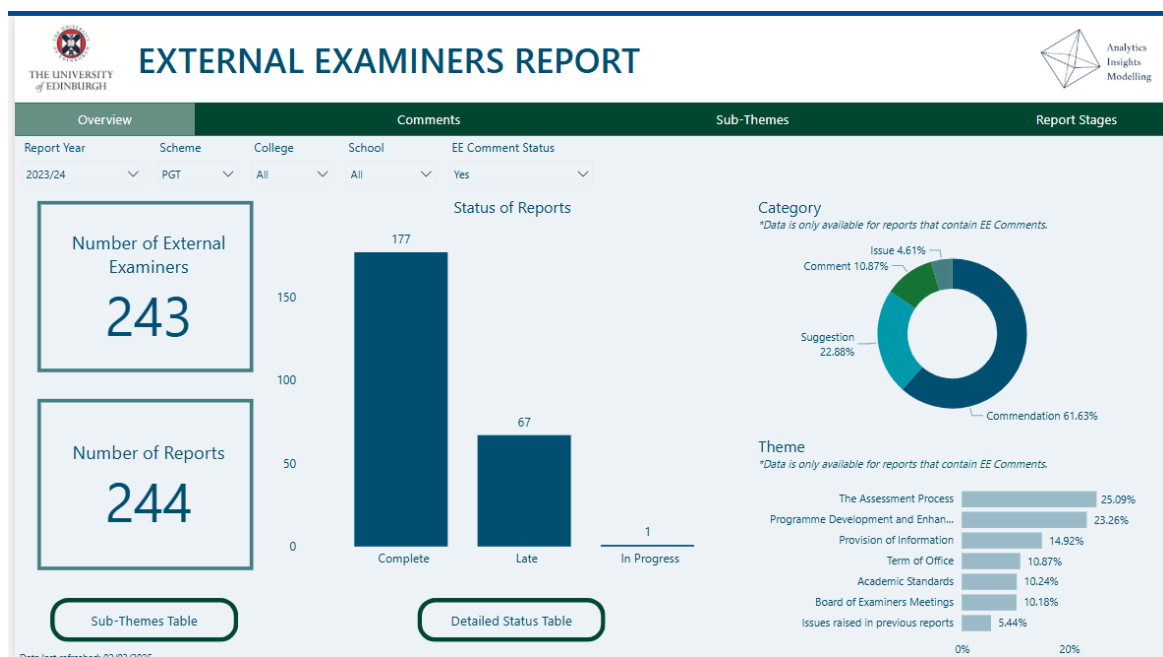
Figure 5 Undergraduate report overview

Figure 6 Postgraduate taught report overview

Susan Hunter
Academic Quality and Standards
07 March 2025

Senate Quality Assurance Committee

03 April 2025

External Examiners: Exceptional Appointments Report 2023/24

Description of paper
1. Report on College approvals of exceptional External Examiner appointments made during 2023/24.

    Fit with remit:

Quality Assurance Committee	Y/N
Oversee the delivery and enhancement of the University's quality assurance framework, ensuring that it meets external requirements.	X
Promote the quality assurance framework as an important part of the University's activities and ensure that the outcomes inform relevant University business.	X

Action requested / recommendation
2. To formally note the report.

Background and context
3. The External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy provides for Colleges to make exceptional appointments where a conflict of interest has been identified (section 24). The Policy states that, "Colleges will report annually to Senate Quality Assurance Committee on exceptional appointments of External Examiners with conflicts of interest categories stated in this policy". The report is compiled by Academic Quality and Standards from information provided by Colleges.

Discussion

College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences:
4. The College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences had eight exceptional appointments. There were 10 exceptional appointments in the previous academic year.

New exceptional appointments
5. There were four in the Law School, two in Literatures, Languages and Cultures (LLC) and one each in the Schools of Divinity, and Health in Social Science (HiSS). The College notes that both the Law School and LLC have a high ratio of Externals Examiners per Board, which makes it difficult to avoid using more than one External from the same institution.

6. The Law School received three concessions for nominees affiliated with the same institutions as External Examiners already appointed in the School. In one case, the overlapping appointment was ending in 2023; in two cases the ratio of appointments was very small. In one case an exceptional appointment was

approved for an External who was within the period of five years since previously being employed by the University due to the very short period of overlap within the five-year period, and all students from that time had graduated.

7. LLC received two concessions for nominees affiliated with the same institutions as External Examiners already appointed in the School. In both cases the ratio of appointments was very small due to the high proportion of External Examiners per Board. Additionally for one appointment there was a limited pool of expertise in the discipline.

8. In Divinity one appointment was made where there could be a perception of a reciprocal arrangement, However, there was only one semester of overlap of appointments and no discipline cross-over. Additionally, there was a limited pool of expertise in the discipline.

9. In HiSS, one appointment was made despite the nominee already having two other External Examiner appointments. The College granted the concession as one appointment was finishing in 2024.

Extensions to existing appointments/non-standard appointments
10. There were nine exceptional extensions and six non-standard term of office dates. There were 10 exceptional extensions in the previous year. The higher number of extensions and later start dates for some examiners was partly due to the impact of industrial action.

11. Exceptional extensions were distributed as follows: three in Moray House School of Education and Sport (MHSES), two in the School of Social and Political Science (SPS), and one each in HiSS, History, Classics and Archaeology (HCA), and LLC. The majority of these extensions were granted to ensure consistency and Schools facing challenges in finding replacements due to industrial action.

12. Non-standard terms of office were distributed as follows:
    - HiSS – one to cover new programme intake at January and one with an existing appointment in another School where HiSS faced difficulty in recruiting within the discipline.
    - Edinburgh College of Art (ECA) – resignation of the previous External.
    - HCA – the previous External resigned during industrial action.
    - Law – three-year tenure as External could not commit to standard four-year term.
    - School of Philosophy, Psychology and Languages Science (PPLS) – to cover maternity leave.

College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine:
13. The College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine had four exceptional appointments. There were seven exceptional appointments in the previous year.

New exceptional appointments
14. There were three new exceptional appointments in the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies (Vet School). One appointment was a vet in practice who did not meet all appointment criteria. However, the External was paired with an

External from an HEI. The BVM&S team are keen to appoint a practicing vet alongside an academic to ensure practical and academic components are appropriately covered. One appointment identified a potential conflict of interest as the nominee had recently been a guest lecturer. The College was content with mitigations put in place by the teaching team to manage this. One appointment was made under new arrangements governing reciprocal arrangements as approved by SQAC for BVM&S.

Extensions to existing appointments

15. One one-year extension was approved for the Deanery of Biomedical Sciences to allow the External to see the run out of the programme.

College of Science and Engineering:

16. The College of Science and Engineering had three exceptional appointments. There were two exceptional appointments in the previous year.

New exceptional appointments

17. There was one exceptional new appointment in the School of GeoSciences on the basis of industry expertise, as the Examiner had no direct teaching experience. However, due to the nature of the programmes involved, there was also an External Examiner, with relevant teaching experience.

Extensions to existing appointment

18. There were two exceptional one-year contract extensions. In the School of Chemistry an extension was granted due to the nominated replacement Examiner accepting a full-time position at the University and therefore no longer being eligible to fulfil a role as an External Examiner. The other extension was granted in the School of Engineering to allow an Examiner to complete a five-year tenure for continuity and consistency, as they had been with the Programme since it had been set-up. The School were encouraged to submit a new nomination as soon as possible.

Resource implications

19. The paper reports on activity and no resource implications are associated with it.

Risk management

20. The paper is a report on activity and no risks are identified in relation to this report.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

21. This paper does not contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals as it is fulfilling external compliance within the quality framework.

Equality & diversity

22. The paper is a report on activity and an equality impact assessment is not required. Academic Quality and Standards has not identified any major equality impacts in relation to this report.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

SQAC 24/25 4H

23. The Committee should consider implementation and communication of any agreed action. College representatives should ensure that the outcomes of the Committee's discussions are available for consideration by the relevant College committees.

Author
Susan Hunter, Academic Services
04 March 2025

Presenter
Brian Connolly

Freedom of Information
The paper is **open**.

Page **4** of **4**

Senate Quality Assurance Committee

3 April 2025

Committee Priorities 2025/26

Description of paper

1. The paper asks the Committee to approve proposed priorities for academic year 2025/26.

Fit with remit

Quality Assurance Committee	Y/N
Oversee the delivery and enhancement of the University's quality assurance framework, ensuring that it meets external requirements.	Y
In partnership with Edinburgh University Students' Association, ensure effective student engagement and representation of student voices in the University's quality framework.	Y
Maintain oversight of the outcomes of the quality assurance framework, ensuring that actions are addressed, and support the sharing of good practice.	Y
Promote the quality assurance framework as an important part of the University's activities and ensure that the outcomes inform relevant University business.	Y
Support the University's engagement with external quality requirements and activities, including: Enhancement-Led Institutional Review, the UK Quality Code, and responses to consultations and initiatives.	Y
Identify areas for innovation and enhancement of the student experience and ensure that these inform Senate Education Committee's policy development.	Y
Consider the implications of the Committee's work and its decisions in the context of external initiatives and compliance and legal frameworks, particularly in relation to equality and diversity.	Y

Action requested / recommendation

2. The Committee is asked to approve the proposed priorities for 2025/26, outlining areas of focus and objectives.

Background and context

3. In semester two of each academic year, Senate Standing Committees discuss and agree priorities to focus on throughout the following academic year. The process for development and agreement of committee priorities has been further enhanced this year to include a specific request for contributions from Senate.

4. The following have been taken into consideration when proposing priorities across the Standing Committees:

- Committee remits
- Feedback from Senate and standing committees
- University strategic priorities
- External and regulatory requirements
- Outcomes of quality processes, including external review

5. Member input (including from the constituencies they represent) is critical to shaping the proposed priorities and the associated areas of focus and objectives. Members are therefore invited to shape the draft priorities below or to suggest additional priorities to reach agreement on a set of proposed priorities which are relevant to the committee remit and the University's strategic priorities, and are achievable within resources. As such, members are asked to consider SMART criteria when discussing and agreeing the proposed priorities. Ideally, the objectives of the priorities should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.

6. The proposed priorities are a continuation of those set for the current year of 2024/25 with the exception that the priority in relation to the outcome of the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Tertiary Review has now been updated to reflect that the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) has now been implemented. The areas of work and focus remain relevant to the Committee, and are areas which require continued focus and oversight.

7. The timeline for discussion and agreement of standing committee priorities is as follows:

	Mid-year reflection update + input to priorities	Mid-year reflection + priorities discussion	Agree priorities (standing committees)	Senate notes agreed standing committee priorities
SEC	5 Feb	27 Feb	1 May	20 May
APRC	5 Feb	20 March	By electronic business (by end April)	20 May
SQAC	5 Feb	20 Feb	3 April	20 May

Discussion

DRAFT Committee priorities 2025/26

Priority	Responding to 2023 Quality Enhancement & Standards Review (QESR)

Rationale and fit with remit	This priority responds to the recommendations following the 2023 QESR and is relevant to the Committee remit: • 2.6 Support the University's engagement with external quality requirements and activities, including: external quality review, sector reference points, and responses to consultations. • 2.8 Consider the implications of the Committee's work and its decisions in the context of external initiatives and compliance and legal frameworks, particularly in relation to equality and diversity.

Area of focus and objectives	• The Committee will focus on the progress required against the QESR recommendations:
	   i) Assessment & Feedback (turnaround times and quality of feedback)
	   ii) Implementation of the Tutors & Demonstrators training policy
	   iii) Promotion of academic staff based on teaching
	   iv) Learning & Teaching Strategy
	   v) Attainment gap monitoring
	   vi) Pace of change: make progress on recommendations from external reviews which can be evidenced in the next academic year.
	• The Committee will support and monitor the work of the External Quality Review Oversight Group, overseeing actions to progress the above recommendations. The Group will report to SQAC and Senate Education Committee (SEC) to allow the Senate Committees to monitor progress against recommendations and ensure that appropriate action is being taken.
	• The Committee will update wider Senate on developments and progress in order to facilitate understanding of QESR and related external QA requirements.

Regulatory/external requirement?	Yes. This is in response to recommendations made in the QAA Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR) 2021 Report and the later QESR.

Priority	Engaging with the new Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF)

Rationale and fit with remit	A new sector-wide Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) has been implemented by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) in 2024-25. This fits with the Committee remit: • 2.6 Support the University's engagement with external quality requirements and activities, including: external quality review, sector reference points, and responses to consultations. • 2.8 Consider the implications of the Committee's work and its decisions in the context of external initiatives and compliance and legal frameworks, particularly in relation to equality and diversity.
Area of focus and objectives	• The Committee will update policy, guidance and practice to align with the TQEF. • The Committee will oversee the embedding of the new institutional annual quality reporting process to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC): the Self-Evaluation Action Plan (SEAP). • The Committee will engage with the new national enhancement programme for Scotland's colleges and universities: Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP). • Committee will update wider Senate on developments and changes in order to facilitate understanding and engagement with the new TQEF.
Regulatory/external requirement?	Yes. Mapping to SFC Guidance on Quality for Colleges and Universities 2024-25 to 2030-31 is an external requirement.

Priority	**Evaluation and monitoring of the effectiveness of the new student support model (SSM)**
Rationale and fit with remit	Relevant to committee remit: • 2.5 Support the University's engagement with external quality requirements and activities, including: external quality review, sector reference points, and responses to consultations. • 2.6 Identify areas for innovation and enhancement of the student experience from the outcomes of the quality framework and ensure that these inform Senate Education Committee's policy development.

Area of focus and objectives	- Oversight of the development of an evaluation mechanism as the model transitions to business as usual – including how this mechanism integrates with existing quality assurance processes. - Committee to be responsible for assessing the effectiveness of the SSM, through the evaluation model and supported by data to evidence the impact. - The Committee will look to ensure consistency and identify good practice & lessons learned from the use of the SSM. Any relevant lessons learned from implementation will be shared with the University Initiatives Portfolio Board (UIPB).
Regulatory/external requirement?	Yes. The University has made progress on the recommendation in ELIR 2021 to progress with student support services. Under this recommendation, the University was asked to develop an effective mechanism to monitor consistency of implementation and allow it to evaluate the impact of these changes on the student experience. Equally, evaluation and institutional oversight of the SSM will be an ongoing piece of work that will be the responsibility of SQAC as a quality measure once the project team completes its work.

Priority	**Student Data Monitoring**
Rationale and fit with remit	Relevant to committee remit: 2.6 Identify areas for innovation and enhancement of the student experience from the outcomes of the quality framework and ensure that these inform Senate Education Committee's policy development. 2.8 Consider the implications of the Committee's work and its decisions in the context of external initiatives and compliance and legal frameworks, particularly in relation to equality and diversity.
Area of focus and objectives	The Committee established this task group with the objective to adopt a systematic approach to monitoring data at the University level across key stages in the student lifecycle. The aim is to understand how well the University supports different student groups throughout their time at Edinburgh. The task group has been active

	in 2024/25 and will continue in 2025/26. The group will make recommendations to SQAC for a systematic data monitoring process. This new systematic approach will fill a gap in our oversight of the student experience at the University and will focus on quality data and high standards of evidence collection and use. Where appropriate, the Committee will consult with APRC to understand relevant policies, behaviours & EIQA analysis. Some aspects of the work of this task group are in alignment with the attainment monitoring recommendation of the QESR. The QESR report requires the University to: • Complete the recommendation on attainment gap oversight, coordination and monitoring from ELIR 4, expediting progress to ensure that the work being undertaken is effective. • Pay particular attention to sharing good practice and supporting staff in understanding the causes of attainment gaps and taking effective action.
Regulatory/external requirement?	Yes. This was a recommendation in the QAA ELIR 2021 and was re-emphasised by the QESR. Furthermore, it is an area of work that the Committee has identified for focus in previous years and now looks to prioritise the package of work that is required.

Priority	**Enhance Senate understanding of arrangements and effectiveness for quality assurance regarding internal systems and change processes**
Rationale and fit with remit	Relevant to committee remit: • 2.6 Identify areas for innovation and enhancement of the student experience from the outcomes of the quality framework and ensure that these inform Senate Education Committee's policy development.
Area of focus and objectives	SQAC is to prioritise helping Senate to better understand and scrutinise the arrangements and effectiveness for quality assurance regarding internal systems and change processes, including

	recent/ongoing changes to Exceptional Circumstances, Timetabling, Student Support, and Virtual Learning platforms.
Regulatory/external requirement?	No. This priority has been set at the request of Senate.

Resource implications

8. Standing Committees' work has implications not only for Registry Services, but also for the membership and stakeholders the Committee may need to consult and work with in relation to a particular priority including in relation to implementation and evaluation. Resource implications should be outlined and considered on an ongoing basis as work on priorities progresses.

Risk management

9. Work on priorities is vital to the Committee fulfilling its remit. Failure to fulfil its remit raises potential risks associated with the University's framework of academic policy and regulations and the student experience.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

10. This paper does not respond to the climate emergency or contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Equality & diversity

11. Equality and diversity implications should be outlined and considered on an ongoing basis as work on priorities progresses.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

12. The discussion at the meeting will be used to finalise the proposed priorities.

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March 2025

Presenter
Tina Harrison

Freedom of Information Open

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