

H/02/27/02
CSPC: 16.03.17

The University of Edinburgh

**Minutes of the Senatus Curriculum and Student Progression Committee (CSPC)
held on Thursday 16 March 2017 in the Raeburn Room, Old College**

Present:

Professor Alan Murray (Convener)	Assistant Principal, Academic Support
Professor Graeme Reid	Dean of Learning and Teaching (CSCE)
Mr Alan Brown	Associate Dean (Academic Progress), CAHSS
Dr Theresa McKinven	Head of PG Section (CAHSS)
Ms Alex Laidlaw	Head of Academic Affairs (CSCE)
Dr Sheila Lodge	Head of Academic Administration (CMVM)
Professor Helen Cameron	Director, Centre for Medical Education (CMVM)
Mr John Lowrey	Dean of Undergraduate Studies (CAHSS)
Dr Geoff Pearson	Dean of Students (CMVM)
Dr Antony Maciocia	Dean of Students (CSCE)
Mr Patrick Garratt	Vice President Academic Affairs, EUSA
Ms Ellie Tudhope	Senior Academic Adviser, The Advice Place
Dr Neil Lent	Institute for Academic Development (IAD)
Dr Adam Bunni	Head of Governance and Regulatory Team, Academic Services
Mr Barry Neilson	Director of Student Systems
Ms Anne-Marie Scott	IS Learning, Teaching and Web
Professor Susan Rhind	Assistant Principal, Assessment and Feedback

In attendance:

Ms Ailsa Taylor (Secretary)	Academic Policy Officer, Academic Services
Mr Tom Ward	Director, Academic Services
Ms Olwen Gorie	Head of Undergraduate Teaching Organisation, Edinburgh College of Art

Apologies for absence:

Dr Ewen Macpherson	School of Engineering
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1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on Thursday 26 January 2017 were approved as an accurate record.

2. Matters Arising

- a) **Electronic Business – Assessment Requirements for ExEDE Joint PhD Candidates (Aarhus)**

The Committee had approved an item of electronic business on this item by correspondence on 17 February 2017.

3. Assessment and Progression Tools (APT) Steering Group: Timing of Exam Board for Semester 1 Courses (CSPC 16/17 4 A)

Professor Susan Rhind and Mr Barry Neilson presented this item. At the November 2015 Committee meeting, a recommendation had been made to move to a position whereby ratified semester 1 course marks were all published after semester 1 Board of Examiners meetings. Opt-outs would only be approved if there was a firm pedagogical reason for this, and relevant College Boards would have responsibility for assessing these pedagogical reasons.

The Committee was invited to re-assess this issue in the light of the Assessment and Progression Tools project, taking account of data regarding the proportion of semester 1 course results published early in semester two in 2015/16 and 2016/17 academic years.

The Committee was invited to discuss whether the existing recommendation was being implemented effectively enough for undergraduate courses, and whether it was reasonable to expect that around 20% of semester 1 courses had firm pedagogical reasons for not publishing ratified marks at the end of semester 1. The Committee was also invited to discuss the reasons for the differences between publication rates for undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses.

The following points were made:

- Committee members expressed the view that they were firmly in support of the previous recommendation made by the Committee in November 2015. It was reiterated that opt-outs should only be approved if there were firm pedagogical reasons for this. Schools and Colleges would be expected to continue to push this firm recommendation.
- It was reasonable to expect that there would be good reasons for examining semester one courses at the end of semester, but not for waiting until the end of semester two to confirm results of courses examined in semester one. If late confirmations were due to logistical constraints, (rather than for pedagogical reasons) then the requirement would be for Schools and Colleges to examine whether such constraints could be overcome.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed to reiterate its support for the November 2015 recommendation and to ask Colleges to continue to encourage their Schools to comply with it. The Committee also agreed that there was no fundamental reason to delay the confirmation and publishing of semester one postgraduate taught courses until the end of semester two, although it did recognize that some logistical and resourcing issues may make it more challenging to achieve this for postgraduate taught courses than undergraduate courses.

4. Coursework Extensions Regulations and Special Circumstances Policy (CSPC 16/17 4 B)

- a) Coursework Extensions Regulations

Dr Adam Bunni introduced this item.

Feedback from Schools and from the Students' Association in particular had indicated that the consistency of practice targeted by the new coursework extension regulation introduced in 2016/17 had largely been achieved, with students no longer frequently raising concerns about inconsistent treatment. However, the Committee recognised that some issues to address regarding the regulation and its operation, for example regarding how requests for extensions for more than seven days are handled. It was anticipated that the Committee would look to do some more work to confirm the position in relation to coursework extensions during 2017/18 (but agreed that the status quo would be maintained for now). This would mean that Schools could continue to accept late submissions of up to seven calendar days without exacting a penalty, and that extensions of more than seven days would continue to be handled via Special Circumstances processes.

The Committee confirmed their expectation that final decisions on coursework extensions would be an academic responsibility. Student support/administrative/professional services staff could be involved in gathering information on behalf of an academic member of staff, but ultimately the decision required academic approval. The Committee agreed to amend the Taught Assessment Regulations slightly to clarify this point; the revised regulation would note that the Course Organiser, Programme Director, or equivalent *academic member of staff*, decided whether the student had provided good reason and sufficient supporting evidence to justify an extension.

It was clarified that the regulation regarding coursework extensions did apply to dissertations, and noted that this would be clarified in the 2017/18 version of the Taught Assessment Regulations.

b) Special Circumstances Policy

The Committee re-affirmed the previous decision taken in relation to the Special Circumstances Policy; that, in accordance with section 7.5 of the Special Circumstances Policy:

“7.5 SCCs will not consider information relating to students' marks when making decisions on Special Circumstances.”

It noted that it was the expectation was the Boards of Examiners would continue to make the final decision on the outcome/actions in relation to individual student cases, having full access to marks, and that – since students' marks are not evidence of the existence of special circumstances – there is no need for Special Circumstances Committee to have access to them.

However, it was recognised that there were still some issues to address in relation to the Special Circumstances Policy and anticipated that the Committee would do some more work to confirm the position during 2017/18 (but agreed that the status quo will be maintained for now).

5. Rounding and Borderlines in the Taught Assessment Regulations (CSPC 16/17 4 C)

Dr Adam Bunni introduced this item and the Committee discussed the issues raised in the paper.

It was agreed to make some minor adjustments to the Taught Assessment Regulations in 2017/18 to clarify the position on rounding and borderlines, following matters that had been raised as part of the Assessment and Progression Tools project. The Regulations would

clarify that marks for components of assessment were not rounded, and rounding was only applied to final course marks. In addition, the Regulations would clarify that Board of Examiners could consider borderline course marks where a student had special circumstances, or where the course mark affected progression, but would not otherwise consider borderline course marks.

6. Resits and Academic Failure Task Group – Final Report (CSPC 16/17 4 D)

Dr Adam Bunni outlined the work undertaken by the Resits and Academic Failure Task Group, and presented a paper which included proposals for revisions to the Taught Assessment Regulations and Undergraduate Degree Regulations in 2017/18. A consultation had been undertaken, and the task group had judged that there was not sufficient consensus to justify making significant change to the policy; the group had agreed to attempt to clarify the existing regulations based around the status quo. The group's proposals therefore involved minor clarifications only, and the following minor changes:

- Re-organisation of the existing content of the resit assessment regulation, to promote key principles of resit assessment;
- Content added explaining that some Honours programmes required passes in specified courses at the first attempt in order to progress to Honours ('elevated hurdles');
- An explicit statement added that "unsatisfactory academic progress" meant "failure to meet relevant criteria for progression". The regulations referred to the Procedure for Withdrawal and Exclusion from Studies for details regarding the process of managing unsatisfactory academic progress;
- Re-organisation and removal of redundant content regarding Fitness to Practise;
- Content added to clarify that, where students progressed with a credit deficit, they must ultimately obtain the missing credits;
- Content added relating to repeat years, in which students who were unable to progress may return to study on a full-time, part-time, or assessment-only basis, in order to address a credit deficit and seek to progress in the subsequent year.

The proposed draft regulations were approved, as presented. The final regulations would be formally approved by the Committee at their next meeting on 6 April 2017, as part of the annual approval of assessment and degree regulations.

7. Moderation Policy Review – update and recommendations (CSPC 16/17 4 E)

Mr Tom Ward introduced this item, noting that a review of the policy on moderation had been conducted and there was broad support to simplify the existing University documentation, and for the Institute for Academic Development (IAD) to develop new information and resources on moderation. The Committee agreed to the recommendations set out in the Paper, which included deleting the current Principles of Internal Moderation of Taught Assessment and incorporating relevant provisions into the Taught Assessment Regulations. This would simplify the documentation in which the information is presented, whilst maintaining the current level of regulation.

8. Discontinuation of postgraduate research supervision (CSPC 16/17 4 F)

Dr Adam Bunni presented this item. A mechanism was required for use in exceptional circumstances where it was judged that it was no longer possible for the University to provide supervision for postgraduate research students. The expectation would be that this would occur very infrequently. The University's regulations were currently unclear on what

happened in the event that a student-supervisor relationship appeared to have irretrievably broken down, and adequate alternative supervisory provision could not be provided.

The proposal contained in the paper was to include new regulations regarding changes to supervision in the Postgraduate Degree Regulations for 2017/18, and add procedural elements to the Procedure for Withdrawal and Exclusion from Studies. The broad approach set out in the paper had been endorsed by the Researcher Experience Committee (REC) in November 2016.

Extensive discussion was held on this item and the following points were made:

- It was not appropriate to think of discontinuation of supervision as 'exclusion' since this implied that blame had been attributed to the student;
- Discontinuation of supervision should only be followed when the University taken all reasonable steps to identify other options for supervision;
- It was recognised that any process did not remove the possibility that a student could argue that the University has breached its contract.

It was agreed that the University (rather than a College, as originally proposed) should make any decisions on individual cases, to ensure sufficient externality.

It was agreed that Academic Services would put together some alternative proposals which focused more clearly on termination of supervision leading to the requirement for the student to withdraw from studies. The power to terminate supervision would be vested with CSPC. A paper would be drafted for approval at the April 2017 CSPC meeting.

9. Senate Committee Planning 2017/18 (CSPC 16/17 4 G)

This paper was received by the Committee, and formally noted. This paper invited the Committee to identify any priorities for the coming session.

It was suggested that possible future items for consideration for CSPC in 2017/18 could include:

- Assessment and Progression Tools;
- Policy and regulations review (with some further work to clarify policy and practice in relation to borderlines, and the Special Circumstances Policy/coursework extensions);
- Service Excellence Programme – this was expected to lead to business for the Committee;
- Postgraduate taught assessment/progression and award arrangements - particularly with regard to progression to dissertation, resits and dissertation resubmission.

If Committee members had any further comments on this item they were invited to contact Mr Tom Ward by 30 March 2017 on tom.ward@ed.ac.uk

10. Arrangements for consulting with stakeholders on learning, teaching and student experience matters (CSPC 16/17 4 H)

This paper was received by the Committee for information, and formally noted.

11. Knowledge Strategy Committee Report (CSPC 16/17 4 I)

This paper was received by the Committee for information.

12. Any Other Business

It was noted that this would be Professor Helen Cameron's last meeting, given that she would soon be leaving the University to be Dean of Medical Education at the new medical school in Birmingham Aston. The Convener expressed his sincere thanks to Professor Cameron for her hard work and support of the Committee. Professor Cameron would be replaced on the Committee from April 2017 by Professor Neil Turner, Dean of Undergraduate Learning and Teaching, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine.

Ailsa Taylor, Academic Policy Officer, 23 March 2017