

The University of Edinburgh

**Minutes of the Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC)  
held at 1.00pm on Thursday 14 November 2019 in the Raeburn Room, Old College**

**Present:**

Professor Alan Murray (Convener)	Assistant Principal, Academic Support
Dr Jeremy Crang (Vice-Convener)	Dean of Students (CAHSS)
Dr Paul Norris	Associate Dean (Academic Progress) (CAHSS)
Dr Lisa Kendall	Head of Academic and Student Administration
Professor Judy Hardy	Dean of Learning and Teaching (CSE)
Stephen Warrington	Dean of Student Experience (CSE)
Heather Tracey	Acting Head of Academic Affairs (CSE)
Dr Antony Maciocia	Dean of Postgraduate Research (CSE)
Professor Neil Turner	Dean of Undergraduate Learning and Teaching (CMVM)
Dr Paddy Hadoke	Director of Postgraduate Research and Early Career Research (CMVM)
Stephanie Vallancey	Vice President Education, Students' Association
Gemma Riddell	Advice Place Senior Academic Adviser
Rayya Ghul	Institute for Academic Development (IAD)
Dr Adam Bunni	Head of Governance and Regulatory Framework Team, Academic Services
Sarah McAllister	Student Systems and Administration

**In attendance:**

Ailsa Taylor	Academic Policy Officer, Academic Services
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**Apologies for absence:**

Kirsty Woomble	Head of PGR Student Office (CAHSS)
Dr Geoff Pearson	Dean of Students (CMVM)

**1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 September 2019 were approved as an accurate record.

**2. Matters Arising**

Item 3 Curriculum approval arrangements for Edinburgh Futures Institute (EFI)  
(APRC 19/20 1A)

The Curriculum Oversight Board would now be chaired by Vice-Principal Professor Colm Harmon and the Deputy Convener would be Dr Paul Norris in his forthcoming new Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Approval role.

**3. Service Excellence Programme – Special circumstances: Request for policy changes for 2020/21 (APRC 19/20 2A)**

This paper requested special circumstances policy changes in order to support the incoming Extensions and Special Circumstances (ESC) team. The proposed changes reflected the fact that the ESC team would review all the special circumstances applications to determine the validity of the case and secure all evidence. The academic impact of supported cases would be determined by the School. The ESC team service was due to launch in July 2020.

The Committee agreed to make the following amendment to the policy change table presented in Paper A:

‘Reviewing the size of Board of Examiners committee to determine a maximum size against the current minimum to meet quorum standards’ was amended to ‘Reviewing the size of Special Circumstances Committee to determine a maximum size against the current minimum quorum standards.’ Similarly, the reference to risk was amended in this section to refer to the Special Circumstances Committee (SCC), as opposed to the Board of Examiners.

Subject to the above amendment, the paper was approved as presented.

Under the new processes, if the validity of the case had been accepted, the Convener and members of the SCC would have sight of the full case in order to make decisions on impact. This differed from current practice, whereby the SCC did not have access to the full case.

Members commented that the changes were being made for good reason, and could lead to much greater levels of consistency if handled well, but it would need to be accepted that there wouldn’t necessarily be time efficiency gains overall. It was also noted that a key matter to address would be expansion of web guidance, so that students fully understood the processes. In addition, although there could be quick decisions made on the validity of the case, it could still take some time before the student found out about the final decision, so it would be important to manage student expectations. Consideration would also need to be given to the number of Special Circumstances Committees to ensure the greatest levels of consistency.

It was clarified that under the new processes, the Convener of the SCC and a delegated student support staff member could expedite decision making in cases related to applications for waiting late penalties, and extensions applications for more than seven days.

For escalated cases, Sarah McAllister and Adam Bunni would further discuss defining a protocol and drafting policy accordingly. For non-escalated cases applications which were accepted would be passed for consideration by the relevant Special Circumstances Committee in the School(s) responsible for the course(s) to which the application related.

**4. Industrial action – concessions to regulations and policies (APRC 19/20 2G)**

The Committee approved this paper, which gave temporary concessions to regulations and policies in response to the planned industrial action, subject to the following amendment:

Taught Assessment Regulations 2019/20 (External Examiners) Regulation 8  
Convener of the Board of Examiners: responsibilities

The Committee removed the reference under Section 8.1 (f) to “participation of External Examiners”. The previous concession, under 8.1 (a) “approving the content of examination papers taking account of the comments of External Examiners” would stand.

**5. Proposals for review of the Student Appeal Regulations (APRC 19/20 2B)**

Dr Bunni presented this paper, which presented proposals for the methodology of the forthcoming review of the Student Appeal Regulations, scheduled to take place in semester 2 of 2019/20. The paper was approved as presented.

**6. Non-standard PhD examination arrangements: collaboration with KU Leuven (APRC 19/20 2C CLOSED)**

This closed paper was approved by the Committee as presented.

**7. Collaborative provision: Memorandum of agreement (annual update) (APRC 19/20 2 D CLOSED)**

The Committee noted the contents of the closed report.

**8. Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR) 2020 – Update (APRC 19/20 2E)**

This item was received for information.

**9. Academic year dates 2021/22 and provisional academic year dates 2022/23 and 2023/24 (APRC 19/20 2F)**

The Committee received a paper on academic year dates. Comments had been received in advance from Scott Rosie in Student Administration. Mr Rosie had noted that as part of ensuring the minimum of 10 available days for the December diet, the 2021/22 proposed calendar correctly showed a combined ‘revision/exams’ week. However, on the basis of this minimum duration, and the commitment to not examine beyond 21 December, Mr Rosie had commented that both 2022/23 and 2023/24 calendars would need to be amended so that they also reflected the need for the hybrid week.

The Committee discussed this matter and agreed that it should not be necessary to curtail the revision period in either 2022/23 or 2023/24, provided that examinations took place on Saturdays (e.g. 10 and 17 December 2022, and 16 December 2023). The agreement that CSPC had made previously for academic year dates in 2021/22 was also contingent on exams taking place on Saturdays.

The Committee confirmed their view that maintaining a full revision week should be a priority, and curtailing the revision week should only be resorted to when it was unavoidable, as it was in 2015/16 and would be again in 2021/22. As part of this, the Committee's view was that the University should consider scaling up support for Saturday examinations, with more examination venues made available, in order to be able to run full-scale exam sessions on Saturdays, which would have resource implications.

The Committee confirmed their view that the benefits of retaining a full revision week outweighed the risks inherent to Saturday exams, and the Committee were therefore supportive of the University ensuring this was resourced appropriately.

The Committee approved the academic year dates 2021/22 and provisional academic year dates 2022/23 and 2023/24 as presented.

**ACTION: Approved academic year dates to be passed to Communications and Marketing by Academic Services**

The paper also listed the programmes with non-standard academic year dates for Committee approval. This information was available on the website, and College Committee representatives had been asked to check if the information was correct at the time of the meeting.

It was agreed to insert the Access Programme and International Foundation Programme provided through the Centre for Open Learning.

**ACTION: Any further changes to the non-standard academic year dates to be passed to Academic Services by College representatives on the Committee so that the website can be amended at:**  
[www.ed.ac.uk/semester-dates/programmes-with-non-standard-academic-years](http://www.ed.ac.uk/semester-dates/programmes-with-non-standard-academic-years)

It was noted that there was a caveat listed on the relevant website which suggested 'We cannot guarantee the accuracy of this information, if you are unsure about the semester dates for your programme please check with your School.'

## 10. Any Other Business

Professor Murray extended his thanks to Anne-Marie Scott, the co-opted member of the Committee for her support of CSPC and APRC. Ms Scott would be leaving the University after 18 years of service, therefore this would be her last APRC meeting.