

The University of Edinburgh

**Minutes of the Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC) meeting
held online on Thursday 23 September 2021 at 2.00pm**

Present:

Dr Paul Norris (Convener)	Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Approval (CAHSS)
Professor Jeremy Crang	Dean of Students (CAHSS)
Rachael Quirk	Head of Taught Administration and Support (CAHSS)
Kirsty Woomble	Head of PGR Student Office (CAHSS)
Stephen Warrington	Dean of Student Experience (CSE)
Alex Laidlaw	Head of Academic Affairs (CSE)
Professor Antony Maciocia	Dean of Postgraduate Research (CSE)
Professor Jamie Davies	Dean of Taught Education (CMVM)
Dr Deborah Shaw	Dean of Students (CMVM)
Professor Patrick Hadoke	Director of Postgraduate Research and Early Career Research Experience (CMVM)
Tara Gold	Vice President Education, Students' Association
Charlotte Macdonald	Advice Place Manager (interim)
Dr Cathy Bovill	Senior Lecturer in Student Engagement, 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 (Secretary)	Academic Policy Officer, Academic Services
Stuart Lamont	Observer (Students' Association)
Dr Susan Morrow	Deputy Programme Director (MSc Surgical Sciences) and Deputy QA Director (Clinical Sciences) (CMVM)

Apologies for absence:

Professor Judy Hardy	Dean of Learning and Teaching (CSE)
Philippa Burrell	Head of Academic Administration (CMVM)

Dr Norris opened the meeting and welcomed those present, including the new members. Dr Norris also welcomed Stuart Lamont (Students' Association) who was to attend APRC as an observer during this academic year 2021/22.

1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 3 June 2021 were approved as an accurate record.

2. Minutes of the Previous Special Meeting

The minutes of the previous special meeting held on 5 August 2021 were approved as an accurate record, subject to the following amendment:

Item 2 Coursework Extensions and Special Circumstances (page 3). There was a typo at the bottom of page 3 under the section about additional grounds which were added to the special circumstances during the pandemic. The first bullet point referred to 'Been required to carry out more paid work than usual...' when it should have been 'Being required to carry out more paid work than usual....'

3. Matters Arising

3 June 2021 – item 3 Edinburgh Futures Institute (EFI) Postgraduate Taught Programmes

At the June 2021 meeting, the Committee had discussed the EFI proposals and the Committee had proposed that EFI should approach Senate Education Committee (SEC) to discuss the proposed arrangements for flexibility in duration of study for Lifelong Learning students further. SEC had met on 15 September 2021 to discuss the institutional position on this, and had approved the EFI proposals.

Following SEC's approval, no further action was needed from APRC. The Committee noted, however, that there had been discussion about the application of the Code of Student Conduct to Lifelong Learning students. APRC could be asked to give more consideration to this issue, should any problems arise in the future.

5 August 2021 Special meeting – item 2 Special Circumstances – MSc Dissertations

At the APRC special meeting on 5 August 2021, the Committee had been asked to consider whether College approval should continue to be required in order for students to re-submit a dissertation at MSc level. It had been noted at the time that this was current practice within Colleges. The Committee had agreed that this would require further discussion at a later date, however it had highlighted that Colleges were able to devolve such decisions to Schools, and should do this in the meantime. The Committee had agreed to return to this matter and discuss again during 2021/22, in advance of approving the regulations for 2022/23.

Convener's Action

Convener's Action had been conducted since the last meeting on 3 June 2021 as follows:

- a) Approval of a concession relating to regulations for optional study abroad;
- b) Approval of non-standard assessment arrangements for a joint PhD between University of Edinburgh/University of Groningen.

4. CMVM: Proposal for an alternative third year in the MSc in Surgical Sciences (Paper A)

Dr Susan Morrow presented this item. The paper was a proposal for an alternative 60 credit SCQF Level 11 Evidence Based Surgery course, which had been designed to sit alongside the current final year 60 credit MSc Surgical Sciences dissertation

course. The Committee discussed and gave their support for the 60 credit SCQF Level 11 Evidence Based Surgery course as an alternative to the currently offered Dissertation (Surgical Sciences) course. It was agreed by the Committee that the proposals had some similarities with other proposals that they had seen and approved, and was in the spirit of existing regulations because of the substantial research component.

Following queries by Committee members, it was noted that it had not yet been decided whether to offer the option to all students, and they may need to cap numbers and approve on a case by case basis, for example allow it for those students who could not find a local Supervisor.

It was noted that the Models for Degree Types were due for review soon. The Committee expressed a desire for wider institutional discussion on acceptable alternatives to dissertation at MSc level, to help inform the review of the Models for Degree Types.

ACTION: Dr Paul Norris to approach Professor Colm Harmon (Senate Education Committee) to have a wider discussion about the Models for Degree Types and the institutional position on acceptable alternatives to dissertation at MSc level. Dr Paul Norris would report back to the Committee in November 2021.

5. Study Abroad for one Semester: credit on aggregate (Paper B)

Dr Adam Bunni presented this item. The paper considered an issue relating to the application of credit on aggregate in cases where undergraduate students studied abroad for one semester only.

The Committee discussions on this item included the following:

- CSE had raised a concern that an initial proposal on this that had been circulated to some members of the Committee by draft had treated UoE and study abroad credits differently, but compensation had since been added to the proposal in both directions, therefore this was believed to have addressed CSE's concerns.
- The effect of the proposals on what would be seen by students on their EUCLID record, and on classification.
- It was recognised by the Committee that in some cases students managed course selection with little assistance, therefore effective communication was important so that the changes were clear to students.
- The Committee understood that the proposal was intended to resolve the immediate issues that had been presented, rather than change the year abroad structure.
- If the Committee were happy with the principals outlined in the paper then there would need to be further work between the CAHSS and CSE and SWAY on the workflow to aid implementation. There would be queries, for example, around what appeared on transcripts, and on Progression Board processes/timing to work out.

- The Committee expected to be able to reflect upon how well the processes were working this time next year.
- The Committee noted that they did not wish to set a specific average for the UoE course element.

The proposal was agreed by the Committee as follows:

Eligibility for credit on aggregate would continue to be calculated separately for a semester spent abroad and a semester spent at University of Edinburgh (UoE), in line with Taught Assessment Regulation 52.5. However:

- a. Where a student fails 30 or 40 credits of UoE courses, they will be allowed to progress provided they fall into Category 1 for their study abroad, irrespective of the average mark achieved for their UoE courses;
- b. Where a student has passed all 60 credits during their semester in UoE, but is placed in category 3 for their study abroad, they may be awarded full credit for their study abroad, provided their credit deficit is roughly equivalent to no more than 40 UoE credits (20 ECTS).

6. Vice President Education Priorities 2021/22 (Paper C)

Tara Gold presented this item for information. This paper provided an overview of the Students' Association Vice President Education's priorities for 2021/22. Priority areas included strengthening the University's response to the pandemic, modernising Edinburgh's curriculum and increasing transparency, responsibility and accountability.

7. APRC Membership and Terms of Reference 2021/22 (Paper D)

The APRC membership list was approved subject to the following amendments:

- Dr Paul Norris' role as Convener was not an ex-officio position.
- Dr Cathy Bovill's title was added (Senior Lecturer in Student Engagement, Institute for Academic Development (IAD))
- Charlotte Macdonald's title was changed to Advice Place Manager (interim).

The Committee discussed the Terms of Reference, with reference to the extent of student representation on APRC and other Senate Committees, and also in particular with reference to the extent of online distance learning student and postgraduate student representation. The Committee noted that it would be important to reflect on student representation in any discussion about membership of Senate committees.

8. Review of Senate Committee Effectiveness (Paper E)

The Committee considered the results of the review and, whilst recognising the low response rate, approved the proposed actions in section 4 of the Appendix. The results of the effectiveness review and agreed actions were to be reported to the October 2021 meeting of Senate.

9. Any Other Business

Sarah McAllister confirmed that there would be an end-to-end review of Extensions and Special Circumstances (ESC) based on Board of Examiner practice seen in the previous session, and available data. The review would look at policy and practice in the medium term, and consider in the longer term the sector discussion that was just beginning. The goal was to provide a detailed process for running Board of Examiners meetings, and the intention was that ESC data would be supplied to match this process. APRC would be updated periodically on progress.

The Committee discussed a concession request from CMVM. The Committee raised no objections to this, and it was agreed that the individual concession should be forwarded by Dr Patrick Hadoke to Dr Paul Norris to consider by Convener's Action on behalf of the Committee.

ACTION: Dr Paddy Hadoke to send individual concession request to Ailsa Taylor (ailsa.taylor@ed.ac.uk) for consideration by Dr Norris on behalf of APRC by Convener's Action.

Dr Bunni raised an item of business in relation to what regulations should apply to students who were due to complete the taught component of a PGT programme or an Honours year of a UG programme in 2020/21, but had been allowed to repeat some or all of that year during 2021/22 based on upheld special circumstances (i.e. null sits). The questions related specifically to the rules relating to Credit on Aggregate, which were amended by concession during 2020/21. The Committee discussed this, and agreed the following:

- Students repeating courses/a whole year of study during 2021/22 will be treated under the regulations applying to all students taking courses in 2021/22, i.e. NOT those applied by concession during 2020/21; this means that students can qualify for up to 40 credits to be awarded on aggregate;
- Where there are cases in which this could lead to a perverse outcome for an individual student, the School can approach the College to request that a concession be considered for that student. An example of this may be where a student could have been awarded Credit on Aggregate in 2020/21, but was instead offered null sits/repeats on the basis that they wanted to improve their performance, but they subsequently went on to fail those courses again.

ACTION: Dr Adam Bunni to email relevant College contacts to confirm what had been agreed by the Committee in relation to the regulations that should apply to these students.

Dr Norris noted that the intention was that the Committee would still meet online on Microsoft Teams for the time being, rather than meeting "in person". Members noted that there were some disadvantages to meeting in person when there would likely be a mixed economy with some persons online and some attending in person, which they felt would likely add complexity.