1 General points

1.1 While the University is in the process of gathering information regarding the impact to date of the industrial action, it is clear that in some areas learning, teaching, and assessment have been disrupted. This guidance is designed to provide Schools and Colleges with an understanding of the options available to address any disruption to date, and any elements that may be ongoing. Given the UCU’s recent announcement that the further round of planned industrial action has been suspended and that it has asked its members to work normally, some elements of this guidance may not be required in practice.

1.2 As a University we have a moral obligation to seek to minimise the disruption to our students’ studies while maintaining academic standards. To this end, Schools and Colleges should take all reasonable steps available to them within these guidelines to ensure that their students’ ability to learn, progress and graduate has not been compromised by the industrial action. The guidance applies until the impact on students has been addressed in full.

1.3 The University’s Assessment and Degree Regulations for Taught and Research programmes, and all other University academic policies, regulations and guidelines, continue to apply.

1.4 The Senate Curriculum and Student Progression Committee (CSPC) has agreed a small number of temporary concessions to the Assessment and Degree Regulations to provide a greater degree of flexibility for Schools to manage teaching, learning and assessment while the impact of the industrial action on students is addressed. These temporary concessions take account of the particular ways that the industrial action has affected learning, teaching and assessment at the University of Edinburgh. They are accompanied by a range of mechanisms to ensure that academic standards are not compromised, taking account of Quality Assurance Agency guidelines.

1.5 The concessions, which are set out in the guidance, may only be activated by Schools in the event that their activities have been significantly disrupted by the industrial action and that it is not possible to mitigate this disruption using the existing provisions of the University’s Regulations. When Schools utilise any of
these concessions, they must accompany them with the mechanisms set out in this guidance to ensure that academic standards are maintained.

2 Student engagement and attendance

2.1 Students were expected to attend all scheduled teaching and assessment events that took place despite strike action. For the duration of the strike action, where a scheduled activity took place as normal despite the action, existing student attendance monitoring arrangements (attendance registers etc) should have applied. Where an activity was cancelled due to strike action, even if it was a Tier 4 engagement point, normal attendance monitoring procedures could be relaxed and there was no need to record or action the missed engagement point. There is no requirement to introduce additional engagement points to replace those lost during the strike action.

2.2 Some students may have chosen not to cross a picket line to attend teaching or assessments that took place despite the strike action, however the University does not expect any arrangements to be made to offer alternative teaching or assessments, or to make any concessions in such cases.

3 Assessment & feedback

Dissertation submissions

3.1 Given where we are in the academic year, there is no general requirement for Schools to change the timing of submission dates for undergraduate dissertations. However, if students’ work on their dissertations has been disrupted due to the impact of the industrial action on supervision, Schools can extend submission dates to reflect the duration of the disruption (up to a maximum of three weeks) where this will not impact adversely on students’ preparation for examinations in April / May or prevent Schools from completing marking and moderation of the dissertations in time for the scheduled Boards of Examiners meetings. Annex A provides guidance regarding how Boards of Examiners can provide appropriate allowance for any lack of supervision during the period of the strike action.

3.2 Where industrial action has impacted on the support available to PGT students in the process of submitting their dissertation topics for approval, the School should extend the deadline for agreeing the dissertation topic to reflect the duration of the disruption experienced (up to a maximum of three weeks).

Coursework submissions and feedback

3.3 Students have been expected to work towards submitting coursework on time, as usual, and to work on the assumption that normal penalties will continue to apply to late or non-submission of coursework. This includes deadlines that fell on planned strike days. However if students were uncomfortable with crossing a picket line and students were required physically to hand in that assessment, Schools should have allowed late submission (on the next non-strike day) for students unwilling to cross a picket line. This did not apply if submission could be made electronically.
3.4 If any delays in providing feedback on one piece of assessment have compromised students’ ability to undertake the subsequent piece of assessment, the School has the flexibility to extend coursework submission deadlines for all the students on the relevant course. Schools are however advised not to extend deadlines unless there is a compelling case for doing so, and to keep the length of extensions to a minimum.

3.5 The University introduced a concession to the regulations so that coursework extension requests from individual students may be considered by administrative staff if the appropriate academic staff were not available due to the industrial action. Schools needed to alert students to make coursework extension requests through the Teaching Organisation or equivalent if the normal academic member of staff is not available. In practice, given that the industrial action has been suspended, it is unlikely that this concession will be required in practice.

3.6 As a result of the industrial action, it may take longer than the published 15 days for Schools to mark and return student assessments. In order to minimise any delays, Schools are asked to ensure that marking and returning marks on assessed work is treated as a high priority activity.

Setting examination papers

3.7 Where possible, Conveners of Boards of Examiners should ask External Examiners to review exam papers as usual. However, the University has approved a concession so that if an External Examiner is unavailable as a result of the industrial action (see 6 below), a School can set an exam paper without review by an External Examiner. When setting an exam paper without the input of an External Examiner, Conveners should ask an additional internal member of academic staff from the subject area to review the paper.

Setting coursework and examinations when content has not been covered

3.8 Schools will need to ensure that coursework does not test students on content that the course has not covered adequately due to the industrial action. Schools may however set assessments covering content that is associated with cancelled teaching activities, as long as that content has nonetheless been covered in a reasonable alternate way, for example through additional teaching activities or through material in reading lists and on VLEs. Schools are responsible for making an academic judgement regarding whether content has been adequately covered or not.

3.9 Similarly, Schools will need to ensure that exams do not test students on content that has not been covered adequately due to the industrial action, applying the same principles that apply to coursework (see 3.8). This may require exams to be rewritten and Schools should ensure that this is also treated as a priority action for staff now that the period of strike action is over. Rewritten exam papers should be reviewed by an External Examiner as usual. However the University has approved a concession so that rewritten exam papers do not need to be reapproved by an External Examiner(s) where time is short or where the External Examiner is not available as a result of the industrial action. When revising an exam paper without the input of an External Examiner, Conveners of Boards of Examiners should ask an additional internal member of academic staff to review the paper.
4 Boards of Examiners - accounting for disruption when making course, progression and award decisions

4.1 Annex A provides guidance to Boards of Examiners on how to take account of any disruption to teaching and assessment processes when considering final course marks and making progression and award decisions. Since Schools are responsible for informing Boards of Examiners of any impact upon courses they are responsible for, it should not be necessary for students to submit Special Circumstances because of the industrial action, unless the industrial action has had a particular impact on an individual student in combination with other special circumstances (for example it is possible that disruption to a course may have exacerbated a student’s mental-health conditions, leading to a more significant disruption to that student’s assessment than for other students on the course).

4.2 By attempting to substitute for lost teaching, ensuring coursework and exam papers are fair, and giving appropriate guidance to Boards on Examiners, the University has minimised the impact on student progression. The University has however introduced some concessions that provides Boards of Examiners greater flexibility in considering PGT progression, if it is necessary to do so (See Annex A, para 6.1d). Where a Board of Examiners is unable to determine the necessary. In the near future, the University will provide equivalent guidance to Boards of Examiners regarding flexibility regarding progression for undergraduate students.

5 Operation of Boards of Examiners

5.1 It is possible that the industrial action may impact on the operation of Boards of Examiners. In order to enable Schools to plan accordingly, Annex A sections 9 to 12 provide guidance regarding how Schools can enable their Boards to fulfil their responsibilities during a period of industrial action, for example how to meet requirements for quorum. In practice, given that the industrial action has been suspended, there are no grounds for expecting the provisions related to the quorum of internal members to be required. Those elements of the guidance are however provided for completeness.

6 External Examiners

6.1 The UCU encouraged External Examiners to resign from their posts. It is also possible that External Examiners will not have resigned but may nonetheless not have been prepared to fulfil their responsibilities as a result of the industrial action.

Notice periods and payments for External Examiners that resign

6.2 Since the University does not specify a notice period for External Examiners that resign from their posts, if an External Examiner has resigned a School should ask them to continue working for one further week, and as far as possible to complete any work that they are currently undertaking for the University, and also ask them to return to the University any assessment information (eg samples of students’ work) as soon as possible. If an External Examiner has undertaken any substantive duties this session, the School / College should pay part of the annual fee proportionate to
the volume of work they have undertaken. The School should also reimburse the External Examiner for any reasonable expenses they have incurred this session. Any payments would be subject to normal requirements, for example regarding demonstrating right to work in the UK, and regarding expenses policy, and no payments should be made until the External Examiner has returned all assessment information that has been provided to them for review.

Reappointing or replacing UG and PGT External Examiners that have resigned

6.3 If a UG or PGT External Examiner had resigned during the period of industrial action, now that the industrial action has been suspended the School should ask the External Examiner if they wish to be reappointed. If so, the School should seek to reappoint them as long as the re-appointment would not extend their term of office beyond that normally allowed by the University’s External Examiner Policy, and as long as they continue to have the relevant qualifications and expertise etc. If an External Examiner who has resigned does not wish to be reappointed, the School should seek to replace them with an alternate External Examiner.

6.4 Normal processes for the appointment of External Examiners continue to apply.

Alternate arrangements if a UG or PGT External Examiner is not available

6.5 Annex A (sections 9 to 12) provides guidance on some options for Schools in the event that UG or PGT External Examiners are not available to participate as a result of the industrial action (eg because an External Examiner has resigned and not been reappointed or replaced).

External Examiner arrangements for PGR oral examinations

6.6 Section 5 of Annex B to this guidance provides guidance regarding how Heads of Schools should manage External Examiner arrangements for PGR oral examinations during the industrial action. In practice, given that the industrial action has been suspended, there are no grounds for expecting these provisions to be required.

7 Fieldwork

7.1 In the event that scheduled fieldwork has been cancelled as a result of the industrial action, students should be reimbursed for any travel or accommodation costs for cancelled field trips. Each College will advise their Schools on whether these costs will be met at School or College level.

8 Implications for courses due to run next session

8.1 In some cases, courses that students are taking this session will be pre-requisites for courses that they will take next session. In the event that content in pre-requisite courses has been missed due to the industrial action, and that it is not possible to reschedule the relevant teaching activities, it may be necessary for Schools to adjust the content in next session’s courses.
9 PhD Vivas and annual progression reviews

9.1 Guidance on managing PhD vivas, as well as MPhil and MSc by Research oral examinations and annual progression reviews, is provided in Annex B. In practice, given that the industrial action has been suspended, it is unlikely that Schools will need to utilise most elements of this guidance. It has however been provided for completeness, since some Schools may still have steps to take in relation to oral examinations that were disrupted during the industrial action.

9.2 International PhD students whose Tier 4 visas may be affected by the strike should be directed to Edinburgh Global or Student Administration for further advice and support with their visa situation.

10 Recruitment, conversion and admissions activity

10.1 Recruitment and Admissions staff sent standard text to staff involved in recruitment, conversion and admissions activities that could be used for any enquiries from prospective students regarding the industrial action.

10.2 Where the industrial action has made it difficult for Schools and Colleges to meet published deadlines for considering applications for internal scholarships, they should consider extending the deadlines.

11 Visiting Students

11.1 Edinburgh Global and the Visiting Students Office have written jointly to the partners involved in sending visiting students to the University to inform them of the industrial action, signpost them to available information online and highlight the steps being taken to mitigate the impact on students (including visiting students).

12 Joint programmes with other Schools

12.1 Where a School has joint programmes with other Schools, the programme director for the 'lead' School should contact their counterpart in the other School to ask whether their contribution to the joint programme has been disrupted, and to ask what mitigations they are putting in place.

13 Collaborative programmes with other institutions

13.1 The University has a range of taught and research student programmes that are jointly delivered with partner institutions in the UK, EU and internationally. In some cases, the partner institution will have also been affected by the UCU industrial action. Where a School has jointly delivered taught or PhD programmes with a UK institution that has been subject to the industrial action, the School’s programme director or equivalent should contact their counterpart at the partner institution(s) to ask whether their contribution to the jointly-delivered programme has been disrupted, and to ask what mitigations they have put in place. Where a School’s own contribution to a jointly delivered taught or PhD programme has been disrupted due to the industrial action, the School’s programme director or equivalent should
contact their counterpart at the partner institution(s) to inform them of the disruption and of how they are mitigating it.

14 **Informing students about how the industrial action may affect them**

14.1 Schools should inform students of any arrangements for rescheduling or mitigating cancelled teaching or assessment events. In addition Schools should inform students how they will be assessed in the event that course content has not been covered due to the industrial action. After Boards of Examiners have met, Schools should provide students with a summary of how they have taken account of the disruption when determining course and programme outcomes (see Section 15 of Annex A).

14.2 Where students have general enquiries about how the industrial action might affect them, they can email ucu-action-queries@ed.ac.uk.

15 **Sources of advice for staff**

15.1 For advice regarding the operation of UG and PGT Boards of Examiners, and PGR student matters, staff should contact their College academic office, or Academic Services (either Tom Ward, Director of Academic Services, or Adam Bunni, Academic Policy Manager).

15.2 For general advice on learning and teaching matters contact: Gavin Douglas, Deputy Secretary (Student Experience)

16 **Authority**

16.1 The Senate Curriculum and Student Progression Committee has authority to interpret and approve concessions to the University’s academic regulatory framework, acting with powers delegated by the Senate.
Annex A

Guidance for Boards of Examiners for Taught Programmes

1 Overview

1.1 While the University is in the process of gathering information regarding the impact to date of this industrial action, it is clear that in some areas assessment processes have been disrupted. This guidance is designed to provide Boards of Examiners with an understanding of the options available to address any disruption to date, and any elements that may be ongoing. Given the UCU’s recent announcement that the further round of planned industrial action has been suspended and that it has asked its members to work normally, some elements of this guidance may not be required in practice.

1.2 As a University we have a moral obligation to seek to minimise the disruption to our students’ studies while maintaining academic standards. To this end, Boards of Examiners should take all reasonable steps available to them within this guidance to determine course results and make progression and award decisions in way which as far as possible does not lead any student to be disadvantaged as a result of the industrial action. The guidance applies until the impact on students has been addressed in full.

1.3 This guidance is based on the existing provisions of the Taught Assessment Regulations, which already offer a degree of flexibility to treat students fairly while maintaining standards when unanticipated circumstances disrupt assessment, and to manage issues regarding the membership of Boards of Examiners. The Senate Curriculum and Student Progression Committee (CSPC) has agreed a small number of additional concessions to the Regulations to provide a greater degree of flexibility for Boards to address the impact of the industrial action on assessment processes. These temporary concessions take account of the particular ways that the industrial action has affected learning, teaching and assessment at the University of Edinburgh. They are accompanied by a range of mechanisms to ensure that academic standards are not compromised, taking account of Quality Assurance Agency guidelines.

1.4 These concessions, which are highlighted in the guidance below, may only be activated by Schools in the event that their activities have been significantly disrupted and it is not possible to mitigate this disruption using the existing provisions of the Taught Assessment Regulations, and must be accompanied by appropriate mechanisms set out in this guidance to ensure that standards are maintained. Where Boards utilise any of these concessions, they must record this in the minutes of Board meetings.

2 Responsibilities

2.1 Heads of School and Conveners of Boards of Examiners have key responsibilities in the management of assessment. Any Head of School who is unable to act in the way envisaged in this guidance should inform their Head of College so that alternative arrangements can be made. Similarly, Schools should confirm with Conveners
whether they are able to carry out their Board of Examiners responsibilities. If the
Convener cannot carry out all their responsibilities as a result of the industrial action,
then the Head of School may wish to consider nominating an alternative.

2.2 Assessments and examination scripts are the property and responsibility of the
University, not of individual examiners or markers. These materials must be
accessible to the University when required. If an assessment is not marked, it is the
responsibility of the Convener of the Board of Examiners to ensure that scripts are
stored safely, normally in the School office, and marked as soon as is practicable.

3 Accounting for disruption to teaching or assessment – general points

3.1 When considering options to address the impact of disruption to assessment
processes, Boards must maintain the principle that students may only be awarded a
pass and a mark / grade for a course where there is sufficient evidence of
performance against relevant learning outcomes. Boards should however avoid
being unduly rigid in interpreting the stated learning outcomes for a course where it
is not in a student’s interests to do so. For example, in some cases where the
teaching and assessment has been disrupted it may be more appropriate to consider
whether a student has broadly met the overall learning outcomes rather than
requiring them to meet the detailed and specific requirements for each one (unless
there are disciplinary or professional body requirements for doing so).

3.2 The industrial action may mean that teaching of some content on courses may have
been missed, formative feedback may have been returned later than expected to
students, dissertation supervision may have been disrupted, or that some
components of assessment (e.g. participation elements) may have been waived.
Schools are responsible for informing Boards of Examiners of any impact upon
courses they are responsible for. Academic Services has provided Schools with a
standard template to assist them with this.

3.3 Where Boards have options regarding the appropriate way to take account of the
impact of the disruption when determining course and programme outcomes, they
should choose the course of action which is most likely to be in a student’s interests
while maintaining academic standards. In exceptional circumstances, it may be
reasonable for Boards of Examiners to offer a student a choice (see section 7 below).

3.4 In some cases, the School may be able to address any impact to courses in full, for
example by changes to examination papers, rescheduled teaching, or extensions to
coursework deadlines. Where this has happened, a Board will not need to consider
any of the steps set out in sections 4 and 5. Where it is not been possible to address
in full the impact upon assessment of any disruption, Boards of Examiners must
consider the impact when determining students’ final results for affected courses
and when making progression and award decisions.
4 Making decisions on courses on the basis of unreliable assessment results

4.1 The Taught Assessment Regulations, supported as necessary by relevant concessions from CSPC, provide Boards of Examiners with four different options for addressing the impact of any disruption to assessment processes that leads to results for components of assessment being unreliable:

a. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate to remove the weighting apportioned to a component of assessment on a course, where this component has been severely disrupted by the industrial action. CSPC has approved a concession (to Taught Assessment Regulation 13.3), allowing Boards of Examiners exceptionally to make changes to the weighting of components of assessment for a course without requiring College approval, or consultation with affected students or External Examiners. Where a Board is considering removing the weighting of an affected component of assessment, it should carry out modelling to determine the impact on students’ results and to ensure that no individual students are disadvantaged. Where removing the weighting for an affected component benefits a large majority of students but not all individuals, the Board should retain the published weighting for those students who would not benefit from removing the weighting. Rather than removing the weighting altogether for a component, in some exceptional circumstances a Board may wish to retain but reduce the weighting of a particular component. Boards should only do so when there is no other way to award a pass for a course, and should be aware that the EUCLID Assessment and Progression Tools functionality would not support it and therefore a School would have to undertake manual calculations.

b. Boards may wish to refer to information regarding performance on the course (or other courses at the same level within the subject area) in previous years. Where performance appears to be significantly poorer than might normally be expected for a course, even after adjustments to assessment weightings have been undertaken, a Board may exceptionally consider making marking adjustments to address this. Where adjustments are made, these should be applied fairly and consistently to the benefit of all students in a cohort, and (as indicated above) only be applied where there is sufficient evidence of performance against relevant learning outcomes.

c. While students remain responsible for the academic quality of their Honours or Masters dissertation or project, the Board should take account of any lack of supervision for a student’s Honours or PGT dissertation due to the industrial action when determining the result for the course, where there is evidence that the disruption would have adversely affected a student’s performance. For example, if a student’s dissertation contains work of varying levels of performance, the Board may give greater weight to those elements which demonstrate higher performance, if there is evidence that the lack of supervision at certain times may have contributed to the student’s weaker performance in the other elements.

d. Where severe disruption to the assessment process means that a Board cannot securely assign marks to students for a course, the Board should consider
offering affected students a null sit for any affected course and rescheduling the affected assessment (or a suitable alternate assessment).

5 Making decisions on courses where assessment results are missing

5.1 Boards of Examiners may find that marks for some components of assessment within courses are unavailable at the time of their scheduled Board meetings as a result of the industrial action. In some cases (for example, where the assessment has been undertaken but marking and moderation has been delayed) a Board may expect the marks to become available in due course. However, if an assessment was cancelled as a result of the industrial action, a Board would not expect the marks to become available. CSPC has activated Taught Assessment Regulation 71, which empowers Boards to make decisions on course results on the basis of partial information when assessment results are either temporarily or permanently unavailable. Key elements of the regulation are:

a. At the start of the meeting, the Board of Examiners must agree on any specific elements of assessment without whose marks it cannot proceed to determine a student’s result for the course.

b. In general, the higher the proportion of assessment results for the course are available, the more likely that a Board will be able to agree a student’s mark and grade for the course. For example, where less than four-fifths of the (weighted) components of assessment for the course are available, the Board is unlikely to be able to determine a mark or grade for the course, and where results for less than half of the weighted components are available, it is unlikely that the Board will have sufficient evidence even to reach a pass decision. However, these proportions are reference points rather than mandatory rules; a Board of Examiners can use its academic judgement to determine a mark or grade, or, failing that, a pass / fail result for a course irrespective of the proportion of assessments that are available as long as it has sufficient evidence of performance against learning outcomes.

c. No Board should return a fail decision in a situation where any unavailable assessment results will become available at a later date, unless it is absolutely clear that even passes at 100% in the unavailable assessments would not be sufficient to turn a fail into a pass.

d. Where Boards have sufficient evidence to make decisions then the decision will be made and will stand, unless subsequent information becomes available which it would be in the student’s academic interest for the Board to consider. If unable to reach a decision, even on a pass, the Board should record that insufficient information on which to make a decision was available at that time and should reconvene when information is available.

5.2 It is possible that within a course cohort, the assessment results are complete for some students but not others. In this situation, Boards in possession of all information necessary to proceed with the assessment of only some students should proceed to determine and publish course marks and grades for those students. This means that some students may be informed of their final course results before
others can be. Boards must ensure that moderation processes take account of situations where a single component of assessment is being marked at different times for different parts of a cohort.

5.3 Where it is not possible to award credit for a course a Board could also consider **declaring the course a null sit** and permitting students either to retake the course (or the elements of it that have been missed, along with associated assessments) on a first sit basis the next session, or to attempt any missed assessment on a first sit basis.

6 Making progression and award decisions when final course results have been adversely affected by the industrial action or are missing altogether

6.1 It is possible that, despite the options set out above, in some situations Boards of Examiners may not be in a position to award credit for some courses due to the unreliability or absence of assessment results. In addition, it is also possible that in some circumstances Boards of Examiners may have been able to confirm a pass for a course but not to determine marks or grades, or that any course marks or grades confirmed may not adequately reflect what a student could have achieved if there had not been any disruption to the course. This may affect the Board’s ability to determine awards and make progression decisions. In these circumstances, Boards of Examiners have the following options:

a. Boards may award **credit on aggregate** for Honours and Taught Postgraduate courses that have not been passed or for which course results are missing as a result of the industrial action. Boards may do this for students who are eligible for credit on aggregate due to academic failure in normal circumstances (that is, **students on PGT programmes, and undergraduate students in the Honours years of Honours degree programmes**, where their programme allows the award of credit on aggregate), and should be calculated on the normal basis (but with the option to exclude affected course results when calculating credit on aggregate, see b below). In addition, CSPC has granted a concession to allow Boards to award credit on aggregate for **students in the final year of an Ordinary degree** for any courses which have been failed or for which course results are missing as a result of the industrial action (calculating credit on aggregate on the same basis as for students on Honours degree programmes) as long as all the courses they are attempting this session are at level 9 or 10 (if any are at level 7 or 8, a Board should seek advice from their College before considering the award of credit on aggregate). In line with normal regulations, Boards may not award credit on aggregate for other categories of students or courses.

b. Boards may exclude **missing or adversely affected course results** when making calculations regarding credit on aggregate, progression, award, Honours degree classification, and the award of Merit or Distinction at PGT level.

c. Where a student whose course results are missing or have been adversely affected by the industrial action is in the **borderline for progression or award decisions** (that is, two percentage points or less below the boundary), a Board of Examiners can use its academic judgement to assign the student to the higher class or grade if there is sufficient evidence of achievement at that higher class or
grade and the disruption to the student’s teaching and assessment has not already been taken into account when assigning course results.

d. Where a Board of Examiners is unable to determine the **progression status of a PGT student** as a result of the industrial action, either because insufficient information is available to make a formal decision, or a Board has been unable to meet as scheduled, it **should allow the student to progress on a provisional basis**. Schools should inform any students allowed to progress on this basis that the decision is a provisional one, and may be changed when the Board of Examiners has been able to make a formal decision regarding their status.

e. Where a Board of Examiners is unable to determine the **progression status of an undergraduate student** as a result of the industrial action, either because insufficient information is available to make a formal decision, or a Board has been unable to meet as scheduled, the Convener of the Board should inform the senior academic administrator in their College. They will discuss the situation with a group constituted by the Senate Curriculum and Student Progression Committee, which will be authorised to consider the case for additional concessions to enable the student to progress.

f. Boards may approve a **provisional award**. For example, a Board could recommend the award of an unclassified degree if it has sufficient information to confirm that a student is eligible for an Honours degree but insufficient information to confirm the classification. When a full set of results becomes available, the Board would reconvene to approve a final award.

### 7 Offering students a choice regarding potential mitigations

#### 7.1 Boards of Examiners at course and programme level are responsible for determining the appropriate course of action to take account of any disruption due to the industrial action. However, in exceptional circumstances, if a Programme Board has compelling evidence that allowing a student a further assessment attempt for a course (as opposed to determining a course result on the basis of unreliable or incomplete assessment information) could affect positively their overall programme outcome (e.g., degree classification / progression status / award), it could ask the relevant Course Board to allow that student a choice. The decision to allow a student a choice is a matter of academic judgement for the relevant Boards (and one we expect to be exercised in a very small number of cases), rather than an entitlement for a student.

#### 7.2 The relevant Course Board can only decide to offer a student the choice between having the course result determined on the basis of existing assessment information, and attempting disrupted assessments (and, if relevant, attending rescheduled teaching, and/or retaking the entire course next session) where there is a realistic and practical way to offer the alternate option. For example, if a course is not already scheduled to run again next session there is no expectation that a School would offer to run it for a specific student.

#### 7.3 In the event that a Board decides to offer the student a choice, the School ‘owning’ the course should enable the student to make an informed choice, by setting out the
options, explaining the implications (including financial implications – see 8 below), and highlighting sources of advice and guidance (including the Advice Place and the student’s Personal Tutor). The relevant School should contact the student as soon as possible after the relevant Board meeting, to allow them as much time as possible to make their choice (while communicating any deadlines, for example so that the possibility of graduating on time remains open). For Tier 4 students, the relevant School should ask the student to seek advice from the Immigration Compliance team regarding the visa implications before deciding whether to accept the choice to attempt the affected assessments / teaching again.

7.4 In the event that a Course Board offers a student a choice and the student does decide to attempt the affected assessments again, the Course and Programme Boards would ultimately award the student the most favourable of the original and subsequent course (and programme) outcome.

8 Reimbursing students’ costs

8.1 In some cases students may incur additional expenses as a result of undertaking additional assessment or learning and teaching activities as a result of a Board of Examiner’s action to mitigate the impact of the industrial action. The University will reimburse reasonable expenses incurred. Information about the processes for applying for reimbursement is available at:

https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-administration/heaction/student-expenses-claims

9 Achieving a quorum of internal members at a Board of Examiners

9.1 Taught Assessment Regulation 39 states that a meeting of a Board of Examiners is quorate if no fewer than half the internal examiners are present. This section provides guidance to Schools regarding their options in the event that the industrial action makes it difficult to meet this regulation. In practice, given that the industrial action has been suspended, there are no grounds for expecting these provisions to be required. This guidance is however provided for completeness.

9.2 CSPC has provided a temporary concession from the need to have half of the internal examiners present. However, no Board may have fewer than two internal examiners present.

9.3 Conveners need to ensure that the Board has sufficient expertise and participation of those with key roles in order to make decisions, e.g. regulations expert, those with knowledge of the course and/or programme. Conveners of Boards of Examiners should review the likely attendance at the Board meeting in advance to enable as great a participation by internal examiners as possible.

9.4 CSPC has approved a concession to Taught Assessment Regulation 39.1, giving Heads of School (rather than Heads of College) or their nominee the authority to approve any amended membership of a Board in exceptional circumstances. Conveners may wish to nominate replacement members where they do not expect that existing members will be able or willing to participate in a meeting of the Board. It will however be very important for the Head of School, or nominee, and the Convener,
to be satisfied that any replacement member(s) are competent to fulfil the role expected of them.

9.5 If circumstances change and an internal member who has been replaced becomes able to fulfil their role as an internal member, Heads of Schools are encouraged to agree to reinstate them and, where appropriate, remove any replacement member.

9.6 Conveners of Boards of Examiners should ensure that, wherever possible, Boards meet as scheduled. However, if it becomes clear that a Board is not going to be able to meet with a quorum (in line with the concession set out in 9.2) and with sufficient expertise to make decisions at its scheduled time, then the Convener should cancel the Board meeting. A new date for a meeting should be set at the earliest subsequent opportunity, with every effort being made to convene a quorate Board with sufficient expertise, if necessary with amended membership.

10 Achieving a quorum at a Special Circumstances Committees

10.1 Membership of a Special Circumstances Committee consists of a Convener along with at least two other academic members of staff. This section provides guidance to Schools regarding their options in the event that the industrial action makes it difficult to meet this regulation. In practice, given that the industrial action has been suspended, there are no grounds for expecting this provision to be required. It is however provided for completeness.

10.2 If a Special Circumstances Committee is unable to operate with a quorum as a consequence of the dispute, then the School may wish to appoint alternate members to enable the Special Circumstances Committee to fulfil its role.

11 Achieving a quorum at Board meetings in the event of non-participation of External Examiners

11.1 Taught Assessment Regulation 39 states that a meeting of a Board of Examiners is quorate if at least one External Examiner participates in and approves the decisions of the Board. Where an External Examiner is not available to participate as a result of the industrial action, CSPC has approved a temporary concession so that, if necessary, a Board of Examiners can operate without the normal requirement to have an External Examiner’s participation in a Board meeting. Where a Board is intending to meet and make decisions without the participation of an External Examiner during this period of industrial action in accordance with this concession, the Convener must contact the senior academic administrator in the relevant College who will seek to identify a suitable member of academic staff from elsewhere in the University (an ‘Internal External’ Examiner) who can attend the relevant Board meeting and provide a level of externality to the Board’s proceedings. The School cannot go ahead with the Board meeting unless the College is able to put these alternate arrangements (or other appropriate arrangements, see 11.5) in place.

11.2 An ‘Internal External’ would temporarily have the status of a member of the Board (treated as an External Examiner for the purposes of quorum) and be able to comment on whether the Board has carried out its business correctly and robustly,
in line with the University’s policies and regulations. While there is no expectation that the ‘Internal External’ would have expertise in the discipline, they would be able to advise on whether mark and grade profiles are equivalent to those of previous years, and whether the Board has taken account of External Examiners’ previous advice.

11.3 College can only appoint an ‘Internal External’ to act in place of an External Examiner at a Board of Examiners where the External Examiner that has terminated their contract had already reviewed a sample of students’ assessment work for the relevant course(s) this session and provided feedback on it to the internal moderators or Board, or where the College has put in place an ‘Independent Moderator’ (see 10 below) to fulfil this function.

11.4 Academic Services will issue Colleges with detailed guidance regarding the operation of the ‘Internal External’ examiner role, including: criteria for appointment; roles and responsibilities; documentation to be issued to Internal Externals; and reporting requirements.

11.5 If no External Examiner is able to participate and the relevant College is not able to appoint an ‘Internal External’ examiner for the meeting, the relevant College should seek advice from Academic Services and the Convener of CSPC regarding whether there are any other options that may allow the Board of Examiners to meet and to confirm the course and programme results while maintaining academic standards.

12 Maintaining academic standards in the event of non-participation of External Examiners in assessment procedures

12.1 In line with the temporary CSPC concession regarding the participation of External Examiners, where an External Examiner is not available to participate in assessment procedures in advance of a Board of Examiners meeting by reviewing a sample of students’ assessed work, the Convener must contact the senior academic administrator in the relevant College who will seek to identify a suitable member of academic staff from elsewhere in the University (an ‘Independent Moderator’) to undertake this role. The Board cannot confirm the relevant course results unless the College is able to put these alternate arrangements (or other appropriate arrangements, see 12.4) in place.

12.2 An ‘Independent Moderator’ would be external to the School but have disciplinary expertise relevant to the affected courses and be willing to undertake a review of a sample of students’ assessed work in the place of the External Examiner during the period affected by the industrial action. If recent External Examiner reports for the relevant courses highlight any concerns regarding the operation of assessment processes or academic standards, or if the relevant area has introduced a significant number of new courses, the relevant College will consult Academic Services regarding the appropriateness of utilising an ‘Independent Moderator’ before appointing them to the role.

12.3 Academic Services will issue Colleges with detailed guidance regarding the operation of the ‘Independent Moderator’ role, including: criteria for appointment; roles and
responsibilities; documentation to be issued to Independent Moderator; and reporting requirements.

12.4 In the event that it is not possible to arrange for an ‘Independent Moderator’ to undertake the work of reviewing a sample of students’ assessed work in the absence of an External Examiner, the relevant College should seek advice from Academic Services and the Convener of CSPC regarding whether there are any other options that may allow the Board of Examiners to confirm the course results while maintaining academic standards.

13 Recording and reporting on how Boards of Examiners have handled any disruption

13.1 The main requirement, as always, is for Schools to produce Board minutes that contain careful and accurate recording of discussions (noting any additional information taken into account), and of decisions reached. Full and accurate local records will also assist with transmission of information between the current and any reconvened or future meetings of the Board.

13.2 In addition to the standard content (guidance on this is available in the Handbook for Boards of Examiners for Taught Courses and Programmes) minutes must include:

- Any change in the role of members (e.g. appointment of an Acting Convener or substitute internal examiners);
- Any attendance of Internal Externals or Independent Moderators;
- References to any guidance or regulations consulted or invoked;
- Confirmation of any concessions to regulations utilised, and the rationale for this;
- A record of any information regarding the impact of the industrial action on individual courses that the Board has taken into account, and any actions that the Board has made in the light of this information and the rationale for these actions;
- A full record of the reasons for any award or absence of award for a student where a full set of assessment results for that student is not available;
- In Honours years other than final, detailed records of any particular circumstances relevant to classification by a future Board.

13.3 In order that College Offices can prepare a full record of all decisions affected by the industrial action, Schools are responsible for sending College Offices copies of minutes of all Board of Examiners meetings that have been affected by the industrial action (e.g. because they have had to take account of disruption to teaching or assessment, make decisions on partial results, reschedule meetings, or take action in order to have a quorum) within two weeks of the relevant Board meeting.

13.4 Conveners of Boards of Examiners will need to ensure that the secretary to the board and the regulations expert are properly briefed and equipped for their roles.

14 Recording awards and course results in EUCLID

14.1 Schools are responsible for recording awards and course results in the EUCLID student record in line with timescales set within the academic administrative key
dates. As a general principle, it is advisable for Schools to train sufficient staff on this administrative process so that the process of recording and publishing results is not disrupted by unanticipated staff issues of any kind. Schools should contact Student Systems as soon as possible for guidance and / or training to enable demand to be resourced.

15 Informing students regarding how Boards of Examiners have taken account of any disruption

15.1 Schools should provide students with information regarding how Boards of Examiners have taken account of any disruption due to industrial action when reaching decisions. Schools should provide this information when (or as soon as possible after) publishing ratified course / programme results to students.

15.2 Schools should provide students with the following information in relation to each course:

- The nature of disruption to teaching / assessment / feedback on assessment on the course, including whether it affected all students on the course, or a subset;
- Steps taken to mitigate disruption to the course in advance of the meeting of the Board of Examiners (e.g. rescheduling of teaching, changes to assessment, changes to assessment deadlines);
- Confirmation that the Board of Examiners was aware of the nature of disruption to the course and the steps taken to mitigate disruption;
- Steps taken by the Board to account for any disruption (e.g. removal of weighting from assessment components), including whether these related to all students on the course, or a subset.

15.3 Schools should also provide students with summary information regarding any steps taken by Boards of Examiners to account for disruption at programme level (ie when making progression and award decisions).

15.4 Schools should determine the most appropriate way to make this information available to all students on the relevant courses / programmes, which may include publishing information on relevant School web pages, or email communication.

Senate Curriculum and Student Progression Committee, 16 April 2018 (revised 23 May 2018)
Annex B

Guidance regarding Doctoral, MPhil and MSc by Research oral examinations and annual progression reviews

1 Overview

1.1 While the University is in the process of gathering information regarding the impact to date of this industrial action, it is clear that in some areas PGR oral examinations and annual progression review processes have been disrupted. This guidance is designed to provide Schools with an understanding of the options available to address any disruption to PGR assessment processes to date, and any elements that may be ongoing. Given the UCU’s recent announcement that the further round of planned industrial action has been suspended and that it has asked its members to work normally, it is unlikely that Schools will need to utilise this guidance. It is however provided for completeness, since some Schools may still have steps to take in relation to oral examinations that were disrupted during the industrial action.

1.2 As a University we have a moral obligation to seek to minimise the disruption to our students’ studies while maintaining academic standards. To this end, Schools should take all reasonable steps available to them within this guidance to ensure that research students are not disadvantaged as a result of the industrial action. This guidance applies until the impact on students has been addressed in full.

1.3 This guidance supplements the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees by providing guidance to Schools regarding the management of PGR oral examinations and annual progression reviews during the industrial action. The Senate Curriculum and Student Progression Committee (CSPC) has agreed a small number of additional concessions to the Regulations to provide a greater degree of flexibility for Schools to manage PGR assessment while the impact of the industrial action on students is addressed. These temporary concessions take account of the particular ways that the industrial action has affected learning, teaching and assessment at the University of Edinburgh. They are accompanied by a range of mechanisms to ensure that academic standards are not compromised, taking account of guidelines Quality Assurance Agency guidelines.

1.4 These concessions, which are set out in the guidance below, may only be activated by Schools in the event that their activities have been significantly disrupted and it is not possible to mitigate this disruption using the existing provisions of the Regulations, and must be accompanied by appropriate mechanisms set out in this guidance to ensure that standards are maintained.

2 Responsibilities

2.1 Heads of School have key responsibilities in the management of PGR oral assessments and annual progression reviews. Any Head of School who is unable to act in the way envisaged in this guidance should inform their Head of College so that alternative arrangements can be made.
3 Oral examinations

3.1 The primary focus of the guidance is on the management of oral examinations for PhDs and MPhils, given the strong imperative to enable them to go ahead where possible, and the potential complexity associated with the involvement of External Examiners. The guidance is also relevant for any MSc by Research programmes that involve oral assessments.

4 Annual progression reviews

4.1 (In practice, given that the industrial action has been suspended, there are no grounds for expecting the following provision to be required.)

4.2 For annual progression reviews for PhDs and MPhils that are scheduled for any strike days, Schools should ask relevant staff if they will be able to fulfil their responsibilities and if not should postpone the reviews to a suitable non-strike days following the guidance set out in sections 5, 6, 7 and 8.

5 External Examiners

5.1 (In practice, given that the industrial action has been suspended, there are no grounds for expecting the following provisions to be required.)

5.2 Heads of School (or delegates) should contact External Examiners for any forthcoming oral examinations scheduled for any planned strike days, to determine whether or not the industrial action will affect their participation in the oral examination. In the event that an External Examiner does not intend to participate in the oral examination on that date due to the industrial action but would be willing to undertake the work on a future date, the Head of School (or delegate) should postpone and reschedule the oral assessment.

5.3 Were an External Examiner unwilling to commit to undertaking the oral assessment at a future date, the Head of School (or delegate) should take advice from University Human Resources Services regarding whether to terminate the contract with the External Examiner and seek an alternate (with approval of replacement via Colleges). Were an External Examiner to resign, the School should seek an alternate (again, with approval of replacements via Colleges). It would be necessary to allow a replacement External Examiner at least two weeks to read the thesis and prepare for the oral examination.

6 Participation of Internal Examiners and Non-Examining Chairs

6.1 (In practice, given that the industrial action has been suspended, there are no grounds for expecting the following provisions to be required.)

6.2 Colleges are responsible for appointing internal examiners and non-examining chairs to examine students for the award of research degrees on the basis of nomination from Heads of Schools.
6.3 For any oral examinations scheduled to take place on any strike days, Heads of School (or delegates) should ask all staff who have been appointed as internal examiners or non-examining chairs whether they intend to fulfil these responsibilities. If any staff do not intend to participate due to the industrial action, the Head of School may wish to seek to nominate alternate staff where possible (rather than postpone the oral examination until the industrial action has ended):

a. Internal Examiners: There is no requirement for the internal examiner to come from the School that owns the student, provided that they have the requisite experience and knowledge of the subject. Where possible, the Head of School would consult the student’s supervisor regarding an alternate examiner. However, if the supervisor is not willing to assist with this process due to the industrial action, the Head of School can proceed without their advice.

b. Non-Examining Chairs. Since the Non-Examining Chair need not be from the same School as the student nor have any expertise in the field that is being examined, Heads of Schools can ask other Schools if they have colleagues available who are willing to fulfil the role. It is only necessary to appoint a Non-Examining Chair if the Internal Examiner is acting for the first time, or is a member of honorary staff.

6.4 It is necessary to allow an Internal Examiner at least two weeks to read the thesis and prepare for the oral examination. Since the Non-Examining Chair is not required to read the thesis, it is possible to nominate a substitute two days before the scheduled oral examination.

6.5 Colleges will aim to confirm nominations (operating under Convener’s action from the relevant College Committee) and to provide the replacement examiners with a copy of the thesis along with the examiners’ report forms, within one day of the receipt of the nomination. The College may require the replaced internal examiner to return their copy of the thesis in order that the College can send it to the replacement examiner.

7 Informing students of changes of examiners

7.1 The School must inform students of any change of internal (or, more exceptionally, external) examiners immediately after the College has approved the nominations.

8 Postponing oral assessments

8.1 If it was not possible to constitute an oral assessment on the scheduled date due to the industrial action, the School should contact the student as soon as possible to explain the situation.

8.2 The relevant School or College should reimburse students for any reasonable costs (e.g. travel to Edinburgh) incurred in relation to the cancelled oral assessment. The relevant School or College should also reimburse External Examiners for any reasonable costs where appropriate. Each College will advise their Schools on whether these costs will be met at School or College level.
9 Use of Skype / video-conferencing

9.1 Where it is necessary either to change External Examiner or reschedule the oral assessment, Schools could utilise Skype / video-conferencing where it assists them to put these alternate arrangements in place (for example, to enable an External Examiner to participate when they are unable to travel to Edinburgh at short notice). CSPC has agreed a temporary concession for the period of the industrial action to waive the requirement for Schools to secure approval from the relevant College Committee for these Skype / video-conferencing arrangements where it is necessary to put them in place at short notice as a result of the industrial action. Schools should however otherwise follow the relevant guidance: www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/videolinked_phd_oral.pdf

10 Recording and reporting on how Schools have handled any disruption

10.1 In order that College Offices can prepare a full record of all decisions affected by the industrial action, and that their Postgraduate Committees are aware of any alternate arrangements when making decisions on PGR students on the basis of examiners’ reports, Schools are responsible for reporting to College Offices regarding any alternate arrangements for oral assessments that have been made (for example, changes to internal or external examiners, or rescheduling of oral examinations), and any use of the concessions set out in this guidance.

Senate Curriculum and Student Progression Committee, 16 April 2018