

The University of Edinburgh

**Minutes of the Senatus Curriculum and Student Progression Committee (CSPC)
held on Thursday 22 November 2018 at 2.00pm in Room 235, Joseph Black Chemistry
Building, Kings' Buildings**

Present:

Professor Alan Murray (Convener)	Assistant Principal, Academic Support
Professor Graeme Reid (Vice-Convener)	Dean of Learning and Teaching (CSE)
Dr Paul Norris	Associate Dean (Academic Progress), CAHSS
Stephen Warrington	Dean of Students (CSE)
Dr Antony Maciocia	Representative of Researcher Experience Committee
Philippa Burrell	Head of Academic Administration (CMVM)
Lisa Kendall	Head of Academic and Student Administration (CAHSS)
Professor Neil Turner	Dean of Undergraduate Learning and Teaching (CMVM)
Dr Jeremy Crang	Dean of Students (CAHSS)
Ellie Tudhope	Advice Place Senior Academic Adviser
Dr Adam Bunni	Head of Governance and Regulatory Framework Team
Anne-Marie Scott	IS Learning, Teaching and Web
Lisa Dawson	Director of Student Systems and Administration
Diva Mukherji	Vice President Education Students' Association

In attendance:

Tom Ward	Director, Academic Services
Miss Theresa Sheppard	Academic Policy Officer, Academic Services
Heather Tracey	Deputy Head of Academic Affairs (CSE)

Apologies for absence:

Dr Juliette MacDonald	Edinburgh College of Art
Professor Lesley McAra	Assistant Principal, Community Relations
Dr Geoff Pearson	Dean of Students (CMVM)
Professor Susan Rhind	Assistant Principal, Assessment and Feedback
Alexandra Laidlaw	Head of Academic Affairs (CSE)
Dr Cathy Bovill	Institute for Academic Development

1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on Thursday 20 November 2018 were **approved** as an accurate record.

2. Matters Arising

a. Code of Student Conduct

Dr Bunni informed the Committee that students and colleges were engaging in a consultation on the proposed changes to the Code of Student Conduct. CSPC is due to consider the proposed changes at its meeting in January 2019.

b. Programme and Course Handbook Policy

Tom Ward noted that, following the approval of the Lecture Recording Policy, a minor change to the Programme and Course Handbook Policy was required: Schools would need to update their handbooks in order to inform students which of their lectures would be recorded. In practice, since handbooks were now in a finalised state for the current year, this would involve notifying students in an appropriate way for the remainder of 2018/19, and in handbooks thereafter.

After a brief discussion, the Committee agreed that it would not be necessary to amend the description of the Course Organiser in the handbook to include a reference to stewarding the lecture recording process, but that this would be kept under review as part of the implementation of the Policy.

c. Postgraduate Assessment and Progression

Tom Ward updated the Committee on the discussion held at Senate Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) on modifications to pass marks for Master's degrees. LTC had agreed that further scoping work was necessary to make significant changes in the future. The Committee agreed to consider a paper in January which would set out a range of options for changes which could be made in the shorter term.

3. Service Excellence Programme – Special Circumstances & Coursework Extensions (CSPC 18/19 2 A)

Gavin Douglas provided an overview of the proposed policy changes to the Special Circumstances and Coursework Extension process, following endorsement at the Service Excellence Programme Student Administration and Support (SEP SA&S) Board.

The SEP SA&S Board had approved a single, centrally-run special circumstances and coursework extensions service, which would review, process and make binding decisions on the validity and impact of cases through an online system. School Boards of Examiners would continue to make the final academic decision on the outcome for the student and the academic and professional services staff would continue to provide frontline pastoral support to students.

The new process would improve the student experience by providing consistency, administrative efficiency and data quality, while reducing the time spent on administrative work by academic and professional services staff. The service was currently projected to commence in August 2019.

The Committee, having asked whether it would be possible to run a pilot of the proposal, was informed that this would not be possible, because of the practicalities and the cost involved in building the system, which could not be arranged on a small scale.

In discussion, committee representatives provided feedback on the proposals from each part of the University as follows:

- In the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Schools generally supported proposals for a streamlined, online system and centralised service, with dissent from one School.
- In the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine, Schools/Deaneries were very supportive of an online 'fit for purpose' system, involving one University process in which students would submit an application in one place. The College

raised concerns, however, that Schools/Deaneries would not be making decisions on impact under the new system, and requested that they be involved in writing guidance for a central team, if the proposal were approved. The College was also concerned about the additional workload involved for Schools/Deaneries in inputting information into the system, the tight timeframe for implementation, the fact that the proposed Policy did not fully take into consideration online, part-time learners who worked full time, the need for transparency around Special Circumstances due to 'Fitness to Practise' requirements in a number of programmes, and the lack of detail on some elements of the proposal.

- In the College of Science and Engineering, Schools had expressed strong concern about centralising the special circumstances procedure and about the short timeframe involved in implementing the change. The College expressed the view that the change would not lead to a more efficient use of staff time.
- The Students' Association supported the proposals, noting that they acknowledged the issues of consistency and transparency which students experienced with the current system, and had addressed these in a positive way. Highlighted in particular was the need for consistency around the language used to communicate to students the outcome of applications.

The Committee noted that additional detail on the proposals in the following areas was needed before it could agree to them:

- The Board would need to clarify the nature and level of information on student cases which the central unit would be communicating to schools.
- The Board intended to carry out further work on the handling of late and retrospective applications for special circumstances, clarifying in particular the cut-off point for these
- The Board would need to clarify the process for applications for extensions which were greater than seven days, including how processes would apply to online distance learning programmes
- The Committee requested clarification on the composition and size of the central team
- The Committee noted that the proposals would involve a significant amount of work at school level within a short period of time, and it would therefore require detailed information of the actions involved in delivering the changes in time for August 2019.

The Committee agreed that the University's appeal regulations would need to apply to decisions of the central service; once there was greater clarity on the proposed arrangements Academic Services would work with Service Excellence Programme colleagues to draft changes to relevant regulations and the Special Circumstances Policy and bring them to the meeting of CSPC in March 2019 for approval. The Committee noted that some schools would need to seek approval for the policy changes from accrediting bodies.

The Committee was supportive in principle to the proposals and was committed to doing what it could to make the project successful. The Committee's support was contingent, however, on agreeing specific wording for the regulations and Special Circumstances Policy, and on the Board providing satisfactory detail on the operation of the new system.

Action:

SEP SA&S Board to provide the Committee with further detail regarding the proposed arrangements, for the CSPC meeting in March 2019.

SEP SA&S Board to provide the Committee with a detailed timeline of key milestones required to deliver the changes in time for August 2019; this will need to include a process for evaluating the changes.

Academic Services to make changes to Regulations and Policy to bring to the CSPC meeting in March 2019.

4. Boards of Studies Terms of Reference (CSPC 18/19 2 B)

The Committee made minor modifications to the draft simplified Boards of Studies Terms of Reference document. The Terms of Reference would then be put to Court for approval by resolution.

5. Proposed Removal of Online Distance Learning Policy (CSPC 18/19 2 C)

The Committee approved the removal of the Online Distance Learning Policy.

6. Academic Year Dates 2020/21 and Provisional Academic Year Dates 2021/22 and 2022/23 (CSPC 18/19 2 D)

The Committee noted that the revision and examination diet in Semester 1 2020 was truncated, and that the Timetabling and Examination Services team had indicated that 10 working days would be required for examinations.

The Committee requested further analysis into possible models for examination timetable for Semester 1 2020, including an investigation into whether the revision period could extend to Week 11. The Committee also asked for information on the possibility of reducing the length of Welcome Week as part of this discussion.

Action: Academic Services to liaise with the Timetabling and Examination Services team about analysis for examinations in Semester 1 2020.

7. Concessions Report 2017/18 (CLOSED CSPC 18/19 2 E)

The Committee noted the report of the approved concessions to University regulations or policies approved by Convener's Action on behalf of the Curriculum and Student Progression Committee during the 2017/18 academic year.

8. Any other business

Distance Learning at Scale

The Committee noted that it would be invited to consider a proposal for a distance learning programme at its next meeting, or (subject to consultation with the Convener) by correspondence.