

**Meeting of the Senatus Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC)  
to be held online on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> May, 11:30am**

**Minutes**

**Attendees:**

- Paul Norris (Convener)
- Judy Hardy
- Adam Bunni
- Kirsty Woomble
- Deborah Shaw
- Jeremy Crang
- Patrick Hadoke
- Heather McNeill
- Antony Maciocia
- Philippa Burrell
- Charlotte MacDonald
- Rachael Quirk
- Stephen Warrington
- Faten Adam (substitute member on behalf of Sarah McAllister)
- Stuart Lamont (substitute member on behalf of Tara Gold)
- Tina Harrison (Attending in her capacity as Convener of ACG)
- Lisa Dawson (Attending in her capacity as Acting Deputy Secretary)

**Apologies received from** Cathy Bovill, Sarah McAllister, Tara Gold, Jamie Davies.

<b>1.</b>	<b>UCU Industrial Action</b>  The Committee received a verbal update on the UCU Industrial Action from the Convener of APRC and the Acting Deputy Secretary.  The University has been notified that there will be a marking and assessment boycott beginning on 23 <sup>rd</sup> May. The exact details of the boycott are unclear, however this is being taken to include all aspects of the marking and assessment process, which include Boards of Examiners.  A small number of external examiners have resigned from their roles with immediate effect. It was noted it is difficult to enforce the three month notice period for external examiners. External Examiner resignation is not being called as part of the industrial action. To date, a small number of concession requests have been approved by Convener's action to allow exam papers to be approved in the absence of external examiner approval.  Human Resources have followed up with the Edinburgh UCU branch to confirm what action they expect to take. No update has been received as yet, though any updates will be shared with the Committee.	Verbal Update
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	<p>This additional meeting of APRC has been called to discuss invoking regulation 70 and 71, and to consider possible concessions to regulations that may be required to mitigate the impact of industrial action. Academic Services are working on producing guidance for colleagues to support any concessions which are put in place by the Committee. Committee members were asked to also consider throughout the meeting specific areas where additional guidance alongside concessions would be useful.</p> <p>The Committee was informed that the Academic Contingency Group are continuing to meet and if there is an escalation of the industrial action, then further concessions to regulations can be considered if required.</p> <p>It was noted that Student Systems have reviewed the paper presented to APRC and have confirmed that the potential concessions referred to result in minimal or no changes to the Assessment and Progression Tools.</p>	
2.	<p><b>Invoking Regulation 70 and 71</b></p> <p>This item was introduced by Dr Adam Bunni (AB), Head of Academic Policy and Regulation, Academic Services.</p> <p>APRC was asked to consider whether it was appropriate to invoke Regulation 70 and 71. The Committee was asked to decide if there is a risk of significant disruption to our processes.</p> <p>The nature and scale of the action is not yet known, and APRC can only base their decisions on what the University has been formally notified of. The paper anticipates an impact on the return of marked work, the involvement of internal examiners in Boards of Examiners, and works on the assumption that an assessment boycott includes all parts of the assessment process.</p> <p>The Committee noted that, where concessions are approved, they are not active by default, but are only to be activated when they are required to mitigate the impact of industrial action on students.</p> <p>The guidance being prepared by Academic Services gives advice to colleagues on when to activate concessions and provides a hierarchy of actions to be taken when a concession is to be activated.</p> <p>The papers for this meeting were circulated to Senate members in advance and a small number of comments were received by the Convener, which were shared with the committee.</p> <p>Comments received queried how the outcome of the meeting would be shared with Senate. The Convener confirmed that Senate would be informed of the outcome of today's meeting by way of a verbal update at the next meeting of Senate on 25 May.</p> <p><b>APRC was asked to consider whether the marking and assessment boycott and prospective strike action represents a situation where significant disruption is anticipated.</b></p> <p>APRC Committee agreed that there is a risk of significant disruption and it is appropriate to consider activating Taught Assessment Regulation 70 and 71.</p>	APRC 21/22

**Taught Assessment Regulation 70**

The Committee agreed it is appropriate to activate Taught Assessment Regulation 70.

The Committee considered the regulations to be subject to a concession one-by-one.

**General Undergraduate Degree Programme Regulations****Regulation 38: Minimum progression requirements**

The Committee confirmed that Regulation 38 of the DRPS would not be relaxed at this time. APRC will continue to monitor this and will revisit this decision if required.

Progression decisions should be made under normal timeframes if the information is available to do this.

There were some programme-specific impacts discussed, which require progression to be confirmed by the end of the current academic year, due to programme requirements. Specific examples raised include intercalated Medical Students and students going on a year abroad. It was recommended that CMVM, SWAY and the School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures be consulted on the potential impact to these students. If further decisions are required to relax progression regulations, these will be considered by APRC as needed.

**Taught Assessment Regulations****1. Feedback Deadlines****Regulation 16: Feedback deadlines**

APRC agreed to relax Regulation 16.

**2. Board of Examiners: quorum****Regulation 39: Board of Examiners: quorum**

APRC considered this regulation and noted that the Convener must be satisfied that the Board of Examiners will be competent to make the decisions, even if quorum cannot be reached. APRC agreed to relax Regulation 39, provided that the Board was still competent.

***Regulation 39.2: In exceptional circumstances and by prior written agreement with the Head of the College and the Convener of the Board, representatives nominated and authorised by them may substitute for internal examiners.***

APRC agreed to relax Regulation 39.2, empowering the Convener of the Board to substitute internal examiners, where this would support the operation of a Board with a quorum of suitable members.

APRC discussed the hierarchy of approaches to issues relating to quorum at Boards, and agree the following:

1. If alternate members can attend a Board of Examiners in lieu of the usual Board members and achieve quorum, then this action should be taken.
2. If the Board can practicably be held asynchronously and achieve quorum, this action should be taken.
3. The final option after all other options have been exhausted is to activate the concession to relax the regulation.

The Convener of the Board of Examiners would be responsible for making this decision.

### **3. Progression, classification and award decisions**

#### **Regulation 13: Passing assessment:**

The Committee discussed these regulations and agreed that if the Learning Outcomes have been met, then grades can be considered to be final.

If subsequent information becomes available after the Board has ratified and confirmed marks, and this information is to the student's benefit, then the missing components should be included and updated grades considered by the Board of Examiners.

If a missing component becomes available after the grades have been ratified and confirmed by the Board of Examiners and this is to a student's detriment, the missing component should not be included.

The Committee noted that marks changing may impact on graduating students and may result in updated classifications. It was agreed that this is unavoidable though such changes can only result in a student's degree classification improving.

Regulation 13.3) APRC agreed to relax Regulation 13.3 and give Boards the flexibility to reweight assessment items, provided that the Learning Outcomes have been met. APRC agreed to relax the regulation for Boards to consult with College Committees.

Regulation 13 a) APRC agreed to relax Regulation 13.3a)

Regulation 13 b) APRC did not relax Regulation 13.3b).

If the external examiner is not in post, then a concession should be sought from APRC.

**Action:** The Committee requested that the guidance issued to Schools and Colleges include information on when Boards may be asked to revisit decisions based on missing information becoming available.

#### **Regulation 51: Undergraduate progression: pre-honours and into honours & 52: Undergraduate honours assessment progression**

The Committee confirmed that Regulation 51 and 52 of the TAR's would not be relaxed at this time. APRC will continue to monitor this and will revisit this decision if required.

#### **Regulation 53: Award of undergraduate Ordinary and General degrees**

The Committee discussed this regulation and noted that credit on aggregate is not available on Ordinary degrees as students have the opportunity to resit failed courses over the summer.

If activated, Boards would be asked to decide whether a student is eligible for credits on aggregate based on average calculation including the full 120 credits. If a course result is missing, this would be excluded from the calculation. Failed courses would be included in the calculation,

unless they had been excluded due to special circumstances, or due to exceptional impact from the industrial action.

The Committee considered programme-specific examples where this regulation cannot be relaxed. Medical programmes are classified as Ordinary degrees, and for professional purposes, credit on aggregate cannot be awarded for failed courses.

APRC agreed to relax Regulation 53, though Medical programmes would be excluded from this relaxation.

**Action:** The guidance will ensure that Medical programmes are excluded from this regulation and that it was clear that this relaxation was in relation to graduating students only.

APRC members expressed a desire to consider a permanent change to the regulations to allow the award of credit on aggregate for Ordinary degrees.

#### **Regulation 56: Postgraduate assessment progression**

The Committee discussed this regulation and agreed that due to timing of postgraduate progression decisions impacting on the period immediately following, this regulation should be considered by APRC now. This would mean that PGT students could potentially be allowed to progress on a provisional basis, pending a final decision when more information became available.

The Committee agreed that it was desirable for Boards of Examiners to meet as soon as possible once marks are available, rather than holding these over until students have completed their dissertation.

APRC agreed to relax Regulation 56.

#### **4. Postgraduate Research Assessment Regulations 2021/22**

##### **Regulation 13: Progression Review**

APRC agreed to relax Regulation 13 of the Postgraduate Research Assessment Regulations 2021/22.

##### **Taught Assessment Regulation 71**

APRC was asked to consider whether the guidance set out in TAR 71 is appropriate for Boards of Examiners to use, in the event that this is needed as a result of the industrial action

The Committee agreed it is appropriate to activate Taught Assessment Regulation 71.

It was noted that the guidance is unlikely to expand significantly on the advice that is outlined in the Regulation. Boards retain discretion to decide whether they have enough information to make decisions.

**Action:** it was requested that the guidance provide Schools with advice on who to contact if they have further queries.

<p>3.</p>	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p><b>External Examiners</b> The Committee received a verbal update on the resignation of external examiners. Concessions required to regulations related to external examiners have been handled on a case-by-case basis to date. The number of resignations remain low and APRC does not believe there is a need for widespread relaxation of regulations.</p> <p>APRC agreed that the possible relaxation of regulations related to external examiners should continue to be considered on a case-by-case basis and, in the first instance, by Convener's action. APRC will continue to monitor this, and revisit this decision if the scale of impact changes.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Colleges to contact their Schools to ask them to get in touch with issues related to external examiner involvement in assessment processes</p> <p>The Committee was informed that a verbal update on the decisions taken by APRC would be given to Senate on 25 May.</p> <p>The University Contingency Group would also receive an update on the discussions had at ACG, and the decisions taken by APRC. APRC will be updated as information on the industrial action is received from Human Resources.</p> <p>There was a request to provide students with an update and reassurance as soon as possible, which would be taken forward by Acting Deputy Secretary.</p>	
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