

The University of Edinburgh  
Senate Quality Assurance Committee

**Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 25 February 2021  
at 2pm via Microsoft Teams**

**Present:**

Professor Tina Harrison <b>(Convener)</b>	Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance
Brian Connolly	Academic Policy Officer, Academic Services
Dr Gail Duursma	School Representative (Engineering), College of Science and Engineering
Olivia Eadie	Assistant Director and Head of Operations and Projects, Institute for Academic Development
Dr Jeni Harden	School Representative (School of Molecular, Genetic and Population Health Sciences), College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine
Dr Katherine Inglis	School Representative (Literatures, Languages and Cultures), College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Fizzy Abou Jawad	Vice President (Education), Students' Association
Nichola Kett	Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team, Academic Services
Professor Linda Kirstein	Dean of Education Quality Assurance and Culture, College of Science and Engineering
Stuart Lamot	Edinburgh University Students' Association Representative
Dr Paul Norris	Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Approval, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Dr Claire Phillips	Dean of Quality Assurance, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine
Professor Leigh Sparks	Deputy Principal, University of Stirling
Paula Webster	Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling, Student Systems and Administration

**In Attendance:**

Victoria Bennett	Quality Officer, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine
Gavin Douglas	Deputy Secretary, Student Experience

## 1. **Welcome and Apologies**

The Convenor welcomed Gavin Douglas (Deputy Secretary Student Experience) to the meeting for agenda item 4 and Victoria Bennett (Quality Officer, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine) as an observer.

## 2. **Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 17 December 2020**

The Committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting.

## 3. **Matters Arising**

The Convenor noted the following in reference to the Annual Reports:

- a report on the areas for further development had been submitted to the University Executive.
- individuals and areas with relevant responsibilities had been asked for a response and these will be submitted to the April meeting of the Committee.

### **For Discussion**

## 4. **Quality Processes and Digital Maturity**

The Committee discussed developments to quality processes in the light of ongoing work to improve access to and use of quality data (e.g. the Data Task Group).

It was noted that in semester one 2020/21 the Convenor and the Academic Services Quality Team worked with the Digital Transformation Programme in Information Services to undertake an assessment of digital maturity of the quality processes and the Senate Quality Assurance Committee. The Digital Maturity report made the following recommendations:

- **Central quality hub:** use a single digital platform as a central hub for quality process outcomes (including good practice examples) to support collaborative working, workflow automation, organisation and storage, communication, escalation of actions, and closing the loop on actions. As part of this, explore coding/theming of quality process outcomes to support analysis and create an accessible source of data/evidence.
- **Communication:** as part of a wider review of communication strategies, present the outcomes of quality processes in more engaging and accessible formats.
- **Student engagement:** continue work with the Students' Association to support student representation communication and student engagement with quality processes.
- **Data:** support data evaluation during quality processes and explore formalising the use of metrics in quality processes.

- **Meetings** (including SQAC and events): continue to explore options and engage with stakeholders

The Committee was in agreement that quality assurance processes produce a rich range of data which could be used to drive student experience improvements by providing students and staff with better information.

The Committee welcomed the improvements to data led by the Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling. However, the Committee was in agreement that in order for students and staff to make valid judgements there must be a baseline consensus on the data and metrics used. Concerns were noted in relation to ongoing school mistrust of centrally held data and cultural resistance to using defined metrics. The limitations of small data sets was also noted as was the ability of staff to make use of large and complex data sets. The Committee agreed that equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) data needed to be improved with more granular data, specifically disaggregated black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) data. There was also a need to focus more on the performance of Scottish students.

It was agreed that any set of metrics would need to be benchmarked with reference points both internal (i.e. University strategy) and external (e.g. Teaching Excellence Framework). The importance of context was also noted, with the need to avoid reducing judgments on performance to a standardised checklist which was either overly mechanistic or not relevant to some subject areas. Performance data must demonstrate relevance and therefore value to each specific area. For example, the General Medical Council (GMC) has implemented a new quality reporting system which staff valued as it provided for ongoing engagement with data and not simple snapshots.

**Action: Jeni Harden to be invited to present on the new GMC quality reporting system at the next Directors of Quality Network meeting.**

Members raised concerns in relation to the timing of any new approach to the use of performance data, noting that staff across the University were exhausted after spending a year coping with the effects of the pandemic. It was suggested that the focus should be on helping them engage with the data currently available on the student data dashboards and begin a conversation about the direction of travel in the future which should be shared with Senate Education Committee.

The Committee agreed that emphasis should be placed on data to identify and share good practice and that has the greatest impact on the student experience. It was also agreed that there was a role for QA processes and data in the forthcoming Curriculum Transformation.

**Action: Professor Colm Harmon to be invited to the May meeting to discuss ways that SQAC can help support the Curriculum Transformation.**

**For Information and Formal Business**

## **5. Enhancement Led Institutional Review - update**

The Committee noted a progress update on the Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR). It was noted that the planning visit had taken place on 3 February 2021 and that the main visit was scheduled to take place between 22 and 26 March 2021. A draft report, outlining recommendations and commendations, is expected in June 2021 followed by the final report in July 2021.

## **6. Annual Monitoring – update**

The Committee noted that the Convenor, College Deans and Academic Services had met in January to consider reporting options and plans for the next QA reporting cycle. It was agreed that the light touch, interim approach will be maintained for the 2020-21 QA reporting cycle. The same streamlined reporting template will be used but Schools will be asked to complete all three questions this year (question 1 was optional for the 2019-20 reports). The reporting timeline will revert to the usual dates, with late August once again the key deadline date for school submissions. It was noted that School Directors of Quality had been informed of this extension to the interim reporting process.

## **7. Personal Tutor (PT) System Oversight Group – update**

The Committee noted that the Group had met to consider examples of good practice and areas for further development arising from Senior Tutor feedback gathered by the Deans of Students. It was noted that the implementation of the new Extensions and Special Circumstances (ESC) process had been identified as a cause of concern and an ongoing challenge. The Committee agreed that issues arising from the implementation must be addressed before the next round of Board of Examiners meetings.

## **8. Enhancement Themes – update**

The Committee noted the institutional plan and members were invited to contact Academic Services with examples of community building activities.

## **9. Internal Periodic Review: Reports and Responses**

The Committee confirmed that it was content with progress implementing the recommendations from the internal periodic reviews. The following noted:

- Red Amber Green (RAG) Status Reporting – the Committee welcomed the quick and easy to understand status indicators but noted that some recommendations may be inappropriately coloured (i.e. Edinburgh College of Art 4.1 and 4.4 should be defined as ongoing).
- Centre for Open Learning (COL) – the Committee noted positive progress but also that the COL action plan was reliant on other parts of the institution. It was agreed that the College would help COL address any barriers to progress.

The Committee noted that Academic Services had benchmarked with other Scottish institutions to determine if the 14 week and year-on follow-up reporting schedule is the norm for the sector. It was found that, typically, the 14 week report equivalent took the form of an action plan rather than a report on action taken and was submitted sooner (~8 weeks post review). It was also noted that Academic Services

will explore themes and SMART objectives to help focus and theme recommendations and thus help with tracking actions.

**10. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

**11. Date of Next Meeting:** Thursday 22 April 2021, 2pm, MS Teams