

**The University of Edinburgh**  
**Senate Quality Assurance Committee**

**Minutes of the meeting held on  
Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2023, 2pm – 4pm  
Hybrid meeting: Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House  
and Microsoft Teams**

**1. Attendance**

<b>Present:</b>	<b>Position:</b>
Professor Tina Harrison	Deputy Vice Principal, Students (Enhancement) (Convener)
Professor Matthew Bailey	Dean of Quality, CMVM
Dr Michael Barany	Senate Representative
Professor Laura Bradley	Doctoral College Representative of CAHSS (PGR)
Marianne Brown	Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling
Brian Connolly	Acting Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement, Academic Services
Dr Anne Desler	School Representative of CAHSS
Dr Gail Duursma	School Representative of CSE
Olivia Eadie	Co-Director, Institute for Academic Development
Dr Pia Helbing	Senate Representative
Professor Linda Kirstein	Dean of Education Quality Assurance and Culture, CSE
Callum Paterson	Academic Engagement and Policy Coordinator
Dr Neneh Rowa-Dewar	School Representative of CMVM
Dr Emily Taylor	Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Approval, CAHSS
Professor Jose Vazquez-Boland	Senate Representative
Sinéad Docherty	Committee Secretary, Academic Services

<b>Apologies:</b>	
Carl Harper	Vice President (Education), Students' Association
Professor Nazira Karodia	Deputy Vice Chancellor and Vice Principal of Learning & Teaching, Edinburgh Napier University

## 2. Minutes of meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2023

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2023, pending minor amendments. This decision was made after some discussion and it was noted that not all members of the Committee were in agreement.

## 3. Matters Arising

- **Quality and Enhancement Standards Review (QESR)**

The Committee were informed that the QESR report from QAA Scotland had been received for factual checking, and the outcome was that of confidence in the University's management of quality and standards. There is, however, a sense of urgency with the recommendations specified, assessment and feedback in particular.

The published version of the report will be shared with SQAC and Senate in due course. The publication date is January 2024.

- **EDI Training**

Members of the Committee were reminded to undertake the EDI training if they have not already done so.

- **Committee Vice-Convener**

The Convener highlighted that the role of Vice-Convener has been vacant since membership changed in the summer of 2023. The Convener proposed that the College Deans of Quality each take the role of VC on an annual, rotational basis.

The Committee agreed to this arrangement. The Dean of Education Quality Assurance and Culture CSE has the role of VC for the remainder of academic year 2023/24.

- **Committee Priorities**

The Committee were informed of concerns from Senate elected members that SQAC is continuing in its business despite the committee priorities not having been approved by Senate. The Committee were informed that some elected members of Senate would be inclined to approve the TORs once more information on SQAC business and priorities is known.

A Senate elected member of the Committee advised the areas in which some of their constituents request further information:

- Explanation of external requirements and the timeline and process of these.
- Overview of the routine monitoring activities that SQAC will be overseeing.
- On strategy matters, what issues will be considered by SQAC and what delegated powers may be involved.
- On strategy and policy matters, more concrete action on how the Student Support Model is evaluated.
- The role of SQAC in understanding the background and case for the Curriculum Transformation Project.

**Action:** Academic Services to take comments and present a paper outlining reflections against Committee priorities to Senate for comment.

#### 4. College Annual Quality Reports (Paper C)

##### College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS)

The Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Approval, CAHSS spoke to the annual quality report from that College. The Committee were informed that next year the intention of CAHSS is to focus on fewer priorities, and to make Assessment & Feedback the number one priority.

The following areas and themes were highlighted in the overview of the CAHSS report:

- Inadequate estate & space allocation
- Language competency
- Workload allocation
- Staff wellbeing
- Tutor training in assessment & feedback

Discussion of these items took place, and the following points were made:

- Challenges with available space and allocation has an impact on the perception of quality as it affects the ability of staff to deliver teaching and support.
- CAHSS are gathering information on space provision and management from Schools, in order to identify where problems are most acute and also share best practice/solutions.
- There is a need to manage student expectations around their studying experience, especially PGR students who may expect their own desk and space as standard. Space issues may have a disproportionate impact on the PGR community.
- There are also live issues with RAAC, and the resulting pressure on space highlights the lack of capacity within the University.
- Language competency becomes an issue when students do not have requisite language skills to contribute and participate fully, and this raises the questions of whether courses then meet level 11 requirements.

- Tutor training in assessment and feedback is inconsistent across Schools. Issues stemming from this come up in CAHSS through NSS results, PTES, PRES, IPRs and annual monitoring.
- Tutor training is often seen as a student experience issue but does link in with course planning and delivery, as well as workload.
- The three-week turnaround time for feedback needs to fall within contracted hours for tutors and be reflected in the WAM.
- There are questions as to whether staff have been trained in assessment design, and how staff can be supported to best implement the assessment and feedback principles and priorities when assessment methods are evolving.
- It was noted that concrete evidence of outcomes and measurable targets should be included in the annual quality reports.
- The Dean of Quality, CAHSS confirmed that the College sets objectives against which it can evidence progress.

<p><b>Action:</b> Committee Convener to liaise with Dean of Quality, CAHSS around policy and guidance for online assessment and AI.</p>
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### **College of Science and Engineering (CSE)**

The Dean of Education Quality Assurance and Culture, CSE noted thanks to colleagues and academic affairs for their work on the report. Recognition was also given to the efforts made by colleagues in the Doctoral College for their work around the PGR experience.

Key themes identified in the CSE report and highlighted to the Committee were:

- Progression and attainment
- Assessment and feedback
- Implementation of the Student Support Model
- PGR health and wellbeing
- Staff wellbeing and workload

Views of wider Senate members were fed into this discussion by elected members, and it was noted that this paper had garnered most discussion amongst those members. It was reported that some elected members of Senate did not recognise the account of the SSM which did not reflect concerns such as long queues for meetings with Student Advisors, issues with students not having full credit loads in early weeks of the academic year and not enough contact with cohort leads.

The Dean of Education Quality Assurance and Culture, CSE informed the Committee that she and the Dean of Students had met with all Schools in the College in the last month to pull together the themes for the report. The College's Student Support Implementation Group identified thematic areas, good practice and areas to improve. There have been focused activities on

building relationships between students and academic staff, and a Sharepoint site launched to manage requests for recommendation letters and proof of studies. It was acknowledged that this is the first year of the SSM and it will evolve over time. Learnings will be taken from this year into the next year.

### **College of Medicine & Veterinary Medicine (CMVM)**

The Dean of Quality, CMVM highlighted the following areas and themes in the College report:

- Staff and resources
- Concern around the resilience of staff to implement projects such as CTP
- Estates & timetabling
- Student voice
- College leadership
- Examples of good practice, such as the inclusion of a student in the preparation for the MolGenPop IPR and efforts to improve student representation on College committees.

Discussion of these items took place, and the following points were made:

- There can be unintended consequences of decisions, like that to make course evaluation questionnaires the responsibility of Schools & Deaneries, which has an impact on how to manage and apply resource equally.
- Space constraints have an impact on building community, and contribute to the increasing divide between research and teaching.
- The voice and experience of academics needs to be taken more widely into account when it comes to spaces design.
- Student voice is a common theme, with plenty of effort going in but not moving the dial. There should be better consideration by the University of how to share good practice in terms of student voice.
- Online students must be an area of focus, with consideration needed as to how to implement good practice into the online space.
- The governance and structure review which is taking place in the College will inform the priorities for next year.
- Opportunities to share and learn about good practice at University level would be appreciated.
- CMVM reported that the new Student Support Model had received strongly positive feedback within the College.

Following consideration of the three College reports, the following areas were considered to be key institutional themes which will be remitted to individual areas for response, where possible, and addressed further at College level over the next academic year.

- Space and estate
- PGR student experience

- Staff wellbeing & workload
- Assessment & feedback

There was not certainty on whether language competency was a common theme across the three Colleges. It was asked whether the recognised bedding-in issues discussed with the SSM could be added, but the convener explained to the Committee that the key themes should only be items raised directly by the reports. CMVM reported strongly positive feedback in relation to the SSM. There is a separate mechanism for evaluating the SSM.

**Action:** The Dean of Education Quality Assurance and Culture, CSE agreed to take this issue back to College discussion to explore if it is a widespread issue.

## 5. Course Level Evaluation (Paper E)

The Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling spoke to this paper. The Committee were informed that the University is not looking to centralise course level evaluation again, but is looking to review the current practice in-depth with Schools to understand what is happening at a local level.

Discussion addressed concerns around closing the feedback loop, the shape and scope of the review, the aim to reduce the reliance on surveys and the importance of the relationship between staff and students. It was noted that guidance for staff on effective ways to engage, format and gather student feedback in a timely manner would be valuable. The Committee expressed preference for a research and evidence led review with student involvement throughout.

The Committee approved the proposal to review course level evaluation across the University.

## 6. Any Other Business

The meeting was adjourned before consideration could be given to the further items on the agenda.

**Action:** Committee Secretary to circulate agenda and papers for outstanding items to be considered as e-business.

## 7. Date of Next Meeting

The Committee noted that the next meeting will take place on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 2-5pm. This will be a hybrid meeting, taking place in the Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House and via Microsoft Teams. The meeting has been extended by an hour to ensure that Committee business is completed during the meeting itself.