



Edinburgh Napier QESR Follow Up Action Plan 2024/25

Background

Edinburgh Napier University underwent its Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) on 7th December 2023. The subsequent report was published by QAA Scotland on 15th February and confirmed that Edinburgh Napier University is making effective progress in continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision to enable effective arrangements to be in place for managing academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience.

The published report is available: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/quality-assurance-reports/Edinburgh-Napier-University>

The QESR team found the following areas of positive practice:

- The integration of the ENhance Curriculum Framework and Curriculum Management Environment
- The approach to student engagement and partnership
- Support for mental health

There was one recommendation for action:

Postgraduate research students: The University should make progress on and accelerate its actions in response to the ELIR 4 recommendations to develop an institutional approach to reviewing postgraduate research programmes and the wider student experience, ensuring that arrangements are in place for the next academic year. In addition, the University should put interim arrangements in place to capture the broader postgraduate research experience for existing students.

Within the body of the report, the review team also encouraged the University to take the following actions:

- Utilise the partnership with ENSA to improve awareness of external examiner reports and the role of external examiners more generally amongst students (para 23)
- Continue efforts to take steps to close the attainment gap for TNE students and evaluate the effectiveness of the extra support offered to TNE students and staff (para 39)

Response and Action Plan

Edinburgh Napier is confident that there are effective arrangements in place to capture the broader postgraduate student experience. The approach is embedded within the progress reviews process, commended in ELIR4. The research postgraduate students' (RPG) broader experience is currently captured through a tripartite review structure which operates twice a year. The tripartite structure referred to comprises of an individual, a school and a University element. This works as follows:

Individual Reviews

Each individual RPG student is required to produce a reflective report every October and every March. This entails them writing a four-page report which reflects upon their broad experiences, engagements and activities over the preceding (approximately) six month period. The specific of this reflection will vary from individual to individual and, for each individual, between reports, depending on the student's activities, experiences and stage. Students are encouraged to reflect on such activities as teaching, conference presentation, research obstacles and research successes, as well as particular individual experiences.

Once completed, the report is sent to the student's supervisory team and an appointed independent member of academic staff (known as an Independent Panel Chair or IPC). One week after submitting the report, the student will meet with this panel to discuss the content of the report. At this meeting, the supervisors will leave the room for a period to allow the student to talk independently with the IPC and then the student will be asked to leave to allow the supervisors to talk to the IPC without the student present.

The student and review panel are also required to complete a Supervision Agreement at the meeting. This document details the schedule of meetings for the forthcoming six months, commitments of the student and supervisors and an agreement over authorship credit.

Subsequent to the meeting, the IPC and the Director of Studies (DoS) will complete a Form RD6, providing a narrative account of the meeting and identifying any points

of concern or points that merit some remark or recognition, as well as noting any training needs which have been identified through the meeting. The form is then shared with the student and signed by all present at the meeting.

The paperwork, including the form, the Supervision Agreement and the student's reflective report, is then submit for consideration by the School Research Degrees Committee.

School Research Degrees Committee (SRDC) Review

Following the period of student reviews, each school's Research Degree Committee meets (usually in early November and early April) to review all reflective reports and attendant RD6 forms for each student in the school. The objective of this school level review is two-fold. Committees look to identify, discuss and act to address any concerns affecting individual students. Also importantly, in the context of the QESR recommendation, they also look to identify patterns across the school; i.e. issues affecting or raised by a number of students. The issues identified may be addressed through direct intervention or through the establishment of a plan of action, depending on the nature of the issue in question.

Doctoral College Student Monitoring

Subsequent to the SRDC meetings, the University Research Degrees Committee (which will become the Doctoral College Examination Board) meets to review the outcomes from each school. This process entails a series of meetings, each focusing on a single school. At these meetings the relevant School Research Degree Leader (Chair of the School RDC) meets with the Chair of URDC (Doctoral College Examination Board), Doctoral College Operations Manager and clerk to the URDC/DCEB to discuss each student in the school in question and to ensure each student is on track and that individual concerns are being addressed appropriately. Following this series of meetings, URDC/DCEB meet collectively to discuss identified common (or serious) issues. These then feed into the Doctoral College action plan.

Examples

As noted above, the types of issues emerging from this process necessarily vary enormously. They can range from the identification of an individual student's need for a disability adjustment to a widespread dissatisfaction with student office accommodation. They include identifying delicate matters such as individual students being over-pressured to produce outputs to straightforward matters such as an identified need for statistical training. Depending on the nature of the issue or matter identified, it will be actioned by the school or Doctoral College.

QESR Action Plan

Recommendation	Comments	Action	Timescale	Responsible	Status
<p>The University should put interim arrangements in place to capture the broader postgraduate research experience for existing students.</p>	<p>Processes are in place to monitor and review the broader RPG student experience as detailed above. It is acknowledged that the contribution this process makes to reviewing the broader RPG experience is not as visible as it could be.</p>	<p>Details of the existing processes and the impact of these processes have been presented to Education & Student Experience Committee along with this action plan.</p>	<p>Presented to ESEC May 2024</p>	<p>Calum Neill (Doctoral College)</p>	<p>Complete</p>
<p>The University should make progress on and accelerate its actions in response to the ELIR 4 recommendations to develop an institutional approach to reviewing postgraduate research programmes and the wider student experience, ensuring that arrangements are in place for the next academic year.</p> <p>The launch of the revised UK Quality Code and the Scottish Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework in summer 2024, along with the ongoing development of Edinburgh Napier's Doctoral College offers an opportunity to devise a coherent and strategically relevant approach to the cyclical review of the postgraduate research student experience.</p>		<p>To ensure effective oversight and management of review, the Doctoral College will be established with a Doctoral College Review Panel for the duration of 24/25. The Review Panel composition includes representatives from all 5 Schools, the Head of Quality & Enhancement; Student members; an external member.</p>	<p>Committee structure approved by Academic Board June 24</p>	<p>Calum Neill (Doctoral College)</p>	<p>Complete</p>

<p>Initial conversations have indicated that a thematic approach based upon elements of the postgraduate research student journey would be most effective.</p> <p>It is proposed that an initial thematic review be conducted in 2024/25 academic session as a pilot to inform the development of the University's ongoing approach to review of the research student experience.</p>	<p>The Doctoral College Review Panel will be responsible for approving the methodology for a thematic review of the admissions processes associated with the postgraduate research student experience,</p> <p>The Doctoral College Review panel will consider findings and recommendations from the review with respect to the admissions process – but will also use the experience of conducting the review methodology to inform future reviews (as a pilot approach)</p>	<p>Proposal of methodology to be presented to the Doctoral College Review Panel and QSC at meetings in September 2024. It will detail the review timeframes and reporting milestones and monitor progress to ensure the review is completed no later than February 2025 to inform review</p>	<p>Calum Neill (Doctoral College) in liaison with Katrina Swanton (DLTE)</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
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			planning for 25/26.		
		Within 24/25 the Doctoral College Review panel will develop a robust cycle of review exploring agreed themes for review for 25/26 and beyond employing a methodology informed by the 2024/25 approach and ensuring full alignment with TQEF guidance.	Revised methodology and schedule presented to Academic Board meeting in June 2025	Calum Neill (Doctoral College) in liaison with Katrina Swanton (DLTE)	Not yet started
Utilise the partnership with ENSA to improve awareness of external examiner reports and the role of external examiners more generally amongst students	All students are provided with programme handbooks which clearly state the role and remit of external examiners.	Quality & Standards Committee to commission the develop policy and guidance around opportunities for external examiners to meet with students related to ongoing work in response to the QAA External Examiner Principles.	September 2024	Jane Gregson (Clerk of QSC)	Ongoing

		ENSA and the University to review contents of the online representative training to ensure that the role and remit of external examiners is included and promoted	Updated rep training content finalised before September 2024	Katrina Swanton (DLTE) and Daniel Wright (ENSA)	Ongoing
Continue efforts to take steps to close the attainment gap for TNE students and evaluate the effectiveness of the extra support offered to TNE students and staff	Work has been ongoing to examine awarding gaps more generally within the University and the TNE awarding gap has been incorporated into this.	Paper addressing the awarding gap to be presented to Education & Student Experience Committee with proposal to establish a task-finish group	May 2024	Catriona Cunningham Sofia Shan Sam Illingworth (DLTE)	Ongoing

Date Last Updated: 19th July 2024