

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Friday 12 February 2016

Report from the Meeting of the Joint Board of the University of Glasgow and the Edinburgh Theological Seminary held on 9 October 2015

Robbie Mulholland, Clerk to the Joint Board

1. Appointment of Full-time Principal of Edinburgh Theological Seminary (ETS)

The Convener, on behalf of the Joint Board, extended congratulations to Principal Martin on his appointment as full-time Principal of ETS. Principal Martin who, until now, had undertaken the role in a part-time capacity, took up his new post at the beginning of the session.

2. Remit and Membership of the Joint Board for 2015-16

Members noted that Dr Burns would replace Professor Moignard as the Head of the College of Arts representative. Dr Burns would therefore attend the Joint Board as both the Head of the College of Arts representative **and** the College of Arts representative.

Academic Standards Committee (ASC) is invited to **approve** the remit and membership of the Joint Board for 2015-16 as specified in Appendix 1.

3. Timetable of Meetings

The timetable for meetings of the Joint Board had been revised and the meetings which had previously taken place in January and June would now take place in October and March/April. The October meeting would consider the ETS Annual Report for the preceding academic year, while the March/April meeting would focus on action points and operational matters arising from the October meeting.

4. Annual Report from ETS - Session 2014-15

4.1 *Five-Year Plan*

The ETS Five-Year Plan was published in early 2015 and set out the institution's vision up until the year 2020. The document was a rolling Plan to be reviewed annually which reflected ETS's ambition to extend its provision in theological education to emerging student markets in the UK, Europe and beyond. The Plan incorporated a Risk Register which outlined how the institution intended to address potential threats to its on-going success in the short to medium term.

The meeting noted that the Academic Collaborations Office (ACO) was also in the process of developing a Risk Register template for use by University staff and that the ETS document would provide useful guidance to the University in this regard.

4.2 *Change of Name*

The Joint Board was informed that the change of name from Free Church College to Edinburgh Theological Seminary (supported by targeted marketing) had helped increase interest from prospective students. The student intake in session 2014-15 had been the highest in the institution's history, with 20 students being admitted to the BTh programme and 8 to the MTh programme.

4.3 *Internal Administration*

There had been no major changes in ETS's internal administration in session 2014-15. The Vice-Principal continued to manage day-to-day operational matters, while the Principal was heavily involved in the promotion of the institution both at home and abroad.

4.4 *MyCampus*

ETS had experienced no problems with MyCampus during graduations in session 2014-15.

4.5 *Internal Moderation*

The ETS Vice-Principal reported that, following feedback from External Examiners, a more streamlined internal moderation system had been introduced. The new system which required that all assessments be double-marked internally had proved successful.

4.6 *Dyslexia*

The Joint Board was advised that ETS was aware of an increasing number of students with dyslexia. This was a fairly recent trend and due possibly, in part, to earlier detection at the admissions stage. The ETS Vice-Principal thanked the University Disability Service for the advice and support they had provided to ETS staff in connection with this issue.

4.7 *Assessment Submission Regulations and Turnitin*

The Joint Board was informed that, as required by the UK Quality Code, ETS Programme Handbooks contained information relating to good academic practice. This included information regarding the measures in place to address academic misconduct (e.g. the use of Turnitin), and the penalties associated with this. As a result of the student feedback process, ETS had revised their Rules for Submission of Written Work which helped clarify the penalties regarding the late submission of work and the infringement of rules relating to length of assignments. The revised guidance had been incorporated in Programme Handbooks.

The Convener reported that, following on-going difficulties with the operation of Turnitin, the University had successfully piloted a new software product (Urkund). Guidance notes on the use of Urkund had been prepared and these would be made available to ETS.

4.8 *Access to Theology Course*

It was noted that the Access to Theology course was proving very popular with students. This short course offered a broad introduction to theological education and ETS was optimistic its success would help future recruitment to the BTh programme.

4.9 *Access to Staff Development and Training*

Under the Memorandum of Agreement, ETS staff were entitled to access University courses offered by, amongst others, Employee and Organisational Development, IT Services and the Learning and Teaching Centre. Technical difficulties last year had prevented ETS staff accessing some online facilities but the Joint Board was pleased to note that last year's technical difficulties had been resolved.

4.10 *MTh (Part-Time) Completion*

The Joint Board was informed that many part-time MTh students held full-time ministry posts and therefore required close supervision to ensure they completed on time. ETS was examining ways by which it could help these students avoid exceeding the maximum duration of study for their programme.

4.11 *BTh Distance Learning*

ETS planned to introduce a BTh (by distance learning) programme in session 2015-16. The programme would allow real-time audio, video and data and take advantage of two new classroom spaces under development on campus. Members were aware, however, that distance learning presented particular challenges in relation to technical support, timing of examinations and the online teaching environment. The University's School of Engineering had considerable experience in delivering online learning and video-conferencing and ETS members undertook to liaise with them on this issue.

The Board noted that, under Senate Office guidelines, the introduction of a distance learning option for an existing programme was deemed to be a major programme change. As such, it was likely that some form of re-validation event would be necessary. ETS would therefore be required to submit further details of how the distance learning option would operate to the ACO in the first instance.

4.12 *Programme Validation*

Members were advised that ETS expected preparation for the re-validation of the BTh, MTh (Taught) and MTh (Research) to take place towards the end of session 2016-17. They also intended to submit a proposal for a new Masters in Missiology programme in session 2017-18.

4.13 *IELTS English Language Admissions Requirement for Postgraduate Study*

The Joint Board was advised that ETS monitored and reviewed their admissions policy for programmes and courses on an annual basis. During the most recent review, ETS had considered raising their IELTS English language admissions requirement for postgraduate study from 6.5 to 7.0. Although ETS considered that an IELTS score of 7.0 provided a more secure basis from which to embark on postgraduate study, it had concluded that the required IELTS score should remain at 6.5. Every student was interviewed personally prior to admission and ETS was confident that this process allowed staff to form an accurate impression of an applicant's English language ability. Nevertheless, ETS would continue to monitor this issue closely.

5. Report from ETS Student Representative

The following points were noted from the report:

- Teaching in the new academic year had started smoothly and students were generally content with class sizes and timetabling arrangements;
- Students had raised concern in relation to the heavy workload and amount of reading for continuous assessments in Years 1 and 3. ETS staff were aware of this issue and were monitoring the situation closely. Students would be asked to update Heads of Department regularly regarding any specific concerns they had in relation to the workload for particular courses;
- Students had expressed satisfaction with turn-around times for the marking of assignments; and
- Students, in general, had reported that teaching materials were both stimulating and of a high quality.

6. New Validation Arrangements: Procedures and Fees

The Convener advised the Joint Board that a revised Memorandum of Agreement had been agreed between the two institutions and that the sign-off would be completed immediately following the meeting. He pointed out that the level of support required by the University's Validated Institutions (VIs) had increased significantly in recent years

and this was reflected in the revised validation fees in the MoA. He also reminded members that Scottish Funding Council rules did not allow the University to use public funds to subsidise other activities. Consequently, the revised fee structure was intended to ensure that the University meets its SFC funding obligations.

The Convener assured ETS members, however, that the University was very aware of the financial constraints ETS operated under and that the ACO would work with ETS to minimise their costs wherever possible.

7. Transfer of Academic Credits

The Board **considered and approved** a request from ETS that two BTh students, named in the Annual Report, be awarded credits on the basis of previous study, as detailed below:-

- 90 credits (London School of Theology)
- 30 credits (Scottish Baptist College)

8. Co-Supervision of PhD Students: Procedures and Fees

The Joint Board was advised that an ETS MTh student had applied to continue to PhD study at the University, under a co-supervisory arrangement. The intention was that the University provide the primary supervisor and ETS the second supervisor. The Convener welcomed this as an opportunity to build a closer relationship between the institutions in respect of joint research activity. The College of Arts was supportive of the principle of joint supervision and could provide a seminar for ETS staff on supervisory practice in the Graduate School. The Board **agreed** that the financial arrangements in respect of postgraduate research students admitted under a co-supervisory arrangement would be determined on a case-by-case basis in liaison with the College of Arts Graduate School, as reflected in the MoA.

9. BTh Regulation Change

The Board **noted** that an amendment to BTh regulations has been approved by the Convener under summer powers. The amendment introduced Grade Point Average (GPA) scoring into those sections of the regulations which related to progression and also clarified requirements for the award of the BTh. Furthermore, the Board noted that the revised regulations brought the ETS Code of Assessment into line with the University's Code of Assessment.

10. Appointment of External Examiners

The Board **noted** the appointment of External Examiners which had been approved by the Convener under summer powers. [The Examiners' details are attached as [Appendix 2](#)].

11. Associate University Teachers

The Board approved the new ETS staff outlined in the Annual Report as Associate University Teachers and **resolved to recommend** them to ASC for approval. [A list of new staff is attached as [Appendix 3](#)].

12. Convener's Business

12.1 University Strategic Plan 2015-2020

The Convener advised members that the University Strategic Plan 2015-20 had recently been published and was available at: www.glasgow.ac.uk/about/strategy.

12.2 *Times Higher Education World University Rankings*

The Convener informed the Board that the University had achieved 76th place in the 2015-16 Times Higher Education World University Rankings. This was the University's highest ever position, up 18 places on 2014-15.

12.3 *Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Bill*

The Convener drew members' attention to the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Bill introduced by the Scottish Government in June 2015 and currently going through the Committee stage in the Scottish Parliament. The Bill included proposals in relation to the composition of, and appointment to, the governing bodies and academic boards of higher education institutions. Amongst other things, the Bill would give Scottish Ministers the power to intervene on matters relating to the following:-

- The composition of institutions' governing bodies (Court);
- The composition of institutions' academic boards (Senate);
- The appointment process of the governing body's Chair; and
- The length of time that Chairs of governing bodies could be allowed to serve.

The Bill, as it stood, would have serious and far-reaching implications for University governance. Of particular concern, was the proposal in relation to the composition of Court, in that it made no provision for Senate representation (Senate Assessors in the case of the University). Court would be the final arbiter in matters of governance but with potentially no Senate representation involved in its decision-making process. The increased involvement of Scottish Ministers in University governance also increased the risk that institutions be re-classified from non-profit making organisations to central government bodies by the Office of National Statistics (ONS). This could result in Universities losing their charitable status, their eligibility for certain forms of tax relief and also being unable to retain any surpluses generated.

The University had highlighted its concerns regarding the Bill in its response to the Education Secretary's Call for Evidence.

13. Publications/Publicity Materials

The Convener thanked members for continuing to send the University copies of their publicity materials which referenced the University. The University was obliged, under the QAA Quality Code, to review such materials published by its validated institutions prior to publication.

University of Glasgow and Edinburgh Theological Seminary

Title: Joint Board of the University of Glasgow and Edinburgh Theological Seminary

Remit:

1. To oversee the following programmes (taught or by research):
 - (a) Bachelor of Theology
 - (b) Master of Theology (by research)
 - (c) Master of Theology in Scottish Church History and Theology
2. To make recommendations to the Senate of the University and to the Senate of the Seminary in respect of the validation of the above programmes.
3. To conduct periodic reviews of the above programmes, and make recommendations to the Senate of the University of Glasgow on the basis of their outcomes.
4. To make such recommendations as are appropriate to the Senate of the Seminary.
5. To consider, for transmission to the Senate of the University of Glasgow for its approval, all nominations of external examiners to the University Court for the programmes listed in item 1 above.
6. To consider annually:
 - a) the recommendations of, and comments contained within, the reports of external examiners and the response of the Seminary to the reports;
 - b) a report on the numbers and qualifications of students admitted to the validated programmes, and on the progress of students within the programmes;
 - c) the nomination of members of the Seminary for recognition as teachers of the University;
 - d) the nomination of members of the Joint Appeals Committee;
 - e) to monitor and ensure that the terms and conditions and expectations that were originally approved have been, and continue to be, met;
 - f) Ongoing risk management and maintenance of a risk register.
7. To receive annual reports on, and keep under continuing review, the operation of the Seminary's quality assurance procedures for all programmes overseen by the Joint Board.
8. To foster mutual understanding and co-operation and to encourage and review collaboration between the Seminary and the University in areas of common interest.

Quorum:

The quorum of the Joint Board shall be four and shall comprise at least two representatives from each institution

Joint Board of the University of Glasgow and Edinburgh Theological Seminary

Membership 2015-16

University of Glasgow

Clerk of Senate (Convener)	Professor John Briggs
Head of College of Arts (or nominee)	Dr Barbara Burns
Representative from the School of Critical Studies	Dr Charlotte Methuen
Representative from the School of Critical Studies	Dr Scott Spurlock
Representative from the College of Arts	Dr Barbara Burns
SRC President (or nominee)	Mr Liam King
Head of Academic Collaborations Office (or nominee)	Mrs Jackie McCluskey

Edinburgh Theological Seminary

Principal of the Seminary (Vice Convener)	Reverend Iver Martin
Vice-Principal of the Seminary	Professor John A MacLeod
A Representative of the Teaching Staff	Professor John R McIntosh
President of the ETS SRC	Kenneth Robertson

In attendance

Academic Collaborations Office Clerk	Mr Robbie Mulholland
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Appendix 2

External Examiners Appointed Under Summer Powers

Name	Qualifications	Position	Programme	Term of Office
Professor Crawford Gribben	MA, PhD, FRHistS	Professor of Early Modern British History Queen's University, Belfast	Church History	1/10/2015 to 30/09/2019
Dr David Reimer	BTh, BA, MA, DPhil	Senior Lecturer in Biblical Studies, University of Edinburgh	Biblical Studies	1/10/2015 to 30/09/2019

Appendix 3

The Joint Board **resolved to recommend** to ASC the following members of ETS staff as Associate University Teachers:

Name	Qualifications
Rev David Kirk	MEng, MSc (Eng), BA
Rev Ian Hamilton	BA, BD, MPhil