

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Friday 25 May 2018

Report from the Meeting of the Joint Board of the University of Glasgow and Edinburgh Theological Seminary, held on 2 February 2018

Graeme Shedden, Academic Collaborations Office

1. Remit and Membership of the Joint Board for 2017-18

Members noted the following changes to the membership of the Board for the current session.

- Professor Nick Fells will represent the Head of the College of Arts;
- Dr Alexander Forsyth will represent the School of Critical Studies; and
- Mr Nicholas Mackison will attend as President of the ETS SRC.

The Board noted that the nominee of the UoG SRC President was still to be confirmed. The Clerk would check with the SRC regarding this.

The Board noted that no changes were required to the remit of the Joint Board and it was **agreed to recommend** the remit and membership of the Board, as per **Appendix 1**, to the Academic Standards Committee (ASC) for approval.

2. Re/validation of Existing Programmes and Proposed MTh in Missiology

The Clerk informed the Board that the re/validation event for ETS's existing and proposed provision (the MTh in Missiology) had been arranged for 19 February 2018. The report from this event would be submitted to the May 2018 meeting of ASC.

3. Partnership Review

The Clerk informed the Board that the Partnership Review had recently taken place and the recommendation of the Panel was that the partnership between the two institutions be extended for a period of five years, from 1 October 2018 - subject to approval by the University's Senior Management Group (SMG).

[Clerk's note (11/4/18): The Secretary to SMG has now confirmed that SMG has approved the review panel's recommendation that the partnership between the two institutions be extended for a period of five years, with effect from 1 October 2018. The Clerk would arrange for a formal letter confirming this to be sent to ETS.]

4. Exit Award

The Board noted that provision was now in place within the University Calendar to allow the exit award of a Cert HE (Theology) and that this award had been made to a student in session 2016-17 following her withdrawal from the BTh Theology programme.

5. New Members of Staff for Consideration as Associate University Lecturers

The Board **agreed to recommend** a new member of ETS staff, as per **Appendix 2**, to the ASC for confirmation as an Associate University Lecturer (AUL).

At the last meeting of the Board, members had agreed that a decision to recommend AUL status for another member of ETS staff be deferred pending their satisfactory completion of Masters' level study. It was noted that confirmation of this staff member's eligibility was still not available, and the Board agreed to further defer their decision on the appointment pending this confirmation.

6. Annual Report from ETS for Session 2016-17

6.1 BTh (Distance Learning)

It was noted that the recently introduced BTh (Distance-Learning) had proved very successful. ETS were pleased to note that students making use of this option tended to do so in combination with part-time on-site learning, benefitting from both the flexibility of distance-learning and the collegiate ETS student experience.

6.2 Higher Education Review (2016)

The ETS members observed that the 2016 Higher Education Review (HER) had been a demanding but rewarding process for ETS. It had been helpful in prompting the introduction of enhanced processes and ETS staff had been very pleased with the results and action plan arising from the review.

6.3 Student Numbers

The Board noted that student enrolment figures continued to rise and was pleased to note the increasing number of female students, which had been attributed, in part, to an improved and diversified marketing strategy. The increase was still below what ETS had hoped for, and they remained committed to expanding the female cohort still further.

6.4 Mission Centre

Development of the Mission Centre was progressing well and it was anticipated that this new facility would add considerably to the capabilities of ETS. It was hoped that the Centre would impact positively upon the local community, student employability, the potential of lifelong learning and the delivery of top level educators who would shape the mission sector. ETS were particularly pleased that Dr Alistair Wilson, recently appointed lecturer in New Testament and Mission, would help to co-ordinate its activities.

6.5 Online Questionnaires

Online quality questionnaires had been keenly promoted to students, with some good results, but ETS was intent on improving response rates. Members discussed various alternative strategies, with ETS expressing an intention to trial some of these methods.

6.6 Postgraduate Funding

ETS were examining ways by which they could increase the availability of funding for postgraduate study. It was noted that many potential postgraduate students were employed in vocational ministry with modest stipends that often restricted their ability to pursue postgraduate study.

7. Report from the ETS Student Representative

The President of the ETS Student Representative Council presented an oral report to the Board.

7.1 Student Ethos and Experience

A positive atmosphere of mutual support existed amongst the students at ETS, bolstered by the recently introduced 'buddy system', and students also benefitted from excellent academic and pastoral support from staff, and the various forms of peer support provided by the ETS SRC.

The student body appreciated the institution's continued drive to improve the learning experience through staff consultation with them, both formally and informally. Students welcomed the increased provision of education support services and also developments such as the move to more clearly define the Director of Studies role in relation to student engagement.

ETS students were highly satisfied with the quality of teaching and also the arrangements for assessment, which was well spaced throughout the academic year, and feedback, which was productive and timely.

7.2 Recent Developments

Several on-going developments at the Seminary had been particularly well received by the student body, including the introduction of the Mission Centre, the proposed MTh in Missiology programme and the increasing use of remote learning technologies.

8. Student Health and Wellbeing

Members discussed the issue of student health and well-being and, in particular, the potential impact that routine stress might have on students' mental health during exam periods. Anecdotal evidence suggested that instances of ETS students citing mental health issues or stress as detrimental to their studies were rare. Members agreed that the size and collegiate atmosphere of the institution along with its capacity to provide good pastoral support all contributed to this.

9. Matters Remitted from the Seminary Senate

9.1 Master of Theology (MTh) - Student Deferment and Welfare Options

The Seminary Senate had previously considered the situation of MTh students who had been unable to complete their programme due to work commitments, and members sought to clarify the maximum permitted length of study for the degree. [See Clerk's post-meeting note below*]. The Convener noted that this was a maximum duration which was laid down in degree regulations and which could only be extended under compelling circumstances. He cautioned members that given the rigour of Quality Assurance oversight, it was important that due consideration was given to circumstances before they were deemed to be 'compelling'.

It was noted that voluntary suspension, although rare and undertaken only in exceptional circumstances, was also an option that students could consider, in conjunction with Advisers of Studies. This would ordinarily only be permitted for a maximum of one academic year. The Convener noted that one advantage of suspension as opposed to withdrawal was that the student in question was still a member of the University, and therefore had access to University support and facilities such as Counselling and Psychological Services.

Members were aware that some students might consider accepting an exit award and then applying to re-enter the same programme at a later date. The Convener noted that this had happened in the past, but would be dependent on the credit transferred being cognate to the new programme entered upon.

***[Clerk's post-meeting note: 'Except by special permission of the Joint Board a thesis may not be presented later than four years from the date of the candidate's admission'. (Degree of Master of Theology Regulations 2 v)].**

10. Office for Students

Members observed that the new regulatory body for higher education in England (the Office for Students (OfS)) had come into being in January 2018 and was soon to launch its new regulatory framework, and that the potential effects on Scottish Higher Education remained unclear. They agreed that the regulatory landscape in UK higher education continued to evolve and that Scottish institutions must continue to monitor developments closely.

11. Request for Credit Transfer

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

- Student 1 - 30 credits (London School of Theology)
- Student 2 - 15 credits (Highland Theological College, University of the Highlands and Islands [UHI])
- Student 3 – 45 credits (Highland Theological College, UHI)

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 2017-18

University of Glasgow

Clerk of Senate (Convener)	Professor John Briggs
Head of College of Arts (or nominee)	Professor Nick Fells
Representative from the School of Critical Studies	Dr Scott Spurlock
Representative from the School of Critical Studies	Dr Alexander Forsyth
Representative from the College of Arts	Professor Nick Fells
SRC President (or nominee)	To be confirmed
Head of Academic Collaborations Office (or nominee)	Mr Robbie Mulholland

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	Mr Nicholas Mackison

In attendance

Academic Collaborations Office (Minute taker)	Mr Graeme Shedden
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Appendix 2

New member of ETS staff for consideration as Associate University Lecturer

Name	Post	Department	Qualifications
Alistair Wilson	Lecturer	New Testament and Mission	PhD Diploma in Theology BD (with Merit) BA (Religious Studies)