

## University of Glasgow

## Academic Standards Committee – Friday 24 May 2019

## Report from the Meeting of the Joint Board of the University of Glasgow and Edinburgh Theological Seminary held on Tuesday 30 October 2018

Robbie Mulholland, Academic Collaborations Office

**1. Remit and Membership 2018-19**

Noting the addition of the new Master of Theology (MTh) in Missiology programme (which had commenced this session) within the remit, the Board **agreed to recommend** the remit and membership of the Joint Board of the University of Glasgow and Edinburgh Theological Seminary (2018-19), to Academic Standards Committee (ASC) as detailed in **Appendix 1**.

**2. Validation of Existing Programmes and the Proposed Master of Theology (MTh) in Missiology at ETS**

Members noted that a validation event for all existing ETS programmes and the proposed Master of Theology (MTh) in Missiology had taken place at ETS in February 2018. They were pleased to note that the outcome of the event had been the recommendation that all the programmes under consideration be validated/revalidated, as appropriate, for a period of 6 years. The report of the validation event which contained 6 commendations, 6 recommendations and 1 area for enhancement had been approved by Academic Standards Committee (ASC) at its meeting in May 2018.

The Board noted that the new Master of Theology in Missiology programme had been validated from the beginning of session 2018/19, for the prescribed six year period, whereas the *existing* validation for the Bachelor of Theology, Master of Theology (by Research) and Master of Theology in Scottish Church History and Theology programmes would expire at the end of session 2018-19. This meant that, as things stood, the validation of the MTh in Missiology would expire in September 2024 and the re-validation of the existing programmes would expire in September 2025.

Members agreed that, given the time and expense involved in preparing for and staging validation events, it was desirable to synchronise the validation periods for all ETS programmes so that they expired at the same time. The ETS Vice-Principal observed that ETS would not object to a reduction of one year in the term of the validation period for the programmes recently re-validated (i.e. from six years to five years), in order to bring these into line with the future expiry date of the recently validated MTh in Missiology.

The Board therefore **agreed to recommend** to Academic Standards Committee that the current **6** year validation period for the Bachelor of Theology, Master of Theology (by Research) and Master of Theology in Scottish Church History and Theology programmes at Edinburgh Theological Seminary, be reduced to **5** years. If approved, this would enable the validation period of all provision at ETS to expire at the same time – i.e. the end of September 2024.

### 3. Partnership Review

It was noted that the University had undertaken a review of its partnership with ETS in September 2017 and the University's Senior Management Group (SMG) had approved the recommendation of the review panel that the partnership between the two institutions be renewed for another 5 years, with effect from 1 October 2018.

### 4. Memorandum of Agreement

The Board noted that a new Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) renewing the partnership between the two institutions had been signed by ETS's Principal and UoG's Senior Vice-Principal in September 2018. A separate Data Sharing Agreement had also been signed by both institutions. This latter Agreement took account of recent changes to data protection legislation including the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

### 5. Maximum Duration of Study

The Board considered the issue of maximum duration of study for postgraduate programmes at ETS which had been raised at the previous meeting. This related to the circumstance whereby some part-time ETS MTh students had experienced difficulty in fulfilling the academic requirements of their programme within the normal permitted maximum duration of study owing to work commitments – typically undertaken in ministry-related roles. It also related to the extent to which suspensions, temporary withdrawals and extensions could be permitted within the normal maximum timeframe laid out in degree regulations for a particular programme.

The Clerk advised the Board that he had checked on this matter with the College of Arts Graduate School and research students enrolled at ETS would be subject to the same rules regarding extensions to maximum duration of study as UoG students, i.e. that they could request a suspension of up to two years if employment commitments required them to 'stop the clock' on their studies. During this time they would do no work on their studies. Members recalled that suspensions of this nature were rare; requests would be dealt with on a one-to-one basis and approval was subject to satisfactory academic progress having been made. It was observed that the potential negative impact that suspension could have on a student's engagement with study should not be underestimated, and that the most important consideration in such cases was that students were provided with clear guidance on the possible implications of having time away from study.

It was noted that the recently appointed Director of Postgraduate Studies at ETS, would arrange to liaise further with the College of Arts Graduate School on these and other related postgraduate matters.

The Clerk also undertook to establish what the normal permitted maximum duration of study was for each of the postgraduate programmes at ETS.

### 6. New Member of ETS Staff (Associate University Lecturer)

The Board **agreed to recommend** a new member of ETS staff to Academic Standards Committee for confirmation as an Associate University Lecturer (AUL), as detailed in **Appendix 2**.

Two other new members of ETS staff, also detailed in Appendix 2, had previously been approved as AULs by the former Clerk of Senate acting under delegated powers.

## **7. Annual Report from ETS for Session 2017-18**

### *7.1 Centre for Mission*

ETS's new Centre for Mission which hosts the new MTh in Missiology programme had opened at the beginning of session 2018-19 and welcomed a first cohort of six students. ETS considered this a strong enrolment in the programme's first session. The Centre had also begun to develop links with New College, University of Edinburgh which ETS considered would be a very beneficial relationship for both institutions going forward.

### *7.2 ETS Collegiality*

The Board was informed that staff and students at ETS enjoyed a very positive learning and teaching environment - one underpinned by a strong collegiate ethos. ETS members considered it particularly gratifying that this aspect had been remarked upon so positively in several of the commendations in the University's report of the validation event held in February 2018.

### *7.3 Distance-Learning*

The Board heard that distance-learning provision at ETS (delivered mainly through the BTh (Distance-Learning) programme) had continued successfully in session 2017-18. There had been further investment in technical infrastructure to improve the experience of remote study, both in established teaching spaces and in the new Centre for Mission. This had improved audio-visual capability and had provided the means by which students could interact in teaching sessions in real-time from remote locations. There had been some teething problems with the launch of the system but these had been largely remedied.

Noting that ETS members were reviewing options with regard to the functionality of the current distance-learning system, UoG members agreed to liaise with them on any relevant experience they might acquire of similar systems in future.

### *7.4 Staff Recruitment*

The Board heard that efforts continued to recruit a permanent academic member of staff to teach Scottish Church History and Theology at ETS. The institution was also aware of the need to recruit further administrative staff and this had become more pressing particularly in view of increasing student numbers at ETS.

### *7.5 Postgraduate Supervision*

The Board noted that ETS continued to examine ways by which it could improve the consistency and robustness of its processes with regard to postgraduate shared supervision with UoG. The issue of supervision had been highlighted by the panel at the validation event in February 2018 and ETS were taking steps to ensure that the necessary processes were applied rigorously. A new Director of Postgraduate Studies had recently been appointed at ETS and this would strengthen matters in this regard.

ETS could request supervisors from UoG under the terms of the validation relationship, but it was keen to avoid adding to the workload of academic staff at the University, if at all possible. It was noted that the role of second supervisors and the required frequency of staff/student meetings had been the subject of considerable discussion within Theology and Religious Studies over time, and it was recognised that second supervisors should meet with research students at least once per semester. It was noted that technological solutions could alleviate some of the problems associated with communication between student and supervisor over a distance. ETS would continue to work closely with relevant University staff regarding this matter.

### *7.6 Online Registration*

The Board heard that in view of the added workload that online registration placed on administrative staff, this facility at ETS would be opened earlier (in August) in future. Online registration at the beginning of the current session had been further impacted by the additional demands arising from the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

### *7.7 Graduate Employability*

ETS had recently introduced several initiatives aimed at improving graduate employability and this included the development of several short courses of a vocational nature. It was expected that the new Centre for Mission would have a positive impact on overall graduate employability at ETS owing to the vocational nature of much of its activity.

### *7.8 Student Feedback*

The Board was informed that although feedback from recent student surveys at ETS was very good and reflected a high level of engagement amongst the student body, ETS continued to examine ways by which it could improve response rates. To this end, ETS was arranging to trial electronic completion of surveys during lectures as a means of improving feedback.

### *7.9 Postgraduate Funding*

It was reported that ETS students continued to experience difficulty in securing funding to undertake postgraduate taught programmes. This was due mainly to the fact that the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) did not provide funding for postgraduate taught programmes delivered at non publicly funded institutions, such as ETS. This was challenging for ETS given that many of its potential postgraduate students were employed in the ministry, earned modest incomes and were largely reliant on external funding to support their studies.

It was noted that the overall funding situation for ETS students was alleviated to some extent by the successful efforts of the ETS Principal to secure financial support from patrons of the Seminary, both at home and abroad. ETS members considered that the availability of additional funding streams would almost certainly contribute to a significant expansion of the ETS postgraduate cohort. ETS would continue to explore other avenues through which postgraduate funding could be obtained.

### *7.10 Future Planning*

The Board heard that ETS's primary goal over the forthcoming academic session would be the consolidation of its existing position and offering. No major developments, either in terms of the institution itself or its academic provision, were planned for session 2018-19.

### *7.11 Female Student Engagement*

In response to a question raised by a member of the Board regarding the gender balance of teaching staff, it was confirmed that this had historically been approximately 10 male:1 female. This was due largely to the slow turnover of staff at ETS.

The Board also considered the means by which ETS elicited the views of female students, and stressed the importance that there be a specific channel through which they could express any concerns they might have. ETS members observed that given the size of the institution, the faculty were very attuned to the needs of the overall student population and did not feel that female students would have difficulty in raising any specific issues they might have. Whilst acknowledging the strong sense of community

that existed at ETS, the Board considered that this should not take away from the need for a separate forum for female students (potentially linked to the SRC).

The Board agreed that a feedback mechanism which was specifically for female students would offer a valuable additional channel of communication for the Student Voice. It was also suggested that when curriculum review was undertaken, consideration should be given to the extent to which the subject matter took account of a female perspective. On a related matter, members suggested that further consideration should be given to highlighting the profile of women in ETS's website and promotional material. The increased visibility of women in this regard could potentially aid the recruitment of female students.

## **8. Report from the ETS Student Representative**

The ETS Student Representative Council (SRC) President gave an update on the following matters of interest:

- The quality of teaching and level of commitment which ETS faculty staff demonstrated was greatly appreciated by the student body and the President considered that the level of access which students had to staff, on both a formal and informal basis, was excellent. Students felt their feedback was well received, and responded to, by staff;
- The pastoral support offered by all staff at ETS was considered to contribute significantly to the positive learning environment and strong community ethos at ETS. Opportunities for shared communal activities such as staff and students worshipping and eating meals together also contributed to a strong sense of fellowship. This was supplemented by initiatives such as the 'buddy system', whereby a third year student was paired with an incoming first year student to aid transition to the institution;
- All but one of the students who made use of the distance learning facilities at ETS did so in combination with physical attendance on campus, and the SRC President was personally in contact with that one external student on a regular basis to ensure that he did not feel excluded from the wider cohort;
- ETS continued to make efforts to broaden the appeal of its provision to female applicants and the new buddy system included provision for third year female students to be paired with first year female students. A new SRC committee, the remit of which focussed primarily on matters affecting the student experience of females within ETS, had also been introduced during the course of the last session;
- The ETS SRC had been very pleased with the number of students who had enrolled on the new MTh in Missiology programme, and considered that this cohort added considerably to the diversity and vitality of the ETS student body; and
- ETS students were very appreciative of the validation relationship with the University of Glasgow, not just in terms of the material support which this provided such as access to electronic resources which was vital to students' work, but also the opportunity it provided to obtain a highly valued University of Glasgow degree.

The ETS Vice-Principal observed that ETS greatly appreciated the continued support of staff from University Services, particularly that offered by staff from Disability Services. The Clerk reminded members that the University services and facilities which ETS students had access to was outlined in **Appendix 4** of the renewed UoG-ETS Memorandum of Agreement.

## **9. Convener's Business**

### *9.1 UoG Student Experience Committee*

The Convener noted the successful launch at the beginning of the session of the new UoG Student Experience Committee (SEC) under the co-convenership of Dr Duncan, the Chief Operating Officer and University Secretary, and Ms McDougall, President of the SRC. The SEC, which benefitted from strong student and staff representation as well as the advice of lay members from the University's governing body (Court), would be instrumental in enhancing many aspects of the UoG student experience going forward.

### *9.2 Campus Redevelopment*

The Convener updated the Board on the redevelopment of the University's Gilmorehill campus which was now well under way. This included the on-going construction of the first building due to be delivered as part of the redevelopment programme - the James McCune Smith Learning Hub on University Avenue which was due to be completed in session 2019-20. She noted that the Gilmorehill campus would undergo a marked transformation over the next few years and it was hoped the redevelopment would help cement the University's reputation as a key driver of innovation and change both within the city of Glasgow and nationally.

**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
  - (d) Master of Theology in Missiology
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 2018-19**

*University of Glasgow*

Clerk of Senate (Convener)	Professor Jill Morrison
Head of College of Arts (or nominee)	Professor Nick Fells
Representative from the School of Critical Studies	Professor Charlotte Methuen
Representative from the School of Critical Studies	Dr Sean Adams
Representative from the College of Arts	Professor Nick Fells
SRC President (or nominee)	Ms Nina Donald
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	Dr Alistair Wilson
President of the ETS SRC	Mr Robin Gray

**In attendance**

Academic Collaborations Office (Minute taker)	Mr Graeme Shedden
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## **New Members of ETS Staff (Associate University Lecturers)**

### **For approval by ASC:**

New member of ETS staff nominated as an Associate University Lecturer.

- **Dr Andrew G Bannister**

PhD, London School of Theology (Brunel)

BA in Theology (First Class Honours), London School of Theology)

### **For Note by ASC:**

New members of ETS staff approved as Associate University Lecturers by the Clerk of Senate under delegated powers (July 2018).

- **Rev Dominic Smart**

BSc Geography (First Class Honours), University of Aberdeen

BD (First Class Honours), University of Aberdeen

MTh, University of Aberdeen

Advanced Personal Leadership Programme Alumnus, Henley Business School

Professional Certificate in Coaching, Henley Business School.

- **Rev Thomas Davis**

BA Social Sciences with Economics and Politics, The Open University

Diploma in Politics and Governance, The Open University

BTh (with Distinction), Edinburgh Theological Seminary

MTh (by Research), Edinburgh Theological Seminary. Thesis completed (due to graduate in November 2018).