Taught Programme External Examiners Procedure for Raising Concerns

1. Imperial College London generally has positive interactions with its many external examiners and values greatly the input they provide into our quality assurance processes. The College gives full and serious consideration to the comments and recommendations received. Imperial recognises however that occasionally an external examiner may have a particular concern that they wish to raise outside the confines of the general reporting arrangements. This procedure outlines the action that external examiners can take to raise issues with the College.

2. Discussion of Concern with Department

2.1. External examiners are encouraged to raise any concerns they may have at the earliest opportunity with the relevant College Department. Issues relating to the programme for which the external examiner is examining should be raised with the Board Chair in the first instance. Any concerns regarding central external examiner administration (the issuing of contracts and payment of expenses and fees) should be directed to the Assistant Registrar (Senate & Academic Review) at external.examiner@imperial.ac.uk

2.2. In many cases concerns can be addressed by the relevant College Department immediately. Depending on the nature of the issue, the external examiner may also wish to note this at the Board of Examiners’ meeting and/or in their annual report regardless of whether it was subsequently addressed/resolved.

2.3. External examiners may also raise matters of serious concern, which have not been resolved at Departmental level, with the College’s Provost – please see section (4) below.

3. External Examiner Report

3.1. The College requires Departments to make a formal response to the feedback provided by external examiners in their annual reports. The external examiner report form is available to download from the external examiner website.

3.2. The external examiner reports, and Departmental responses to them, are considered by the relevant Faculty Education Committees as part of the Department’s annual monitoring report(s). These Committees are responsible for ensuring that Departments have responded adequately to external examiner feedback and are taking action as appropriate. External examiners receive feedback on their reports which comprises an individual response to their report from the relevant Department.

3.3. It is hoped that any points of concern, highlighted by external examiners, will be satisfactorily addressed by the relevant Department at this stage. It should be noted that the College may not always agree with the comments made by
its external examiners and may choose not to take forward recommendations. Reasons for this will be documented in the feedback sent to external examiners.

3.4. Should an external examiner find that not all points raised have been satisfactorily addressed by the relevant Department and/or by the College, they should contact the Assistant Registrar (Senate and Academic Review) at external.examiner@imperial.ac.uk who shall ensure that a further response is provided.

4. **Raising Serious Concerns with the College's Provost**

4.1. Should an external examiner wish to raise a matter of serious concern with the College’s Provost they should complete a Confidential Serious Concerns Report Form. The Confidential Serious Concerns Report Form is available to download from the external examiner website.

4.2. A confidential serious concerns report may be submitted at any time.

4.3. The Provost, or his/her nominee, shall consider the report and decide how best to take matters forward. The Head of the relevant Department will be informed of the existence of such a report and may be sent the full report for comment if the external examiner agrees to this. An external examiner can expect to receive an initial response from the Provost or his/her nominee to their confidential serious concerns report within 10 working days of receipt of the form.

4.4. The College will keep the external examiner informed of action taken in response to their confidential serious concerns report and will confirm when it considers the matter to be resolved.

4.5. The existence of such a report and the action arising from the report will be reported to the relevant Faculty Education Committee but the content will not be disclosed.

4.6. Confidential serious concerns reports will not be published on the College’s intranet.

5. **HEFCE Unsatisfactory Quality Scheme**

5.1. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) operates an Unsatisfactory Quality Scheme (UQS). The UQS can be invoked by external examiners who have concerns which relate to one of the following:

- the academic standards set by a provider, or the achievement of students as measured against those standards; or

- the quality of the student academic experience delivered by a provider, including the reliability of information published about the academic experience, and have exhausted all published internal procedures for raising their concerns with the institution.
5.2. Under the terms of the UQS it is expected that the issue will have been raised with the provider prior to HEFCE’s involvement, and the opportunity given for the matter to be resolved locally unless there is a clear reason for this not being possible.

5.3. The UQS will only consider concerns that are serious or systemic in nature and that relate to, affect, or have the potential to affect:

- a number of students, including where the student academic experience does not meet the reasonable expectations of a group of students; or
- the collective student interest; or
- the reputation of the sector as a whole

5.4. There may be occasions where it would be more appropriate for a concern to be raised with the relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body than HEFCE. Accreditation details for the College’s programmes are available from the Assistant Registrar (Senate & Academic Review) at external.examiner@imperial.ac.uk