Present
Professor Sue Gibson (Chair)
Mr Mike Asavarut (Academic and Welfare Officer – Medicine)
Professor Steve Gentleman (Department of Medicine)
Dr Niki Gounaris (Department of Life Sciences)
Dr Mick Jones (College Tutor)
Dr Martyn Kingsbury (School of Professional Development)
Professor Myra McClure (College Consul (non-clinical), Faculty of Medicine)
Professor Andrew Parry (College Consul, Faculty of Natural Sciences)
Dr Duncan Rogers (NHLI)

In Attendance
Ms Sally Baker (Senior Assistant Registrar, Senate and Academic Review)
Mr Bojan Cvijan (Quality Assurance Administrator, Senate and Academic Review)
Professor Michael Lovett (NHLI) – for item 5
Dr Jane Saffell (Academic Lead for Master’s Programmes, Faculty of Medicine) – for item 5
Dr Eleanor Sheppard (Faculty of Medicine) – for item 5
Professor Sue Smith (NHLI) – for item 5
Mr Matthew Sweeting (Quality Assurance Administrator, Quality Assurance and Enhancement)

Apologies for absence
Dr Christine Franey (School of Public Health) [and alternate]
Professor Kate Hardy (Department of Surgery and Cancer)
Professor Debra Humphris (Vice Provost, Education)
Mr Pascal Loose (ICU Deputy President, Education)
Dr David McPhail (Graduate School Deputy Director & Deputy Chair)
Ms Nida Mahmud (GSU President)
Mr Richard Monk (Assistant Registrar, Senate and Academic Review)
Mr Dean Pateman (Academic Registrar)
Ms Rachel Vaux (Academic and Welfare Officer – Life Sciences)
Professor Denis Wright (Director of Student Support)

1. Welcome
Professor Sue Gibson welcomed members to the meeting and apologies, as listed above, were noted.

2. Minutes of the last meeting
The minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2015 were approved.

MLSPD/MQC/2014/40
3. **Matters arising**

3.1 The Committee received and noted an action list detailing matters arising from the previous meeting and containing updates on progress in completing the required action.

4. **Terms of Reference**

4.1 The Committee received and noted the terms of reference for the academic year 2015/16.

4.2 It was noted that the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee was expected to approve a proposal whereby new external examiner appointments would be approved by the Vice Provost (Education), or delegate, rather than by the relevant Quality Committees, with effect from October 2015. Consequently this function would be removed from the terms of reference to reflect this.

**ACTION:** Richard Monk

4.3 It was noted that the Committee would continue to consider external examiner reports which required further action to be taken, and that the terms of reference would be amended to reflect this.

**ACTION:** Richard Monk

**ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

5. **New Programme Proposals - PG Cert / PG Dip / MSc in Genomic Medicine (National Heart & Lung Institute)**

5.1 The Committee considered a proposal from the National Heart & Lung Institute to introduce a new MSc programme in Genomic Medicine, with effect from October 2015. The programme would include a Postgraduate Certificate and a Postgraduate Diploma, and some modules could also be offered as standalone short courses (both with and without assessment) via the continuing professional development route.

**ACTION:** Richard Monk

5.2 It was noted that the proposed programme would be offered on a modular and flexible basis. The MSc programme would be offered on a full-time basis over 1 calendar year (12 months) and on a part-time basis over 2 calendar years (24 months). The Postgraduate Certificate would be offered on a full-time basis over 4 months and on a part-time basis pro-rata (between 5-12 months). The Postgraduate Diploma would be offered on a full-time basis over 8 months and on a part-time basis pro-rata (between 9-24 months). The blended teaching format of one-week face-to-face teaching blocks coupled with online learning for the majority of modules would minimise the need for teaching space.

5.3 Full-time students would register for the qualification with which they wished to exit, either Postgraduate Certificate, Postgraduate Diploma or MSc. Part-time students would register for the Postgraduate Certificate in the first instance and progress to the other awards should they so wish. Students may also exit after completion of the Certificate or Diploma and return to the programme in a subsequent academic year, using the credit gained to contribute towards the higher award, in accordance with the programme and College regulations, and at an appropriate time to be agreed by the Programme Director. The Certificate and Diploma would also be available as honourable exit qualifications provided that students had met the requirements for the award.
5.4 It was noted that the proposal included three new collaborative modules to be delivered by the Institute for Cancer Research (providing the core Cancer Genomics Module), Buckinghamshire New University (collaborating on the optional Workplace-Based Module), and Brunel University London (providing the optional Economic Evaluation in Human Genomics Module). It was noted that the Institute of Cancer Research and Brunel University London may also co-supervise research projects. The Committee was asked to consider approving the partnerships for the provision of the three collaborative modules. The Committee was advised to reflect on the academic content and delivery of the collaborative modules and on their significance within the programme as a whole.

5.5 The Committee commended the Programme Team on the well-defined learning outcomes for the programme, and on the blended learning model which had been developed. The Committee highlighted that the online learning necessarily involved a high level of self-direction and were pleased to note that the students would be guided towards greater independence by careful scaffolding of the online material, so that they would build skills and confidence as well as greater subject understanding as they progressed through each module.

The Committee welcomed Professor Sue Smith, Dr Jane Saffell, Professor Michael Lovett and Dr Eleanor Sheppard who had been invited to present the proposal.

5.6 Professor Lovett explained that the programme had been commissioned by Health Education England (HEE), Genomics England Ltd and the NHS in line with an identified need for training of healthcare professionals in genomic medicine. The programme would provide healthcare professionals with training that would be directly relevant to their careers and to the Government’s 100 Thousand Genomes Project, which was expected to transform healthcare in the coming years.

5.7 It was noted that the MSc programme would consist of seven compulsory modules, one optional module from a choice of six and an independent research project. The Postgraduate Diploma would consist of seven compulsory modules and one optional module from a choice of six. Postgraduate Certificate students would be required to complete the Core Concepts module and three further modules, one of which could be from the list of six optional modules. Taught modules would be assessed via a range of different assessment methods including coursework, examination and practical assessment. The MSc research project would largely be assessed by a written report but would also include a presentation to a mixed student and lay audience, an oral assessment with two internal examiners and supervisor assessment of research and analytical skills.

5.8 It was re-iterated that the programme would be offered via a blended learning model to incorporate both face-to-face and e-learning opportunities. For the majority of modules, students would typically undertake an intensive one week (30 hours) set of face-to-face sessions with a tutor followed by three weeks (30 hours) of directed e-learning. However, it was noted that the Research and Professional Skills module was completely online based.

5.9 The Committee was keen to explore the way in which the e-learning aspect of the programme was structured. Professor Lovett explained that the e-learning elements would be hosted on Blackboard. This would include an introductory video, self-tests at the beginning and end of the module, a primer setting out pre-reading and key concepts, lecture recordings of face-to-face sessions, discussion boards and frequently asked questions dropboxes for module leaders. Relevant academic staff members would monitor the question/discussion boards and respond to any student queries. Most modules also contained game-based online Virtual Patients’ Genomic Journeys chapters where students would be able to trial decision-making theory in practice and learn from the ensuing consequences encountered. Other online chapters would include filmed lectures, animated diagrams, quizzes, voice-overs, collated resources, reflective logs and case studies.
5.10 The Programme Team explained that the Faculty had expertise and experience in delivering on-line learning programmes and the Committee advised that all teaching staff associated with the new programme should be encouraged and supported in personal development in this area.

5.11 Mr Asavarut was invited to comment on the e-learning format from a student perspective. It was suggested that, due to the isolated nature of online learning, there may be a potential issue with regard to student integration and interaction. In response, it was noted that students would have the opportunity to engage with module leaders and with their peers via the discussion forums and sessions conducted via Skype. It was noted that the first week of each module would be a set of intensive face-to-face sessions on campus, which would encourage integration between students. There would also be other opportunities and events throughout the year which would allow students to interact with one another directly. In addition, the students would be integrated into the NHLI cohort building programme and would be a part of the Faculty of Medicine Master’s student community.

5.12 It was observed that HEE funding required the programme to be offered with start dates in March and October. Subsequent to the meeting it was confirmed that the two start dates would be offered in 2016 and 2017 only and that the programme would revert to one entry (March) from 2018. The permanent March start date would offer better access to teaching space.

5.13 In response to enquiries from the Committee, it was confirmed that module leaders and teaching staff appeared eager to be involved and were very enthusiastic about the programme.

5.14 It was noted that applicants without the appropriate academic requirements would be considered for entry via the ‘Special Qualifying Exam’ (SQE) route. The Programme Team reported that not that many applicants were likely to seek entry via this route and confirmed that they would make reference to approved SQE formats already in use in the Faculty prior to setting their own.

5.15 The Committee commented that the number of examinations and assessments on the programme seemed high. It was suggested that, whilst this may be appropriate for students studying part-time who may benefit from individual assessments of taught modules, it may be particularly challenging for students on the full-time programme. The Programme Team responded that the module assessments had been designed to align with the learning outcomes and to be equivalent in terms of student effort across all modules. As such the Programme Team were confident that the assessment format was appropriate.

5.16 The Committee observed from the programme outline of modules across the year that students following the MSc programme on a part-time basis would be required to start their research project whilst still having three core taught modules to complete. This would mean not only would part-time students be required to complete three core taught modules whilst undertaking their research project, but also they could be disadvantaged if they elected to complete a research project in one of these areas. The Programme Team responded that this was an issue which was being addressed, and agreed that students would be appropriately counselled with regard to their choice of research project and the balance of work across the second year.

5.17 The Committee asked for further information on the reasons for selecting Brunel University London and Buckinghamshire New University as collaborative module partners. The Programme Team explained that, in both cases, the collaborative modules proposed were in areas where the two universities had particular teaching strengths that would supplement the teaching at Imperial.
5.18 It was reported that Brunel University London had an excellent reputation in provision for allied health professionals, and that their teaching strengths in this area would complement Imperial’s expertise in medical and biomedical education. The partnership with the Health Economics Research Group would strengthen the programme and attract a greater number of students from across the allied health professions due to Brunel’s strong links with non-medical health professions.

5.19 It was reported that nursing was a priority research area at Buckinghamshire New University. Imperial had been approached the university for support with the development of a workplace based learning module in particular. This module was seen as a very valuable addition to the Genomic Medicine programme, particularly for students on the Certificate and Diploma, and Imperial did not have the relevant expertise to offer this module alone. Buckinghamshire New University had extensive experience in offering workplace based learning to nurses and other allied health professionals, and the partnership would strengthen the programme and would also serve to attract a greater number of allied health professionals, particularly nurses, than if Imperial ran it alone.

5.20 The Committee was satisfied with the rationale for the choice of collaborative module partners as described by the Programme team and asked that the programme proposal be amended to reflect that the selection had been made based on their expertise in the selected areas.

**ACTION: Programme Team**

5.21 After detailed discussion with the Programme Team and subsequent deliberation by the Committee, it was agreed that the Postgraduate Certificate / Postgraduate Diploma / MSc in Genomic Medicine should be recommended for approval by Senate, to commence in October 2015, subject to the revisions to the new partner collaborative module forms as discussed under section 5.19 (above).

5.22 The Committee agreed to recommend that Senate should approve (i) the Oncogenetics Department, Institute of Cancer Research, as a collaborative module partner for “Molecular Pathology of Cancer and Application in Cancer Diagnosis, Screening, and Treatment” module; (ii) the Health Economics Research Group, Brunel University London, as a collaborative module partner for “Economic Evaluation in Human Genomics” module and (iii) the School of Advanced Healthcare Practice, Buckinghamshire New University, as a collaborative module partner for “Work-place Based Learning” joint module.

5.23 The Committee noted that individual collaborative module agreements for each collaborative module would be required.

6. **Programme Suspension**

6.1 MRes in Clinical Research [Clinical Research Design and Management] (Department of Medicine)

6.1.1 The Committee considered a request from the Department of Medicine to suspend entry to the Clinical Research Design and Management pathway within the MRes in Clinical Research, from entry in October 2015, for one academic year.

**MLSPD/MQC/2014/44**

6.1.2 The Committee noted that the request had been made to allow the Department to consider the long term sustainability of the pathway.

6.1.3 The Committee approved the request on the basis that current students would be supported until the completion of their programme and that there were no applicants holding offers or deferred offers of places on the programme.
7. Routine Programme Reviews 2013-14

7.1 MSc in Health Policy (Department of Surgery and Cancer)

7.1.1 The Committee considered the review of the MSc in Health Policy in respect of the 2013-14 part-time cohort.

MLSPD/MQC/2014/45

7.1.2 The Committee noted the reviewer’s comments that the programme had been difficult to review on the basis of the documentation provided. The Committee noted that the application and enrolment data presented had required significant clarification and that evidence of student representation on Staff-Student Committees, accurate minutes of meetings and confirmation of action taken in response to student feedback had been lacking.

7.1.3 The Committee was concerned to note the high number of students taking interruptions and deferrals in study. The Committee noted that the student profile for the programme meant that this was not unexpected, but was keen to ensure that robust feedback mechanisms were in place to support students with NHS and other external commitments.

7.1.4 The Committee noted that a new team had taken over the management of the programme in May 2014 and that many new procedures been implemented which had started to make overall improvements to the programme. The Committee noted that the reviewer had considered the action proposed in response to the external examiner’s report to be comprehensive and that positive action had been taken to address the need for a more streamlined mechanism for student feedback.

7.1.5 The reviewer had commented that the student handbook was well designed and comprehensive and that overall the student feedback had been positive.

7.1.6 It was agreed that the Programme Directors’ response had addressed the comments made by the reviewer. In addition, it was noted that the reviewer had been sent a copy of the quarterly update programme report (December 2014) which described the developments, planned and implemented. The Committee agreed that considerable efforts were being made to improve the running of the programme and the student experience. The programme had been rated as ‘Satisfactory’ by the reviewer and this grading was endorsed by the Committee on the basis that significant improvements were in progress.

7.1.7 The Committee agreed that some follow up action was required as follows:

(i) The Management Team was asked to provide evidence that the proposed streamlined mechanisms for providing timely feedback to students had been implemented and were properly documented before the start of the 2015-16 academic session.

(ii) The Management Team was asked to consider the appointment of a second external examiner in view of the large number of students progressing and graduating each year.

(iii) The Management Team was asked to encourage student representation at programme and faculty level and to take advice from the Graduate School on cohort building.

(iv) The Management Team was asked to submit data on the number of students admitted through the special cases route, identifying the reason for the special case and the progress/outcome for each student admitted by this route.

(v) The Management Team was asked to submit a full set of Staff-Student Committee minutes for review in June 2016.

The Committee requested that the Management Team should report on items (i) – (iv) above in October 2015, and on item (v) in June 2016.
8. External Examiners

8.1 Summary of External Examiner Reports on Master’s Level Programmes in 2013-14

8.1.1 The Committee received and considered the summary of external examiner reports for Master’s Level Programmes in 2013-14. It was noted that the overwhelming majority of reports had been complimentary, with positive feedback on the academic quality of the programmes and the quality of education provided to students. A substantial number of reports had commended the staff responsible for the programmes on the high quality of the educational experience provided to students.

MLSPD/MQC/2014/46

8.1.2 The Committee noted the aspects of good practice which had been highlighted and encouraged members to discuss and disseminate these within their respective departments.

8.1.3 The Committee noted also the items which had been highlighted for further consideration, in particular issues concerning the evidencing of second marking, the lack of consistency of examination papers and model answers and the variation in the level of project supervision.

8.2 Reports from External Examiners 2013-14

8.2.1 The Committee was reminded that, following the recently revised process for the consideration of external examiner reports (Paper MSLDP/MQC/2014/38 of 17 March 2015 refers), reports which had been highlighted by the Vice-Provost (Education) for further action would be reported to the Committee as appropriate.

8.2.2 The Committee received and considered external examiner reports highlighted for further review in respect of the 2013-14 academic year, together with departmental responses to these.

MLSPD/MQC/2014/47

8.2.3 MSc Health Policy
It was noted that the programme team had responded fully to the issues identified by the external examiner and had provided a thorough progress report in response to the request from the Vice-Provost (Education). It was noted that further progress would be reported to the Committee in October to evidence the effectiveness of the measures put in place to address issues identified during the recent programme review (minute 7.1 above refers). The Committee was satisfied with the progress report provided by the programme team.

8.2.4 MSc Human Molecular Genetics
It was noted that the programme team had responded fully to the issues identified by the external examiner and had provided a thorough progress report in response to the request from the Vice-Provost (Education). It was noted that the practice of "serial marking" was aligned with College policy. The Committee was satisfied with the progress report provided by the programme team.

8.2.5 MSc Molecular Biology and Pathology of Viruses
It was noted that the programme team had provided further reassurances about the supervision arrangements as requested by the Vice-Provost (Education) and the Committee was satisfied with the additional procedures put in place by the programme team.

8.2.6 MEd in Surgical Education
It was noted that the programme team had provided a very clear action plan in response to the comments of the external examiner and the request from the Vice-Provost (Education). It was noted that work was in-going towards a major restructuring of the programme which was expected to address all of the current concerns. The Committee was satisfied with the action plan provided by the programme team.
8.2.7  **MSc Taxonomy and Biodiversity**

It was noted that the programme team had responded fully to the request from the Vice-Provost (Education) and had taken appropriate action to address the comments of the external examiner. The Committee was satisfied with the action taken by the programme team.

8.3  **External Examiners due to be replaced for the 2015-16 academic year**

8.3.1  The Committee received and noted the list of external examiners who were due to complete their maximum four year term of office at the end of the 2014-15 academic year and who would therefore need to be replaced for 2015-16.

8.3.2  Members were asked to seek replacements well in advance of the next academic year. It was noted that the list was available on the Registry website. [http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/qualityassurance/externalexamining](http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/qualityassurance/externalexamining)

8.3.3  It was reported that the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee was expected to approve a proposal whereby new external examiner appointments would, in future, be approved by the Vice Provost (Education), or delegate, rather than by the Quality Committees (minute 4.2 above refers).

8.4  **Appointment of External Examiners for 2015-16**

8.4.1  The Committee received, for consideration, the nomination of an external examiner for the new MSc Genes, Drugs and Stem Cells – Novel Therapies programme due to commence in October 2015.

8.4.2  The Committee approved the appointment of the new external examiner as presented in paper 49 [see appendix 1, not published with the minutes]. The Committee was satisfied that the new external examiner thus approved had sufficient postgraduate teaching experience. On this occasion, the external examiner did not have prior external examining experience. The Committee approved the appointment on the basis that the Department had proposed suitable mentoring and training arrangements to support the examiner in his first year.

9.  **New Programme Progress Reports**

9.1  **MRes Biomedical Research**

The Committee received a verbal report on behalf of the Department of Surgery and Cancer representative on the first year of operation of three new streams within the MRes in Biomedical Research programme as follows:

9.1.1  **MRes in Biomedical Research (Anaesthetics, Pain Medicine and Intensive Care)**

Five students had been admitted for the first year, and this had been in line with initial expectations. There had been no issues with assessment and the standard of coursework submitted by the students to date had been uniformly high (distinction level). No issues had been identified by the programme organisers and feedback from the students had been good overall. The programme team reported that the new stream was running well.

9.1.2  **MRes in Biomedical Research (Epidemiology, Evolution and Control of Infectious Diseases)**

Seven students had been admitted for the first year, all funded on 1+3 programmes and this had been in line with initial expectations. There had been no issues with assessment and the standard of coursework submitted by the students to date had been high (six of distinction level). No issues had been identified by the programme organisers and feedback from the students had been good - excellent overall. The programme team reported that the new stream was running well.
9.1.3 **MRes in Biomedical Research (Microbiome in Health and Disease)**
Four students had been admitted for the first year and this had been in line with initial expectations. There had been no issues with assessment and the standard of coursework submitted by the students to date had been high (three of distinction level). No issues had been identified by the programme organisers and feedback from the students had been good overall. The programme team reported that the new stream was running well.

9.2 **Postgraduate Certificate in Reproductive and Developmental Biology**
The Committee received a verbal report on behalf of the Department of Surgery and Cancer representative on the first year of operation of the new Postgraduate Certificate in reproductive and Developmental Biology programme as follows:

9.2.1 One student had been admitted for the first year and this had been in line with initial expectations. It was hoped that recruitment would now expand steadily. There had been no issues with assessment and the standard of coursework submitted by the student had been high (distinction level). No issues had been identified by the programme organiser who reported that the programme was running well, in line with the full-time MSc programme in Reproductive and Developmental Biology.

10. **Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) 2014**
10.1 The Committee received and considered the action plan from the Department of Life Sciences.

10.2 The Committee agreed that the action plan was satisfactory and had proposed appropriate action to address the issues identified.

11. **Reports from Departmental Representatives**
11.1 The NHLI representative reported that the preparations for the new MSc programme in Genes, Genes and Stem Cells – Novel Therapies was going well in advance of the October 2015 start date.

**ITEMS FOR INFORMATION AND/OR DISSEMINATION**

12. **Action taken on behalf of the Committee**
12.1 The Committee noted action taken by the Chair to approve the suspension of the MSc Bioinformatics & Theoretical Systems Biology [1+3 programme] (Department of Life Sciences) for one academic year, from entry in October 2015. The Committee noted that reassurances had been received from the Department that students currently enrolled on the programme would be supported to completion and that there were no applicants currently holding offers.

12.2 The Committee noted that action had been taken by the Chair to approve the recommendation to Senate for the introduction of the new stream in data science within the MRes in Biomedical Research (Department of Surgery and Cancer), consequent on reassurances having been received from the Director of the Data Science Institute that there was no perceived conflict of interest in the use of "data science" in the programme title.

12.3 The Committee noted that action had been taken by the Chair to approve the recommendation to Senate for the modifications to the MSc programme in Immunology (Department of Medicine) with effect from entry in October 2015.

12.4 The Committee noted that action had been taken by the Chair to approve the recommendation to Senate for the change of name of the MSc and Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Therapeutic Strategies to the **MSc and Postgraduate Certificate in Genes, Drugs and Stem Cells – Novel Therapies**, with effect from entry in October 2015. The Committee noted that reassurances had been received from the NHLI that there were no applicants currently holding offers who would need to be consulted on the change of name.
12.5 The Committee noted that action had been taken by the Chair to approve the appointment of external examiners for the 2014-15 academic session [see appendix 1, not published with the minutes]. The Committee noted that the Chair had been satisfied that the new external examiners thus approved had sufficient postgraduate teaching experience and sufficient external examining experience. Where an external examiner did not have sufficient external examining experience the Chair had been satisfied that the Department had made appropriate arrangements for them to be supported by an experienced external examiner.

The Committee noted the programmes which had been granted dispensation from holding anonymous meetings of the Final Board of Examiners for the two year period 2014-2016.

Members were reminded that, in all cases, the approval had been given for the maximum two year period.

14. Senate
The Committee noted that the latest executive summaries from the Senate were available here.

15. Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee
The Committee noted that the latest executive summaries from the QAEC were available here.

16. Postgraduate Professional Development Committee
The Committee received and noted the minutes of the Postgraduate Professional Development Committee held on 25 February 2015.

17. Any Other Business
17.1 The Committee noted that Dr David McPhail was stepping down as Deputy Director of the Graduate School at the end of the summer. The Committee thanked Dr McPhail for his valuable contributions and commitment to the work of the Graduate School and of the Postgraduate Quality Committees over the past four years.

17.2 The Committee expressed their thanks to the outgoing student representatives for their valuable contributions to the MQC over the course of their tenure.

17.3 The Committee noted that Ms Sally Baker, Senior Assistant Registrar (Senate and Academic Review) would be leaving the College at the end of July. The Committee expressed their thanks to Ms Baker for her dedication to the smooth running of the Committee over many years, and wished her well.

17.4 The outgoing student representatives recorded their thanks to the Postgraduate Quality Committees for their work in support of the postgraduate student experience at Imperial.

18. Dates of meetings in 2014-15
Members were reminded that the meeting scheduled to take place on Tuesday 14 July 2015 had been cancelled.

19. Dates of meetings in 2015-16
Dates of meetings in 2015 – 2016 were noted as follows:

Thursday 12 November 2015, 2pm – 5pm – Meeting Room 1, Level 5, Sherfield Building
Thursday 21 January 2016, 2pm – 5pm – Ballroom, 58 Prince’s Gate
Tuesday 22 March 2016, 10am – 1pm – Ballroom, 58 Prince’s Gate
Thursday 26 May 2016, 2pm – 5pm – Drawing Room, 170 Queen’s Gate

20. Reserved Business
There was no reserved business on this occasion.