

Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC)

Minutes from the meeting held on
Wednesday 22 April 2020

Present

David Ashton, Academic Registrar – Chair

Ashley Brooks, ICU Deputy President (Education)

Dr Lorraine Craig, Faculty of Engineering representative

Mohit Devgan, GSU President

Laura Lane, Head of Strategy and Operations, Graduate School

Jonathan Mestel, College Consul (on behalf of Professor Peter Openshaw)

Claire Stapley, CLCC/CHERS representative

Karen Tweddle, Business School representative

Rebecca Middleton, Faculty of Natural Sciences representative

Dr Amir San, Faculty of Medicine representative (on behalf of Martin Lupton)

Judith Webster, Director of Academic Quality and Standards

Scott Tucker, Deputy Director (Academic Quality and Standards) - Secretary

In Attendance

Mike Horner, Education Service Line Manager, ICT [Item 5.1]

Emma Rabin, Assistant Registrar, Quality Assurance and Enhancement

Dr Jeffrey Vernon, Faculty of Medicine

Apologies

Veronica Russell, Business School representative

Martin Lupton, Faculty of Medicine representative

Professor Peter Openshaw, Senior College Consul

1. Welcome, apologies and announcements

1.1 The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting, noting apologies for absence.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

QAEC.2019.46

2.1 The Committee confirmed the minutes of 26 February 2020 as an accurate record.

3. Review of Committee actions

QAEC.2019.47

3.1 The Committee received an update on the following action from the previous meeting:

(i) Programme and Module Modification Procedure (3.2.1 refers)

- Meetings have taken place between the Quality Assurance Team and Faculty Education Managers to gain Faculty feedback
- A revised Programme and Module Modification Procedure will be considered at Programmes Committee (by correspondence) and then QAEC on 3 June.

3.2 It was noted that the action log needed to be updated. This would be completed by the Secretary and reviewed at the next meeting.

4. Matters arising from the minutes

4.1 No matters arising.

5. Academic Regulations and Policy

5.1 Draft Taught Student Attendance Monitoring Policy

QAEC.2019.48

5.1.1 The Committee considered the draft Policy. It is intended that the Policy will apply to all students enrolled on taught programmes and sets out how the College will monitor student attendance and engagement. The Policy will support the College in identifying students who may be experiencing difficulties and might need additional academic or pastoral support.

5.1.2 The following points were noted:

- It was felt that Section A (the 'Policy') needs to be agreed before Section B (the 'Project').
- It was reported by the Education Service Line Manager (ICT) that the attendance monitoring project has not been given priority status as a result of the College's response to COVID-19.
- The definition of student engagement needs to reflect increases in multi-mode learning and be supportive of the changing student landscape.
- Some departments currently specify a minimum attendance requirement (e.g. 80%), often as a result of PSRB accreditation. However, the Committee felt that setting a threshold as College level was not appropriate.
- There is already an attendance policy in place in the Faculty of Medicine but it is not possible to implement this due to the lack of reliable attendance data.
- The Committee agreed that a College Policy is appropriate but that there should be sufficient flexibility so ensure that departmental and programme differences are recognised.
- The Committee welcomed the supportive framing of the Policy in terms of student wellbeing.

5.1.3 The draft Policy will be circulated to FECs for consultation, ensuring that student feedback is collected. A revised version will be considered at QAEC on 3 June.

Action: Director of Academic Quality and Standards / Secretary

6. Surveys

6.1 Coordination of student surveys during COVID-19

QAEC.2019.49

6.1.1 The College's Registry coordinates a number of student surveys including SOLE and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PTES). The Committee discussed the management of these surveys during COVID-19 and considered the pros and cons of continuing to run the surveys as planned, as set out in the discussion paper.

6.1.2 QAEC agreed to extend the closing date for Spring SOLE to Thursday 21 May. This will allow further opportunity to promote the survey and increase participation rates.

6.1.3 QAEC agreed to run Summer SOLE as planned (26 May – 22 June). The Education Service Line Manager agreed to explore the option of using Qualtrics to deliver Summer SOLE due to the issues associated with running Student Viewpoint remotely.

Action: Secretary

6.1.4 QAEC agreed to run PTES as planned (14 May – 12 June).

7 Monitoring and Evaluation

7.1 UG Annual Monitoring Faculty Reports

QAEC.2019.50

7.1.1 The College received Faculty Level Annual Monitoring Reports and noted the following enhancements to the process, which were implemented following Faculty feedback:

- Draft Departmental annual monitoring reports must be discussed with student representatives and updated, if required, to reflect this dialogue
- Departments are not required to complete a separate National Student Survey (NSS) action plan; any actions arising from this source should be included in annual monitoring action plans.

7.1.2 Departments were able to view annual monitoring data through Differential Outcomes dashboards in PowerBI, developed by Strategic Planning. The Dashboards were well received and assisted users in identifying where there are success and attainment gaps between different groups of students. They bring together and make available to users a number of analyses which are produced on an annual basis. The measures shown on the dashboard are intended to align with those used externally, in particular those associated with the Access and Participation Plan (APP) and the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF).

7.1.3 The Committee discussed the UG Faculty Annual Monitoring Reports. The reports highlighted areas of good practice. These included:

- Student voice – an increasing number of Departments are systematically building in opportunities for students to engage with curriculum development
- Equality and diversity – unconscious bias and active bystander training in cohorts
- Learning and teaching - use of education technology to diversify delivery methods

7.1.4 The reports also highlighted those areas in which enhancements could be made to improve the experience of students on their programmes of study. These included:

- Space – a need for refurbished teaching spaces, more flexible teaching spaces and increased capacity in rooms
- AV – better quality systems required in certain areas
- Banner implementation – issues with timing and workload reported

Overall, the process continues to ensure College oversight of academic standards and that appropriate action is being taken at all levels to enhance the quality of the student academic experience.

A College Summary will be presented at the next meeting.

7.2 Proposal for PGT Annual Monitoring during COVID-19

QAEC.2019.51

7.2.1 The move to offering remote timed assessments, and the support and guidance required to implement these alternative arrangements has increased the workload for both academic staff and professional services, within departments and centrally. Acknowledging the ongoing significant work required to support students through this crisis, the Committee discussed a revised annual monitoring process for PGT programmes this academic year.

Whilst the College requires Departments and Faculties to submit monitoring reports on an annual basis, it is recognised that evaluating the performance of programmes and thus safeguarding academic standards and quality of provision is a continuous activity that takes place throughout the year. As a result, the Committee agreed that updated action plans are submitted by each department and that the full annual monitoring report is not required. It was felt that this is a proportionate approach to take during COVID-19 and allows departments to allocate resource where it is most needed during this period.

7.3 PGT External Examiner Summary Report

QAEC.2019.52

7.3.1 It was noted that a new online portal has been implemented for External Examiner Reports. The portal is accessible via all major web browsers and is mobile enabled. The software is compatible with both Microsoft and Apple Devices, which had been identified as an issue with the previous MS Word template. The new portal will allow for more in-

depth analysis of the data arising from the reports than in previous years, and eventually enable the data to be viewed and analysed via data visualisation software such as PowerBI.

7.3.2 The Committee noted the following recommendations, which are advised for Departments to consider with regards to their postgraduate taught provision:

Appointment Process

- Ensure new External Examiners are appointed by the start of the academic year.

Programme Information

- Send programme handbooks to External Examiners for each year of their tenure so they can track any changes to the programme.
- Provide External Examiners with more statistics to help them evaluate changes in performance, i.e., between cohorts.

Assessment Setting

- Ensure that assessment is undertaken by a range of methods where possible. Where students may choose between different modules or streams, care should be taken to ensure that the amount and type of assessment is comparable between all options.

Marking and Moderation

- Ensure copies of both draft assessments and completed assessments are sent to External Examiners in good time so that these can be adequately reviewed.
- Ensure all model answers are in-depth and provide suitable guidance about the differences between marks, particularly at the grade boundaries.
- Consider ways to ensure a fair mark for each member of a group project based on their individual contribution.
- Monitor programmes with high numbers of distinctions carefully to ensure grade inflation does not occur.
- Ensure that all markers (first and second) provide sufficient justification on scripts to ensure any reviewers can see why marks were awarded. Where there is a substantial divergence between first and second marker, ensure that discussion takes place to arrive at a final mark, as opposed to an average of the two.

Feedback

- Provide more feedback to students about their individual exam performance.
- Ensure all External Examiners receive confirmation that their feedback has been taken into account and confirm what changes have been made in relation to any concerns raised. Placement Activity and Collaborative Provision
- Ensure all External Examiners are aware if any of the programmes or modules for which they are responsible is delivered at or in conjunction with external providers.

7.3.3 There are a number of areas where the College will need to take further action to improve its postgraduate taught provision, but overall the College can be assured of the quality and standards of its programmes.

8 **Programmes Committee** QAEC.2019.53

8.1 **Programmes Committee Report**

8.1.1 The Committee received a full report on the meeting of the Programmes Committee held on 18 February 2020. It was noted that the Interim Report on the Programmes Committee was approved at QAEC on 26 February 2020. QAEC.2019.54

QAEC approved the following:

8.1.2 New Programmes

- MRes Cancer Technology
Department of Bioengineering, with effect from October 2020.
- MSc Applied Machine Learning

Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering, with effect from October 2020.

8.1.3 Strategic Approval of New Programmes

- Weekend MBA - Corporate Stream

Business School, with effect from October 2020.

Major Modifications to Existing Programmes

Faculty of Engineering

Earth Science and Engineering

- MSci Earth and Planetary Science

Materials

- MEng Materials Science & Engineering
- BEng Materials Science & Engineering

- BEng Materials with Management
- MEng Materials with Nuclear Engineering
- MEng Biomaterials and Tissue Engineering

Faculty of Natural Sciences

Chemistry

- MRes Green Chemistry: Energy and the Environment

Centre for Languages, Culture and Communication

Humanities and Social Sciences and Change Makers

8.2 Programmes Committee Chair's Actions for major modifications as a result of COVID-19

8.2.1 It was noted that the Quality Assurance Team is receiving proposed major modifications to mitigate Covid-19, which are being collated. These will be considered by QAEC through Chair's action with the outcomes communicated to Departments in the week commencing 27 April.

9 Learning & Teaching Committee Report

9.1 The Committee received a brief verbal report of the last meeting of the Learning & Teaching Committee on 2 April 2020.

10 COVID-19 Response

10.1 Report on the College response to COVID-19

QAEC.2019.55

10.1.1 The Committee received a paper setting out the response made by College to the Covid-19 pandemic. The following areas were noted:

- Governance Structure
- Student Engagement in the response to Covid-19
- Amendments to Policy and Procedure
- Remote Assessment
- Mitigating Circumstances
- Programme and Modules Modifications Procedure
- Student FAQs
- Safety Net Policy
- Postgraduate Registration Policy
- Postgraduate Research Degrees

10.1.2 The Committee endorsed the College's approach that has been taken to the assurance of academic quality and standards.

10.2 Summary of external guidance on the response to Covid-19

QAEC.2019.56

10.2.1 QAEC noted the guidance that has been published by the Office for Students (OfS), the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

11 Dates for meetings 2019/2020

11.1 The date of the final meeting of the academic was noted as 3 June 2020 (reporting to Senate on 24 June).

12 Reserved Area of Business

12.1 There was no reserved business.