

Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC)

Confirmed Minutes from the meeting held on

Wednesday 13 March 2019

Present

David Ashton, Academic Registrar – Chair

Dr Lorraine Craig, Faculty of Engineering representative

Professor Peter Lindstedt, Senior College Consul

Claire Stapley, CLCC/CHERS representative

Alejandro Luy, ICU Deputy President (Education)

Karen Tweddle, Business School representative

Dr Edgar Meyer, Chair of Programmes Committee

Professor Emma McCoy, (attending in the place of Professor John Seddon, Faculty of Natural Sciences representative)

Judith Webster, Head of Academic Services

Lucy Heming, Senior Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance and Enhancement) - Secretary

In attendance

Kirstie Ward, Assistant Registrar (Academic Standards) - Deputy Secretary

Apologies

Professor John Seddon, Faculty of Natural Sciences representative

Ute Thiermann, GSU President

Martin Lupton, Faculty of Medicine Representative

Professor Anthony Magee, Deputy Director of the Graduate School

1 Welcome, apologies and announcements

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed the attendees to the meeting and apologies, as listed above, were noted.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

QAEC.2018.48

- 2.1 The Committee confirmed the minutes of 30 January 2019 with no amendments.

2.2 Review of Committee Actions

QAEC.2018.49

The Committee noted the status of the points of the action sheet. In particular the Committee discussed the following actions:

2.2.1 Student Protection Plan (October 2018, 13.1)

It was noted that the Student Protection plans had been reviewed at each Faculty Education Committee, with the exception of the Faculty of Medicine. It was queried how the student

protection plan would be disseminated to programme leaders and research supervisors. It was agreed that this would be best to be addressed by Strategic Planning.

Action: Secretary

2.2.2 SOLE Lecturer/Module Survey Platform (September 2017, 16.1.2)

It was reported that the Learning and Teaching Committee would be receiving an update on the progress of the working party at its meeting on 17 March 2019. This would be shared with Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee in April.

Action: Secretary

3 Matters arising from the Minutes

- 3.1** It was noted that the Committee had previously endorsed the recommendations from the Undergraduate Student Academic Appeals report. However, it had not specifically agreed the implementation date for procedural changes. The Committee agreed that this should be from academic year 2019/2020.

Action: Secretary

4 Academic Regulations and Policy

QAEC.2018.50

- 4.1** The Committee noted the most recent update from the Regulations and Policy Review Group. The Committee was reminded that the Academic Standards Framework needed to provide clear and transparent regulations that could be consistently applied. It was also noted that key principles and decisions had been made over a series of meetings that were binding and it should not be sought to 'unpick' these decisions.

- 4.2** The Committee was informed of the additional consultation processes that had been put in place following concerns raised in previous meetings, the output from which was feeding into the regular Regulations and Policy Review group meetings.

Proposed Exemptions to Academic Standards Framework

- 4.3** There was specific discussion with regards to the proposed exemption to the curriculum framework for those programmes that have a compulsory placement between years 3 and 4. If the proposal was agreed it meant that programmes would have 270 ECTS credits (as opposed to 240) and therefore also needed further consideration as to the calculation of the programme overall weighted average. This had been discussed and endorsed by the Regulations and Policy Review Group. The Committee approved the model, and the agreed amendment to the calculation of the programme weighted average.

- 4.4** The Committee also discussed the proposed amendment to the calculation of the programme overall weighted average for the integrated Masters in Mathematics with a year abroad programme. It was noted that this proposal had been exceptionally accepted, but that this would need to be considered in the wider context of the work to take place regarding the conversion of marks gained at other institutions.

- 4.5** It was noted that in implementing the Academic Standards Framework there would be a number of changes, which might cumulatively have unintended consequences, and would have to be kept under review.

Endorsement of Regulations and Policy Review Group recommendations

- 4.6** In recognising the previous discussions and need to keep the regulations under review, the Committee endorsed the following items agreed by the Regulations and Policy Review group (QAEC.2018.50), subject to the changes to the documentation at:
- Paragraph 11.8 – to add ‘and where such an award has been approved’
 - Paragraph 13.10 (table) – to amend MEng (with six month industry placement) to 29+29 (from 29:29).

Exit Awards

- 4.7** The Committee discussed the concerns raised on behalf of the Imperial College Union regarding the potential lack of parity for students where some programmes had approved exit awards and others had not. Assurance was given that in the undergraduate programmes considered to date the majority of them had exit awards. It was further noted that it was not always possible in postgraduate programmes to provide the full gamut of exit awards due to the credit size of modules.
- 4.8** The Committee noted that the meeting of the Regulations and Policy Review Group on 1 April 2019 would be considering the criteria with regards to the credit requirements for exit awards.

Implementation of Academic Standards Framework

- 4.9** The Committee considered the implementation of the Academic Standards Framework. It was reaffirmed that it would apply to all first year undergraduate provision that had completed curriculum review from academic year 2019/2020. There was some discussion with regards to how and when the Academic Standards Framework would be implemented for postgraduate provision. It was noted that in some areas postgraduate provision had completed curriculum review, but this did not necessarily include all programmes within the respective department. It was reported that the Regulations and Policy Review Group had yet to reach a consensus on this matter.
- 4.10** The Committee noted that the expected gradual completion of curriculum review would mean that within some departments there would be an inequality of student experience and potentially outcomes for progression and award. There was also concern for how the Academic Standards Framework could be applied where programmes shared modules, should some have completed curriculum review and others had yet to.
- 4.11** Analysis by the Imperial College Business School had shown that there were 3 areas in which their programmes did not meet the proposed Academic Standard Framework, which were: module credit size, regulations regarding compensation, and the calculation of final classification of award.
- 4.12** The Committee was reminded that the current College regulations would require review and approval for the academic year 2019/2020, and if there were particular areas that should be updated in the light of the agreed principles of the Academic Standards Framework this could be incorporated as part of the review.
- 4.13** The Imperial College Union expressed concern with regards to the clarity of information for students as to which set of regulations would apply to them. It was noted that this information would need to be outlined in the programme specification and the programme handbook, the Scheme of Awards and any other area in which the attention of the student body was drawn to the regulations. The Committee was advised that the Quality Assurance

team would be revising the Board of Examiners guidance to support them in this period of change. It was agreed that the Quality Assurance team would liaise with the Union to ensure the relevant webpages were clear.

Action: Secretary and Imperial College Union

Use of decimal places or integers in reporting marks

- 4.14** The final point from the paper (QAEC.2018.50) discussed by the Committee was in regards to the use of decimal places for assessment component and module marks, and level and programme overall weighted averages. It was reported that following the previous agreement that all marks would be recorded to two decimal places, concern had been raised which meant that it was considered to be appropriate to revisit this in the Regulations and Policy Review Group. Some members of the Committee expressed concern that agreed actions were being revisited. It was explained that any decision would be based on academic principles and would be considered appropriately through the proper governance structure.
- 4.15** The Committee noted the outstanding areas for discussion for the Regulations and Policy Review Group and that recommendations on these areas would be presented to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee in April 2019.

5 Student Experience

5.1 Wednesday afternoon timetabling audit

QAEC.2018.51

- 5.1.1** Written submissions regarding timetabling on Wednesday afternoons had been received by the Committee, except for the Faculty of Medicine which would report at the next meeting. These submissions had highlighted that there had been a discrepancy between the timetabling policy document (12:00hrs) and a previous College notice (13:00hrs). The Committee noted that this notice had since been removed.
- 5.1.2** It was discussed that, whilst efforts would be made to ensure that teaching had ceased by 12:00hrs on Wednesdays from academic year 2019/2020, an example of where this might not be feasible was in areas in which there was experimental work that needed to be completed over a number of hours. Additionally it was noted that the data that was utilised to monitor might not always reflect true teaching activity, but making space available for continuation of self-directed study or group work if desired by the students.
- 5.1.3** It was further proposed by the Committee that for postgraduate study, the same drivers for reserving Wednesday afternoons from teaching on might not be present. Therefore the Committee wished to consider further the initial consultation data in relation to postgraduates, and for further work to gather the student view in this area.
- 5.1.4** The Committee agreed that it should continue to monitor Wednesday afternoon timetabling, by receipt of an annual report in Spring each year using data from the central timetabling unit. It was agreed that the original consultation data would be reviewed, and if warranted, then to seek the views of students particularly for taught masters programmes.

Action: Secretary (request data from timetabling)

Action: Alejandro Luy (survey of postgraduate students)

5.2 Timeliness and quality of feedback

QAEC.2018.52

- 5.2.1 The Committee noted the collated responses received with regards to written academic feedback to students. It was recognised that with the current processes to maintain and collect this data was resource intensive to produce.
- 5.2.2 It was agreed that the principles in the feedback policy were clear and accepted, and that individual Faculties would monitor its effective implementation. Should future monitoring show that there continued to be areas of concern, this could be reconsidered by the Committee. It was proposed that this could be an area considered within the periodic review process.

Action: Secretary to report proposal to Assistant Registrar (Monitoring & Review)

- 5.2.3 The Committee agreed that further consideration was needed to be taken with regards to the systems or tools that could be put in place to monitor the timely return of feedback, and the quality of the feedback presented to students. It was agreed that this be raised in an appropriate forum by the Chair of the Committee.

Action: Chair

6 External Expertise in Quality Processes

QAEC.2018.53

QAEC.2018.54

- 6.1 The Committee discussed the advice and guidance in relation to external expertise in quality processes published by the Quality Assurance Agency in November 2018.
- 6.2 It was noted that for institutions in England the expectations and indicators were not statutory, but provided expectations for best practice. For other institutions in devolved nations the documentation was statutory.
- 6.3 It was considered timely to review the external expertise utilised by the College, due to the review of the Periodic Review process and the beginning of the curriculum review process for postgraduate provision.
- 6.4 The Committee confirmed its support, and the importance of, guest speakers, visiting lecturers and professors of practice to the enrichment of the curriculum and the professional development of students. The Committee affirmed that there should not be undue barriers to these appointments.
- 6.5 It was discussed that College staff, on observing considered best practice whilst acting in the role of external adviser or external examiner in other institutions, should ensure that this was shared first within their department but then on to the wider College community.
- 6.6 Other forms of external advice to the College that had been found to be supportive were industry and/or alumni advisory panels, examples of which could be found across the College. However, it was noted that care should be taken to maximise the effectiveness across undergraduate and postgraduate provision, and potentially across departments.
- 6.7 In addition to these advisory panels, the Committee respected the value of the input of external expertise as part of the periodic review and external accreditation.
- 6.8 It was agreed that the documentation provided a valuable point of reference which would be utilised as part of the review of processes going forward.

7 Student Surveys

7.1 Report of the results of the UG and PG Autumn SOLE surveys

QAEC.2018.55

7.1.1 The Committee noted the report, and that department/faculty level scrutiny was taking place in relation to the outcomes of the survey.

7.1.2 Particular note was made of the low participation rate in the survey and that this was a continuing year on year trend. The Committee agreed that this needed to be addressed. It was noted that SOLE was currently being reviewed, and felt that a review of the process should include the timeliness of the request for completion, the format and length of the survey, the usefulness and the data, and how the College 'closed the loop' on the feedback it received.

7.2 New international student recruitment survey

QAEC.2018.56

7.2.1 The Committee formally agreed to the running of this survey. It was noted that this had been previously agreed as part of the strategic plan for international recruitment but expressed concerns of survey fatigue and the overlap with the SOLE surveys open concurrently.

7.2.2 It was agreed that the outcomes of the survey should be shared with the Committee once analysed.

Action: Secretary

8 Programmes Committee

QAEC.2018.56

8.1 The Committee noted the report of the last meeting of Programmes Committee held on 19 February 2019. It was reported that this was the first Programmes Committee whose main items of business related to provision that had completed curriculum review.

8.2 In considering the proposals that had been brought forward, it was assumed that the resource requirements for the programmes as presented and how this was to be met by the College had been considered by Departments and Faculties as part of the submission. The Faculties of Engineering and Natural Sciences confirmed that this had been considered as part of the internal approval processes. It was agreed that how resource allocation was considered would be reviewed as part of the standard quality assurance processes for programme approval.

Action: Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance & Enhancement)

8.3 The following redesigned programmes were approved following curriculum review with effect from October 2019:

Faculty of Engineering (Undergraduate)

Undergraduate Computing

BEng Computing

MEng Computing

MEng Computing (Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning)

MEng Computing (International Programme of Study)

MEng Computing (Management and Finance)

MEng Computing (Security and Reliability)

MEng Computing (Software Engineering)

MEng Computing (Visual Computing and Robotics)

The above programmes will be available to students with effect from October 2019.

Undergraduate Earth Science and Engineering

BSc Geology
MSci Geology
MSci Geology with a Year Abroad
BSc Geophysics
MSci Geophysics
MSci Geophysics with a Year Abroad
BSc Earth Science
MSci Earth Science
BSc Earth and Planetary Science
MSci Earth and Planetary Science

The above programmes will be available to students with effect from October 2019.

Undergraduate Mechanical Engineering

MEng and BEng Mechanical Engineering
MEng Mechanical Engineering with a Year Abroad
MEng Mechanical Engineering with a Year in Industry
MEng Mechanical Engineering with a Year in Industry and a Year Abroad
MEng Mechanical Engineering with Nuclear Engineering
MEng Mechanical Engineering with Nuclear Engineering and a Year in Industry

The above programmes will be available to students with effect from October 2019.

Faculty of Medicine (Undergraduate)

MBBS/ BSc in Medicine- Phase 1 and 3

The above programme will be available to students with effect from October 2019.

Faculty of Engineering (Postgraduate)

MSc Environmental Technology

The above programme will be available to students with effect from October 2019.

Faculty of Medicine (Postgraduate)

MRes Clinical Research

The above programme will be available to students with effect from October 2019.

MSc Allergy

The above programme will be available to students with effect from October 2019.

MSc Reproductive and Developmental Biology

The above programme will be available to students with effect from October 2019.

8.4 The following major modifications were approved:

MBBS - Universiti Brunei Darussalam

To establish a recognition agreement with the Universiti Brunei Darussalam to accept students onto the MBBS programme as graduate entrants, running parallel to the existing Oxbridge entrants (A300) programme with effect from October 2019.

MBBS – BSc Medical Sciences

To make retrospective changes to an assessment within the Year 2 Clinical Research and Innovation module with immediate effect (January 2019).

MSc Digital Health Leadership

To extend the length of the Research Project module from 6 months to 12 months with effect from April 2019 (module to commence May 2019).

MSc Health Policy

To make changes to an assessment within the Health and Society module with effect from May 2019.

8.5 The following Short Course was approved:

Introduction to Corporate Sustainability, Social Innovation and Ethics

Imperial College Business School to introduce the above short course with effect from March 2019.

9 **Annual Monitoring of the Joint NTU-Imperial MBBS Programme 2018/2019 (reporting on 2017/2018)** QAEC.2018.58

9.1 The Committee considered the proposal to streamline the requirements in line with previous agreements to reduce any unnecessary administrative burden without compromising on the value of the data obtained. It was noted that this proposal was specific to LKC due to the unique nature of the provision and the in-country additional regulatory requirements. The Committee agreed the proposal.

Action: Assistant Registrar (Monitoring & Review)

10 **Postgraduate Entry Requirement 2020-2021** QAEC.2018.59

10.1 The Committee noted that the entry requirements for postgraduate provision presented for agreement had been reviewed by Faculty Education Committees prior to its presentation for approval. The spreadsheet included only those programmes that had been on offer for at least one academic year, and did not include any new provision that had recently been approved. The Committee agreed the entry requirements as presented.

11 **Postgraduate Research Quality Committee** QAEC.2018.60

11.1 The Committee received the report of the meeting of the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee held 20 February 2019. It considered the recommendations made by Postgraduate Research Quality Committee and endorsed items 1.2, 1.3, 2.2 and 3.2 without further comment.

11.2 The Committee endorsed point 4.2 with exception of bullet 1. The Committee was concerned to ensure that the appropriate standards of research supervision be maintained and referred this issue back to Postgraduate Research Quality Committee for further consideration.

Action: Postgraduate Research Quality Committee Secretary

12 **UK exit from the European Union Continuity Plans** QAEC.2018.61

12.1 The Committee noted the briefing note previously submitted to Senate with regards to the College's preparation in relation to the UK's exit from the European Union.

13 Faculty Education Committee

13.1 The Committee received reports from the following Faculty Education Committees:

- Engineering Education Committee – 9 and 30 January 2019
- Natural Sciences Education Committee – 9 January 2019
- CLCC/CHERS (CCEC) – 11 December 2018

QAEC.2018.62a

QAEC.2018.62b

QAEC.2018.62c

14 Learning and Teaching Committee

14.1 The Committee noted the Chair's verbal update to the Committee and the papers for Learning and Teaching Committee previously provided. This provided detail of the approval of a new ethics approval process for educational research and a discussion on the next steps with regards to pedagogic transformation.

15 Senate

15.1 The Committee noted the Chair's verbal update to the Committee and the papers for Senate previously provided. The verbal update to the Committee stated that the College had responded to the Universities UK consultation on degree classifications which included the matter of grade inflation. The dates of terms for session 2020/2021 were confirmed and the dates for session 2021/2022 were approved. It was also confirmed that the new department structure in the Faculty of Medicine had been presented to Senate.

16 Any Other Business

16.1 No other matters of business were raised.

17 Dates for Meetings

17.1 Wednesday 10 April 2019
Wednesday 5 June 2019

18 Reserved Areas of Business

18.1 There was no reserved business.