During the 2013-14 academic session, the outcomes of the following periodic reviews were considered by the Senate (individual assessor reports and departmental responses to reports can be found in the Senate Papers listed below):

Postgraduate Taught Provision:

- Department of Earth Sciences and Engineering (Paper Senate/2013/27)
- Department of Life Sciences (Paper Senate/2013/45)
- Department of Medicine (Paper Senate/2013/28)
- Department of Surgery and Cancer (Paper Senate/2013/10)

Research Degree Provision:

- A*STAR Research Degree Programme (Paper Senate/2013/09)
- Department of Aeronautics (Paper Senate/2013/08)
- Imperial College Business School (Paper Senate/2013/46)
- Department of Chemistry (Paper Senate/2013/63)
- Department of Mechanical Engineering (Paper Senate/2013/64)
- National Heart and Lung Institute (Paper Senate/2013/65)
- School of Public Health (Paper Senate/2013/47)

This paper describes examples of good practice highlighted within the individual reviews.

Reviews of Postgraduate Taught Provision

1. Department of Earth Sciences and Engineering (Paper Senate/2013/27)

**Industrial Collaboration** – The review panel considered the level of industry involvement to be outstanding. This ranged from advisory board membership, the provision of software and information, the sponsorship of students and provision of project placements.

(a) **Industry Placements** – The panel was extremely impressed that most students conduct their individual research project in collaboration with an industry host, thus ensuring that the
programmes are tailored to the needs of the industry, and that students gain valuable and relevant working experience. The risk of inadequate supervision of industry-based projects was mitigated by having very formal documentation setting out the expectations of all concerned parties (the Imperial supervisor, the industry supervisor and the student), including specification of the number and frequency of site visits, level of supervision, types of project, etc.

http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/qualityassurance/placements

(b) Industry Advisory Boards – The panel observed that programmes are kept under continuous review by regular meetings with industrial partners who are able to keep the Department abreast of new developments and requirements in the petroleum industry. Industry Advisory Boards facilitate communication with industry in keeping the content of programmes current, assist with stakeholder relations, encourage sponsorship and help find student projects as well as employment opportunities.

Team-Based Learning - The panel highlighted the Wytch Farm collaborative project as an exemplar of good practice. The project brings together students from the three Petroleum Master’s programmes to work together on an interdisciplinary project, replicating the work of an asset team in industry. The activity was seen to be very successful as a preparation for working in industry, and also helped to build a sense of broader cohort across the three programmes, broadening the students’ peer support network.

2. Department of Life Sciences (Paper Senate/2013/45)

Research Projects – the review panel considered one of the real strengths of the programmes to be the range of projects on offer to students, together with the student-driven project choice which encourages students to tailor their education to their own needs and interests, and thereby to engage more actively with the programme.

The use of web-based access to potential projects was highlighted as an instance of good practice. The web-based form is used by potential supervisors to advertise details of research projects to students. The form also provides information on the supervisory arrangements and available facilities.

The forms were set up in Google Docs and examples can be found at these links: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/viewform?fromEmail=true&formkey=dHdMd2xjUVpsekNmR2dTbnJweWFOYkE6MA

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/viewform?formkey=dFFCNXppVzN2aXFrVTl6NFQ0S002SkE6MA#gid=0

Foundation Labs – The practical laboratory training course that is run at the start of several Master’s programmes was thought to be an excellent example of good practice in helping students to integrate into the programme and in ensuring that they are best placed to take advantage of the learning opportunities in the coming year.

Timetabled Learning Activity – Good practice in curriculum design was recognised in the MRes in Molecular & Cellular Basis of Infection which includes timetabled tutorials to provide additional support to students in achieving the learning outcomes and to aid cohort development. In addition, the tutorials encourage academic engagement with the wider group of students in the programme.
3. Department of Medicine (Paper Senate/2013/28)

*Blended Learning* - the effective use of blended learning was highlighted by the review panel as being excellent. In particular, the blended learning on the MSc Allergy and MSc Paediatrics and Child Health programmes was commended.

[http://www1.imperial.ac.uk/departmentofmedicine/postgraduate/allergyprogramme/](http://www1.imperial.ac.uk/departmentofmedicine/postgraduate/allergyprogramme/)
[http://www1.imperial.ac.uk/departmentofmedicine/postgraduate/paediatricsandchildhealth/](http://www1.imperial.ac.uk/departmentofmedicine/postgraduate/paediatricsandchildhealth/)

4. Department of Surgery and Cancer (Paper Senate/2013/10)

*Programme Handbook* - The review panel identified the programme handbook produced for the MRes Cancer Biology as being worthy of note, highlighting that the content includes a short CV and photograph of key programme personnel.

[http://www1.imperial.ac.uk/surgeryandcancer/study/masters/mrescancerbiology/](http://www1.imperial.ac.uk/surgeryandcancer/study/masters/mrescancerbiology/)

*Careers Support* – The panel identified good practice in providing support for students in the preparation of CVs and in applying for PhD places early in the year (October).

*Progress* – The panel identified the mid-project appraisal form used by the MRes in Biomedical Research as an example of good practice. During each project students have the opportunity to complete a mid-project progress report which serves as a useful reflection point for students and supervisors, and as a means for the programme organisers to obtain feedback from supervisors on student progress.

*Prizes* – The panel commended the criteria for awarding prizes operated by the MSc Reproductive and Developmental Biology programme. The programme only awards a prize if a student achieves a distinction mark in all three units of assessment, and this was seen as an indicator of outstanding quality.

**Research Degree Reviews**

5. A*STAR Research Degree Programme (Paper Senate/2013/09)

*Pastoral Support* - The review panel commended in particular the role of the International Office in ensuring the smooth running of the programme and enhancing the student experience whilst in the UK. The excellent support for the programme provided by the International Relations Office Team (since re-structured) in monitoring the students, organising social events and effectively acting as mentors, was highlighted.

6. Department of Aeronautics (Paper Senate/2013/08)

*Academic Support* - The review panel found many examples of good practice in academic support, including group meetings, journal clubs and presentations, and commended the friendly collaborative departmental culture whereby staff outside the immediate supervision team take an interest in projects and are available for consultation. Good practice was observed in instances where supervisors carry a log book of notes on supervision meetings.

*Progression* - In addition to College progression requirements, the Department operates a 6-monthly paper-based review and all students deliver a 30-minute open presentation of their work during November of each year. The panel highlighted this as an example of good
practice in that it enabled academics and students to obtain a good overview of work within the Department.

**Admissions** - The Department operates a very robust admissions policy, admitting only those applicants in whom it has complete confidence. A strict procedure is followed for the acceptance of research students, whereby the two interviewers (proposed supervisor plus one other academic staff member) record the interview by completing an Interview Report Form. The completed form together with a copy of the student's application is then passed to the Director of Postgraduate Research for approval, prior to formal acceptance. The Interview Record Form subsequently helps to identify the type of project (experimental or computational), the facilities the student will need and whether the proposed supervisor has discussed and agreed the use of the facilities with the Laboratory Manager.

**Links with Industry** - The Department hosts an annual symposium, attended by 300 experts from industry, at which research students present posters. This provides an excellent forum for interaction. In addition, the Department makes good use of their extensive alumni within Formula One racing (many F1 senior engineers are Imperial Aeronautics alumni) to get placements for their students.

7. Imperial College Business School (Paper Senate/2013/46)

*Information for Students* – the Information Guide given to new doctoral students during induction, which contains a substantial amount of excellent advice about a range of detailed issues, was considered by the review panel to be excellent. Together with the Doctoral Student Handbook, the information provided for students was considered to be exemplary.

8. Department of Chemistry (Paper Senate/2013/63)

**Postdoc/Postgrad Buddy Scheme** - The Department has initiated a Postdoc/Postgrad Buddy scheme in which a number of Postdoctoral Research Associates (PDRAs) act as informal mentors to PhD students. This scheme assigns postdoctoral mentors to PhD students on a voluntary basis. All Postdoc Buddies receive training from the Postdoc Development Centre, and are seen as being approachable and supportive of research students. The scheme was considered by the review panel to be excellent.

Information on the Postdoc Buddy scheme can be found at this link: [http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/chemistry/postgraduate/life](http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/chemistry/postgraduate/life)

**Annual Postgraduate Symposium** - The Department runs a one day Postgraduate Symposium in June/July each year and this was commended by the panel. This is a high profile event, attracting industrial sponsorship and attendance, intended to showcase PhD student achievements in the Department. All second year students are required to give poster presentations of their progress to date, and all third year students are required to give oral presentations on their research studies. Presentation at the Postgraduate Symposium contributes to the formal PhD progress assessment. Industrial and departmental funded prizes are awarded for the best presentations.

**Chemistry Academic Opportunities Committee** - The Chemistry Academic Opportunities Committee, set up to discuss, receive and disseminate issues related to academic opportunities within the Department, was considered to be an excellent idea. The Committee has developed a very active seminar and social programme, organising networking events and monitoring supportive contact points for students. In addition, students are given valuable opportunities to interact with fellow students at regular weekly
meetings coordinated by the Chair of Chemistry Academic Opportunities Committee. In particular, the panel highlighted the regular Friday discussion forum, facilitating interaction between members of the Department, as an example of good practice. The initiative was highly praised by students who felt that it was a valuable opportunity to make connections and think beyond the sphere of their own research. 
http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/chemistry/academicopportunities/chemacademicopps

9. Department of Mechanical Engineering (Paper Senate/2013/64)

Student Engagement - The Department makes use of the 6 monthly progress report form as a confidential mechanism for students to raise any concerns at a departmental level, and to give students the opportunity to provide confidential feedback on the quality of their supervision. The students had actively participated in redesigning the form and this was considered to be an example of good practice by the review panel who had witnessed that greater input and involvement had undoubtedly led to greater buy in and the appearance of reduced bureaucracy.

Training, Guidance and Support Provided for Supervisors - The panel commended the Department for its very rigorous training of supervisors. Every encouragement is given to supervisors to attend workshops on a range of topics from basic supervision skills and requirements, through to research group building.

The panel highlighted in particular the support given by the Department in assisting and developing newer staff in their role as PhD supervisors. Newly employed academics are often given initial funds by their research group to provide one or two studentships in order to start their research group and take on PhD students. They are also given higher priority in the allocation of internal DTA funds.

The supervisor workload is considered very seriously. A maximum number of active PhD students per academic is observed during the allocation process in order to ensure that staff do not have too many students, and remain able to carry out their supervision role effectively.

10. National Heart and Lung Institute (Paper Senate/2013/65)

Annual Postgraduate Symposium - The review panel highlighted the postgraduate research day as an example of good practice, noting that it provided students not only with an environment to present their results but also with opportunities for networking with other students, particularly those from other campuses where day to day interaction did not routinely occur.

Assistant Supervisors - The panel observed that the Department made full use of the “Assistant Supervisor” title to recognise the role of postdoctoral research associates in the day-to-day supervision of PhD students. The panel highlighted this as an example of good practice, noting that it had major benefits for the postgraduate experience and also had value in training the next generation of potential supervisors and principal investigators.

Student Handbook - The panel considered the Research Student Handbook and induction material to be exemplary.
http://www1.imperial.ac.uk/nhli/training/postgraduate_research_nhli/information/

Training, Guidance and Support Provided for Supervisors - The panel highlighted the departmental policy of insisting that all supervisors, whether experienced or not, attend
relevant training and refresher courses as an example of good practice. In addition, all new supervisors are encouraged to attend one of the student induction sessions to familiarise themselves with the research degree procedures.

**Exit Feedback** - The panel considered the congratulatory e-mail sent by the Head of Institute to students upon graduation, which included an invitation to provide confidential feedback on their experience, to be an example of good practice.

**Penalties for Non-compliance with Procedures** - The panel noted that the Department applies tough penalties on staff for non-compliance with procedures, including barring supervisors who are consistently intransigent in rising to their duties from taking new students, and highlighted this as good practice.

11. School of Public Health (Paper Senate/2013/47)

**Management and Monitoring of Research Students** - The review panel considered the management and monitoring of research students to be excellent. In support of the Early Stage Assessment and the Late Stage Review, individual milestone timetables were sent to both students and supervisors to ensure that they were aware of key dates. The clear structure of milestones, and detail about the requirements at each stage, helped students and supervisors to focus on key dates, and was considered by the panel to be an example of good practice.

**Leaver’s Review Form** - The panel had been impressed by the introduction of a leavers’ review form which provided students with the opportunity to provide valuable feedback on their experience. The leaver’s form was perceived as an excellent way of encouraging students to give honest feedback without the possibility of repercussions, and the panel considered it to be an example of good practice.

**Student Engagement** - The panel had been impressed by the effectiveness of the School’s Postgraduate Studies Committee, noting that it had good student representation and that it was responsive to student suggestions. As part of the Late Stage Review, the School had introduced a 30 minute viva which included an external assessor, in response to feedback from students. The leavers’ review form (above) had also resulted from student suggestions and subsequent discussion at the Committee. The panel highlighted the effectiveness of the Committee as an example of good practice.

**Annual Research Student Symposium** - Students are required to present their research at the School’s Research Student Symposium as part of their PhD Late Stage Review assessment. The panel considered the annual symposium to be an excellent event which provided an opportunity to bring all students and many supervisors together and highlighted it as an example of good practice.