The Programme Director’s Guide:
Master’s Level Programmes
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1. Introduction

This guide is intended to support those responsible for the management of Master’s level programmes by providing key information about the College and its quality assurance processes.

The guide also contains lists of useful contacts and links to various web pages which Programme Directors may find useful. Throughout the guide are examples of good practice that have been identified by periodic review and by other quality assurance mechanisms (such as via external examiner reports or surveys) within the College.

The College carries out regular reviews of all Master’s level programmes and periodic reviews of departments in order to safeguard quality and standards; enhance the student experience; and ensure good practice is disseminated across the College. For more information on these processes see the Programme Approval and Review Processes website.

Terms Used in the Guide

**Department** is used to refer to departments, divisions schools and institutes.

**External Examiners** is used to refer to what some departments may term “visiting examiners”.

**Programme (of study)** is used to refer to an approved course of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification, e.g. MSc, PG Certificate, etc.

**Module** is used to refer to a self-contained, formally structured unit of study, with a coherent and explicit set of learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

**Course** refers to short courses such as those offered by the CPD and the Graduate School; usually a “course” will not lead to a qualification.

**Learning outcomes** refers to what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completing a process of learning.

**Assessment criteria** refers to the knowledge, understanding and skills that markers expect a student to display in an assessment task, and which are taken into account in marking the work. These criteria are based on the intended learning outcomes.

The guide begins with a description of the roles and responsibilities of key College staff and services and then provides information about the College’s committee structure. Following this are sections relating to admissions and student recruitment, handbooks, lectures and timetabling, examinations, new programme proposals and making amendments to existing programmes as well as information about departmental and programme review.

This guide is available on the Registry’s Good Practice website:

[www.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/qualityassurance/goodpractice](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/qualityassurance/goodpractice)

A similar guide for Undergraduate Programmes is also available at the above link.
2. Roles and Responsibilities

In order to assist departments, the Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee (QAEC) has developed a set of Roles and Responsibilities for key members of staff within the College. Each description outlines the typical duties expected of the post holder. These documents may be subject to change and should therefore be checked regularly. Roles and Responsibilities documents can be viewed at:

http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/qualityassurance/goodpractice/rolesandresponsibilities

2.1 College-wide Roles

**Vice Provost (Education):** Responsible for the College's educational strategy and the quality of educational provision.

**Director of Student Support:** Responsible for overall responsibility at College Level for all matters relating to the welfare of students. This includes the College Tutors, the Wardens of the Halls of Residence, the Student Counselling Service and the Senior Disability Advisor. The Director of Student Support also supports the work of the College Chaplaincy. The Director of Student Support reports to the Vice Provost (Education).

**College Tutor:** The College Tutors deal with student welfare / discipline and wardening matters and report to the Director of Student Support. They are available for confidential consultation with students to discuss academic or pastoral issues. College Tutors often help students with problems they find difficult to discuss with staff in their departments.

**College Warden** (refers to Wardens of Halls of Residence): College Wardens have immediate responsibility for the pastoral care, welfare and discipline of their College Hall residents and report to the College Tutors.

2.2 Departmental Roles

**Programme Director** (sometimes referred to as the Course Organiser, Course Director or Programme Organiser): The Programme Director has responsibility for the programme, including the day to day running of the programme.

**Programme Administrator** (sometimes referred to as the Course Administrator): The Programme Administrator assists the Programme Director with the running the programme and with the day-to-day administration.

**Postgraduate Tutor:** Each student should be assigned a postgraduate tutor within the department. The tutor’s role is to provide pastoral support to the student.

**Director of Postgraduate Studies (DPGS):** The DPGS has overall responsibility for all the postgraduate programmes within a department. In larger departments, there may be a DPGS responsible for Master’s level programmes and a DPGS for research students. The DPGS will often chair the Postgraduate Committee in their department.

**Departmental Safety Officer:** All departments have a Departmental Safety Officer who will help with any questions and concerns to do with health and safety.

http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/safety
3. Wellbeing and Support

3.1 Disability Advisory Service (DAS)

The Disability Advisory Service is committed to a policy which allows for equality of opportunity and access and provides a variety of support initiatives in order to enable students to access their studies and achieve full potential. Further information about the Disability Advisory Service can be found at:

www.imperial.ac.uk/disabilityadvisoryservice

3.2 Student Counselling Service

The Student Counselling Service offers short-term counselling to registered Imperial students. It is free and confidential. Further information can be found at:

www.imperial.ac.uk/counselling

3.3 Careers Service

The Careers Service provides a varied and comprehensive careers guidance, information and vacancy service for all students and alumni of Imperial College, from first to final year undergraduates and postgraduates. Students receive expert one-2-one advice with a careers adviser which includes advice about CVs, application and interview techniques. The Careers Service organises a range of employer events throughout the year as well as working closely with departments to provide targeted seminars and workshops to suit subject discipline areas. Further information can be found at:

www.imperial.ac.uk/careers/about

3.4 English Language Support

The Centre for Academic English offers classes and individual support, the majority of which are free of charge, to students and academic staff of Imperial College who are not native speakers of English. Classes are available at both South Kensington and Hammersmith campuses. Further information can be found at:

www.imperial.ac.uk/academic-english

3.5 International Students

The International Student Support team provides assistance and specialist advice on a wide range of international student issues, particularly immigration and orientation. Prior to their arrival at Imperial, international offer-holders can consult dedicated pre-arrival webpages and are sent e-newsletters to support them in preparing to come to the UK. At the beginning of each academic year, the office organises an international students’ ‘Welcome Day’ and team members facilitate a number of international orientation workshops. The Office also operates a daily quick query drop-in session throughout the year (each morning), and students can book 30–minute confidential 1:1 interviews with a trained immigration adviser from 2-4pm on most days of the week to discuss any issues of concern. All Imperial College students are members of International Students’ House, a
central venue at Great Portland Street where many events and trips are organised. In addition, International Student Support covers the booking cost of any students who wish to spend a weekend with a British family, through the HOST UK scheme. Throughout the academic year, the office keeps current students up to date with social activities and opportunities in London, as well as changes to immigration rules, through a termly e-newsletter. The team offers monthly daytrips to places of cultural interest around the UK, and other social events to facilitate integration and enhance the student experience. At appropriate intervals, workshops on immigration options post-graduation and visas to travel to Europe are organised. The Head of International Student Support sits on the College Student Support and Well-being Committee and liaises regularly with other College providers of support to students, as well as external stakeholders and representative organisations, such as UKCISA and UUK.

The International Student Support Office also produce an Arrival Booklet for international students, which is available from their “before arrival webpage”:

http://www.imperial.ac.uk/study/international-students/visas-and-immigration/before-and-after-arrival/

The QAA has published a guide to support universities in offering their international students the best possible experience and in enhancing the opportunities already on offer. See: Supporting and Enhancing the Experience of International Students in the UK: A Guide for UK Higher Education Providers.

3.6 Student Financial Support

The Registry’s Student Financial Support team manages and supports all elements of student finance (except Tuition Fees). They manage and administer the College’s Bursaries and Scholarships, the Erasmus programme as well as the Student Support Fund which is used for emergency loans and grants to help students in financial need.

3.7 Student Hub

The Student Hub provides an enquiry service for students and can be accessed at:

www.imperial.ac.uk/studenthub

The Hub provides general information on enquires relating to the following: accommodation, finance, exams, funding, student records and admissions.

3.8 Safety Department

The Safety Department helps departments and individuals ensure effective safety management systems are in place throughout the College.

http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/safety
3.9 Registry

The Registry is split into sections with different responsibilities:

- Admissions
- Student Records, Exams, Research Degrees & Certificates
- Systems
- Student Financial Support
- Quality Assurance and Enhancement (includes surveys – not NSS)
- Senate and Academic Review (includes external examining)
- International Student Support
- HESA & Student Data (includes NSS)
- Central Timetabling Support
- Student Placements

The Registry is headed by the Academic Registrar, supported by the Deputy Academic Registrar. More information is available at:

www.imperial.ac.uk/registry/abouttheregistry/contacts

3.9 Student Support and Wellbeing

Further information about student support and well-being is available at:

http://www.imperial.ac.uk/students/student-support/

4. College Management and Committee Structure

**The President:** The principal academic and administrative officer of the College is the President, who focuses primarily on strategic affairs and development.

**The Provost:** The Provost reports directly to the President and is responsible for the delivery and enhancement of the College's academic mission in education, research and translation.

The College’s committee structure for governance, educational strategy and quality assurance has been recently revised and the new structures were introduced during the summer of 2014.

Further information about each of the College’s committees can be found at:

www.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/committees

3.1 Governance & Educational Strategy Committees

**The Council:** The Council is the governing and executive body of the College. It is responsible for the finance, property, investments and general business of the College, and for setting its general strategic direction. The Council has six formally constituted committees, to which it delegates part of its authority.
The Court: The Court is a large, mainly formal body. It offers a means whereby the wider interests served by the College can be associated with it, and provides a public forum where members of the Court can raise any matters about the College.

The Senate: The Senate is the academic authority of the College. Its role is to direct and regulate the teaching work of the College (for further information see the section on Quality & Standards Committees below).

President’s Board (and Executive Group of the President’s Board): The President’s Board is chaired by the President. Its primary function is to plan for and address issues of broad, strategic, and College-wide significance. It identifies, endorses and approves strategic initiatives, governance matters and major policies, in addition to the College’s financial strategy.

Provost’s Board: The Provost’s Board is responsible for the delivery of the College’s core academic mission: education, research and translation. This includes oversight of the quality and efficacy of education and research; recruitment, development and retention of academic and research staff; and student life and well-being. It also has responsibility for delegated budgets and their financial control. The Provost’s Board has two main Educational Strategy Advisory Groups:

- Vice Provost’s Advisory Group for Education
- Vice Provost’s Advisory Group for Research

Both the Vice Provost’s Advisory Group for Education and the Vice Provost’s Advisory Group for Research exist to support the Vice Provosts and to assist them in discharging their duties as delegated by the Provost.

3.2 Quality & Standards Committees

Quality assurance and the regulation of degrees offered by the College are overseen by the Senate and its various sub-committees. The Senate is the academic authority of the College and draws its membership entirely from the academic staff and students of the College. Its role is to direct and regulate the teaching work of the College.

Senate sub-committees which cover postgraduate matters include:

The Master’s Quality Committees (MQC) report to Senate and are the major vehicles for quality assurance of Master’s level programmes. Their remit includes: approval of new programmes, changes to programmes (including suspension and withdrawal), and the appointment of external examiners; programme monitoring and review, consideration of external examiners’ reports and responses, degree results and appeals, and reports from accrediting organisations. The MQCs also consider documentation requiring Senate approval and make recommendations as appropriate. The MQCs are:

Master’s Quality Committee (Business, Engineering & Physical Sciences)
www.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/committees/mastersqualitycommitteebeps

Master’s Quality Committee (Medicine, Life Sciences & School for Professional Development)
http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/committees/mlspdmqc
The Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee (QAEC) is the main forum for discussion of quality assurance policy and the regulation of degree programmes and takes responsibility the periodic review process. The Committee also reviews the outcome of student surveys and relevant Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) matters. www.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/committees/qualityassuranceadvisory

Faculty Teaching Committees will normally meet each term to consider all aspects of learning and teaching but usually focus on undergraduate provision. The Committee provide advice on and monitor the quality assurance of teaching provision and identify and exchange good practice across the Faculty.

Departmental Teaching Committees will normally meet each term and ensure that best practise is employed in learning and teaching across the department. Departments may have separate committees for undergraduate and postgraduate provision.

The Staff-Student Committees are designed to strengthen understanding between staff and students through open dialogue and promote high standards of education and training in a cooperative and constructive atmosphere. Students are able to express concerns they may have, both academic and pastoral, and provide feedback directly to staff. Departments may have separate committees for undergraduate and postgraduate provision.

Good practice guidelines for Staff-Student Committees

Good practice guidelines and a model agenda for Staff-Student Committees are available at: http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/qualityassurance/goodpractice/goodpracticeguides

5. Student Recruitment

What information do prospective postgraduate taught students need?

HEFCE have produced the following leaflet to support PGT recruitment teams:

http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/hefce/content/pubs/2014/CL,102014/POI%20leaflet%20PGT.pdf

The leaflet is informed by the following reports:

Understanding the information needs of postgraduate taught students and how these can be met (i-graduate, April 2013)

Understanding how people choose to pursue taught postgraduate study (CRAC, April 2014)

For further information see:

http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2014/cl,102014/
HEFCE initiative: Steps to Postgraduate Study

Steps to Postgraduate Study is a new website to help UK and international prospective postgraduate students find the right higher education courses for them.

It is sponsored by the UK funding bodies and provides information for UK, EU and international students who are making decisions about going straight on to PGT study or returning after a period away from education. The website anticipates the questions students will wish to ask, and points them to where they can find the answers.

Universities and colleges which run PGT courses are being asked to provide a link to this resource from these pages on their websites. The website suggests questions for prospective students to ask both themselves and course providers about PGT courses, and provides information on issues such as visas, accommodation and funding by providing links to relevant third party websites.

The website is part of a HEFCE project on the information needs of taught postgraduate students.

http://postgradsteps.hefce.ac.uk/

Consumer Law Advice

The Competitions and Marketing Authority (CMA) has produced some guidance for Higher Education Providers and students to help them understand their rights under Consumer Protection Law:

https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/higher-education-consumer-law-advice-for-providers-and-students

The College’s Student Recruitment and Outreach Division can provide assistance with all aspects of student recruitment and marketing.

5.1 Postgraduate Prospectus

All programmes are advertised in the paper and online versions of the postgraduate prospectus, both of which are updated annually.

Requests for updates for the printed prospectus are issued by the Student Marketing team in May for the following year of entry i.e. in May 2016 for the 2017–18 edition. The printed prospectus contains a departmental overview, programme list (Master’s and research) and entry requirements for each programme. It does not contain information about individual programmes e.g. descriptions or module lists – this information is housed within the Postgraduate Study website. Although the printed prospectus does not contain detailed programme information, it is important that both Programme Directors and Directors of Postgraduate Studies review the entry for their department carefully in order to ensure that the department description is correct and that any changes to the entry requirements and/or programme provision are reflected accurately.

Requests for updates to the Postgraduate Study website are issued at around the same time that the printed prospectus is published (August/September). The College is obliged to deliver programmes as detailed in the prospectus and on the Study website. Therefore, as with the printed prospectus, it is important that both Programme Directors and Directors of Postgraduate Studies review the online
entry for their department regularly in order to ensure that it reflects the programme that is currently being delivered (e.g. programme description and module lists) and that the entry requirements are correct. [For information on making modifications to programmes please also see section 16 Quality Assurance Processes].

It is important that the Study website remains up to date throughout the year therefore please do notify the Student Marketing team of any changes to your programme provision immediately by emailing: prospectus@imperial.ac.uk

Programme details and content should also be kept up-to-date on the departmental website, which must also contain the programme specification and assessment scheme.

If departments or programmes wish to create their own brochures/promotional material in addition to the postgraduate prospectus, these should be created in line with guidance from the Student Marketing Team and should be distributed to the Student Recruitment Team so they can use them for UK and international recruitment.

The Postgraduate Study website can be found at:

www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg

5.2 Advertising a Programme

FindAMasters.com: The College has a paid a subscription to FindAMasters.com. Any programme offered by the College can be advertised on this site. This site is an online database of postgraduate programmes, allowing prospective students to search by institution and location. Please contact international-recruitment@imperial.ac.uk for details of how to advertise/update your entry on this site.

Prospects.ac.uk: The College's postgraduate programmes are also advertised on prospects.ac.uk. Please contact international-recruitment@imperial.ac.uk for details of how to advertise/update your entry on this site.

House style guidelines

Imperial College London has house style guidelines. Staff are encouraged to consult these guidelines whenever they publish content online, in email or in print. Guidance on communicating about the College and Imperial’s brand and graphic identity is available on the Graphic Identity website.

Specific queries can be directed to graphicidentity@imperial.ac.uk.

Use of photographs and the Digital Image Library

Photographs on your website and promotional materials can support and enhance your message. Images are particularly useful for material targeted at prospective students as they really help you to represent the campus and facilities.
The College has its own digital image library which is free to use by all members of College. You can choose from more than 120,000 images covering all aspects of College life.

The Digital and Creative Media team can also help with enhancing your web pages and publications.

5.3 Recruitment Fairs

The Student Recruitment Team coordinates and administers a variety of student recruitment activities on campus, across the UK, Europe and in a wide variety of international markets in order to assist departments in attracting the most able students from all parts of the world and diversify the international student population of Imperial.

This team also runs weekly Wednesday campus tours and coordinates the President’s Ambassador Scheme. The team visits schools and universities abroad, attends international recruitment fairs, participates in collaborative visits with other London-based universities, and arranges applicant briefings. They visit a wide range of schools across the UK, and attend HE fairs aimed at attracting prospective students. They also support College departments in developing their recruitment activities and strategies.

5.4 Departmental Open Days

As there is no central College Open Day, departments are also encouraged to run their own departmental Open Days. In addition to advertising these on departmental websites, these should be listed on the Visit Imperial website at:

www.imperial.ac.uk/visit/deptopen days

Open Day Marketing

You may wish to keep a record of all those students who register for and attend an Open Day as this is a useful resource for future mail shots and other marketing activity.

6. Admissions

Staff involved in admissions should familiarise themselves with the following:

- The College’s Postgraduate Taught Admissions Policy

All applications to postgraduate programmes are made online. Further information can be found at:

www.imperial.ac.uk/pgprospectus/howtoapply
Any applicant having problems using the online facility for whatever reason should contact Admissions via the relevant Admissions team.

After students have registered at the start of term, reports can be run from the Registry system providing a list of all students who are expected to attend. This report should be checked against the students who are actually attending the programme. Any discrepancies should be reported to your departmental administrator and the Registry.

Further information on reporting applicant/student data can be found here: http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/researchsupport/newsandsupport/rmi/operationalreporting

Admissions are currently processed through eAdmissions – the Admissions module of OSS (Oracle Student System). If you require access to this please contact Gizel Hulusi in Registry Admissions at g.hulusi@imperial.ac.uk.

College is currently in the process of implementing Banner as a new system with a provisional timeline to manage all applicant and student administrative processes within Banner by October 2016.

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**Admissions Reports**

All reports obtained at the Admissions stage should be retained for future use in the programme review process.

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**6.1 Entrance Requirements**

The College has minimum entrance and English language requirements. Programmes can prescribe additional requirements with the approval of the relevant Master’s Quality Committee (MQC) and Senate (see section 16 on Quality Assurance Processes).

Full details of the entrance requirements are detailed in the Academic Regulations for Taught Master’s Degrees.

English Language Requirements for Postgraduate Students can be found at:

www.imperial.ac.uk/registry/admissions/pgenglish

The final decision as to whether a candidate has necessary qualifications for entry to the College is made by the Registry. For information about how the Registry assesses international qualifications, please contact the relevant Admissions Team via http://www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/apply/contact/

Candidates may also be required to pass English language and other tests prescribed by the College. Admission is also dependant on receipt of at least one satisfactory reference.

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**6.2 Special Cases**

If an applicant is eligible to be considered as a ‘special case’, Admissions will advise departments as part of the academic eligibility assessment. If a Programme Director wishes to make an offer to an applicant under the special case procedure the case for admission they will need to submit a case to
either the Director of Postgraduate Studies or Head of Department. The case will then be considered and a decision made. Further information and guidance will follow shortly.

6.3 Special Qualifying Examinations

In a Special Case where a candidate is not a graduate but has professional qualifications and relevant work experience, they can be considered for admission on the basis of a Special Qualifying Examination (SQE). The ability to offer an SQE and the initial SQE paper must be approved by the relevant quality committee before they can be used. Further information is available in the arrangements for setting an SQE.

6.4 Accreditation for Prior Learning (APL)

Accreditation for Prior Learning (APL) is granted only for part-time Master’s level programmes. The maximum APL which may be awarded for entry to a part-time Master’s award is 30 ECTS studied at Master’s level or pro-rata, i.e. 10 ECTS for part-time Postgraduate Certificates and 20 ECTS for part-time Postgraduate Diplomas. In order to be eligible for an award of the College a student granted APL must also study for a minimum of two-thirds of the programme, under the direction of teachers in the College.

The full APL policy can be found at:

http://www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/apply/how-to-apply/

6.5 Interviewing & Offers

A formal offer letter can only be sent by the Registry. It is advisable to make more offers than you have places. As a guide, you can use your departmental Dashboard reports to view historical data on how many offers were made and accepted each year.

For those students who request it, departments are required to respond and provide further information as to why an applicant was rejected.

Staff involved in selection need to have undertaken College recruitment and selection training in order to be aware of equal opportunity and disability issues affecting applicants.

Applicants are given 28 days to reply to their offers, if they fail to reply to their offer by this deadline, the offer will be withdrawn following a reminder email sent 5-10 working days before the deadline.

Interviews

The interview process should normally involve more than one member of staff in addition to the Director of Postgraduate Studies or Head of Department or nominee. Interview questions should be agreed by the panel beforehand and should be asked of all candidates.

Staff involved in interviewing should familiarise themselves with the Interview Good Practice Guide published by SPA which is available at:

www.spa.ac.uk/good-practice/interviews/html
7. Student Registration and Induction

Students register online through Student eService if they have met all the conditions for admission. The Student eService can be found at:

www.imperial.ac.uk/studenteservice

It is College policy that all new students complete a safety induction on their first day.

There are welcome events organised by the College on the first day of term. Details will be sent to Programme Directors and it is recommended that staff from the department attend the event to meet the students.

Students should receive a departmental induction which is specifically tailored to their programme alongside the College induction(s). It is important that departments provide clear guidance on the wellbeing and pastoral support available to students within the College as well as the academic aspects of their programme.

Induction Tips

- Send a Welcome Letter prior to arrival
- Avoid information overload and ensure there is an appropriate balance between generic and programme-specific information
- Ensure that information is available in a timely manner, especially programme-specific information such as timetables and handbooks
- Link to a social event
- Include as many departmental academic and support staff as possible
- Check the Welcome Week calendar to avoid timetabling your induction event(s) when students might want to be elsewhere www.imperial.ac.uk/students/newstudents

7.1 Graduate School

The Graduate School has developed a comprehensive and tailored professional skills development programme for all Master’s students. All courses are free to students and will be recorded on their final degree transcript. Students are therefore encouraged to take as many courses as they can. Full programme details can be found on our website at the following address, www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/professional-skills/

Please contact graduate.school@imperial.ac.uk for further details.

The Graduate School also visits each department during induction week and presents information to students on professional development and events. These slides are available to download at any time from http://www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/staff-resources/

7.2 Imperial Success Guide
As part of the induction process departments should direct their students to the Imperial Success Guide at:

[http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/success-guide](http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/success-guide)

The Success Guide is the College’s one stop on-line resource to support the academic transition into Imperial College. The Success Guide brings together information on effective study, assessments and feedback, wellbeing, workshops and support to ensure that students know where to look for advice and guidance relating to study skills. Although primarily aimed at undergraduate students, some postgraduate students may find it helpful.

### 7.3 Programme Handbooks

A key part of the induction process is to ensure that students receive their programme handbook which should contain all the essential information students need to know about their chosen programme.

A list of items to include in the handbook is available [here](http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/qualityassurance/goodpractice/studentandprogrammehandbooks).

Handbooks must also be available to download on-line and must be available to prospective as well as current students. This is a HEFCE requirement - see [Wider Information Sets](http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/qualityassurance/goodpractice/studentandprogrammehandbooks).

**Handbooks**

The College provides guidance and standard text for inclusion in programme handbooks at:

[http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/qualityassurance/goodpractice/studentandprogrammehandbooks](http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/qualityassurance/goodpractice/studentandprogrammehandbooks)

### 7.4 Lectures and Timetables

Timetables should be prepared in accordance with the [College Timetabling Policy](http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/qualityassurance/goodpractice/studentandprogrammehandbooks). Programme Directors should liaise with their Departmental Timetabler regarding the provision of teaching requirements. A *provisional* timetable for the upcoming academic year which can be broken down to student group level is to be issued annually at the end of July. All contingency bookings made earlier in the process should be removed at this point in order to facilitate the release of rooms for other departments or areas of College business.

The *final* timetable, produced in September, is to be published electronically as a dynamic, individual student timetable accessible via mobile devices. Contact the [Central Timetabling Support Office](http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/qualityassurance/goodpractice/studentandprogrammehandbooks) for information on key processes and supporting technologies.

The appendix to the policy (College Teaching Day notice) includes some advice on the timings of examinations.

It is essential that staff are given adequate warning of their commitments to teaching, examining and related administrative work to ensure they are available.
If PhD students and/or postdoctoral research assistants are involved in teaching it is essential that they are given appropriate training first and provided with a formal contract to undertake the work from HR. A roles and responsibilities document for Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) can be found here.

### Availability of Lecture Notes

Material such as lecture notes, hand-outs and reading lists should be made available to students online once they are registered. Many programmes use Blackboard Learn, which is part of the College’s Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) suite.

### Recording of Lectures

The College strongly encourages staff to record their lectures.

College guidelines on audio and video lecture recording can be found here.

#### 7.5 Term Dates

Term dates can be found at:
http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/currentstudents/termdates

#### 8. Examinations and Assessments

8.1 Academic and Examination Regulations.

The College’s Examination Regulations relate to all matters to do with examinations and the College’s Academic Regulations contain the regulations for the award of all College degrees. Any changes to either set of Regulations must be approved by QAEC and by Senate. It is a department’s responsibility to ensure that delivery of each programme adheres to these regulations which can be downloaded at the following link:

http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/information/academicregulations

Each programme should have a marking scheme which sets out the individual weighting assigned to each element of the programme and describes how the final overall mark is determined. Please refer to the Regulations for the Examination of Master’s Level Programmes (including Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate).

In addition to a marking scheme, programmes should have marking or assessment criteria (made easily available to students) which make clear what standard of work is expected in order for a student to achieve a distinction, merit, pass, etc.

The marking of assessments which count towards a student’s degree classification should be carried out by at least two markers. The markers can use either blind or open double marking or check
marking. Where there are differences in marks for individual assignments, questions, etc., these may be resolved between the markers themselves or with the intervention of a third party. The third party is normally a College Examiners, but may also be an External Examiner.

Second Marking

- Double marking (open or blind) is considered good practice
- All scripts/essays/reports/dissertations and coursework which count towards the award should be annotated to show first and second marking has taken place
- Assessment cover sheets should be use and show the first and second marker’s assessment for each question
- Different coloured pens should been used by each marker
- Each marker should initial each page to confirm it has been read
- Each marker should sign to confirm agreed marks
- All comments from each marker with regards to marks awarded should be included
- An explanation should be provided on how final marks were agreed where marks awarded by each marker differ
- Where a third party intervenes when marks cannot be agreed by the first and second marker this should be clearly noted on the cover sheet.
- Where students are taught and assessed at a partner institution / organisation: the work should checked by an Imperial College Examiner (a sample of work is acceptable).

Moderation is a function carried out by the External Examiner(s) to assure that an assessment outcome is fair and reliable and that assessment criteria have been applied consistently. Moderation focuses on the marks awarded to the full set of assessed work for a task, modules or programme in the context of the academic standards for the award. It is therefore separate from the question of how differences in marks between two or markers are resolved and is not about making changes to an individual student’s marks.

To enable moderation to take place and to ensure that External Examiners have enough evidence to determine that internal marking is of an appropriate standard and consistent, an adequate sample of scripts/coursework should be made available for External Examiners to view. The principles for such selection must be agreed in advance with the External Examiners. External Examiners should see a sample of scripts and other assessed examination material from the top, the middle and the bottom of the range. They should normally see all scripts of borderline candidates and see all scripts assessed internally as failures.

For further information on marking and moderation, see the guidance note: Protocol for Marking and Moderation.

8.2 Examination Boards

Examination Boards are usually made up of the Chair (for Master’s level programmes this is often the Programme Director), external examiners and internal/College examiners. Normally all academic staff involved in substantive teaching on the Master’s programme are appointed as College
Examiners. Assessors may be appointed to assist Boards in the setting of papers in special subjects, to mark scripts and to attend practical examinations. Assessors are not members of examination boards and, unless invited, do not attend the meetings.

Assistant Examiners may be appointed to assist in the marking of scripts at examinations where there are large numbers of candidates taking written papers or practical examinations, and may be required to attend practical examinations. Assistant Examiners are not members of Boards and are not entitled to set papers or, unless invited, to attend their meetings.

The role of the examination board is to agree the marks for every student after each module of the programme and to determine the final outcome of the award (pass/fail and degree classification). There may be internal sub-board meetings but there will only be one meeting of each Board where awards are confirmed, this is known as the Final Board of Examiners’ Meeting (FBEM). Normally a minimum of 60 per cent of the membership of the Board of Examiners should be present for valid decisions to be taken. External Examiners do not normally attend sub-board meetings but all External Examiners should attend the Final Board of Examiners for valid decisions to be taken.

After the marks have been agreed, they are passed onto the Registry using a template that is supplied to departments. Official notification of results to students comes from the Registry. The results are made available for students to access online. If a student has failed Registry will inform them of the decision of the Examination Board to fail them.

Mitigating Circumstances should be considered separately from the FBEM meetings. Students are normally required to submit requests for mitigation in accordance with the prescribed procedure. Submissions by students should be considered by a Mitigation Advisory Panel (MAP). The MAP considers the scope and extent (Severe/Moderate/Slight/None) of mitigating circumstances affecting students’ module/component/element results. The MAP consists of a small group of key staff (e.g. Head of Department, Programme Director, Chair of Board, Director of Postgraduate Students and Postgraduate Tutor), at least one of whom should be a member of the relevant Board of Examiners, which makes recommendations to the full Board. The MAP will determine the amount of information which may be released to the Board subject to the wishes of the student.

The Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedures are available at:

www.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/policiesandprocedures/examinationassessment

The roles and responsibilities of the Chair of the Board of Examiners are available at:

www.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/qualityassurance/goodpractice

All Boards should keep full and accurate minutes of their reasons and decisions. The minutes for the Final Board of Examiners (FBEM) must be submitted to Registry who will keep a central record. Minutes can be emailed directly to the Quality Assurance Administrator at:

external.examiner@imperial.ac.uk

Further details regarding examination boards including items to include in examination board minutes with an agenda template can be found in the Conduct of Master’s Level Board of Examiners’ Meetings.
From 2014-5, the Final Board of Examiners’ Meeting is normally anonymous to ensure parity of treatment for all candidates. However, as the small size, involvement of external examiners in the viva voce examinations and/or the identifying nature of each candidate’s individual project, can make it impractical to ensure anonymity for Master’s level candidates, programmes can therefore seek permission from the relevant Master’s Quality Committee for their Final Boards not to be anonymous.

The College recommends anonymity is practiced where this is reasonable and practical.

The procedure for requesting a dispensation from the anonymity requirement can be found here: http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/policiesandprocedures/examinationassessment

8.3 Releasing marks to students

The College has guidelines on releasing coursework marks to students and encourages departments to provide students with constructive feedback promptly:

https://workspace.imperial.ac.uk/registry/Public/Policy_Framework/04.Examination_and_Assessment/Guidance_Issuing_Actual_Coursework_Marks.pdf

8.4 Reporting Marks to Registry/Awarding Degrees

Departments are requested to confirm their examination units in advance of the meeting of the Board of Examiners. Once the Final Board of Examiners has met and confirmed the marks, progression outcomes (for part-time programmes) and degree classifications these should be reported to Registry on the approved template. By returning the spreadsheet the department is confirming the marks have been checked and approved by the Chair of the Board of Examiners. The date of award for taught postgraduate programmes which finish in September will be 1 November each year. Taught postgraduate degrees which finish at any other time of year will be awarded on the first day of the month following the month in which the programme ended.

Degree certificates are sent to students’ home address following the date of award.

8.5 Appeals

Students may make a representation against decisions of Boards of Examiners; they may appeal against a decision requiring them to withdraw from College. Further information regarding appeals can be found at:

www.imperial.ac.uk/registry/exams/studentappeals

Guidance for departments on how to deal with appeals can be found at:

http://www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/secretariat/college-governance/charters-statutes-ordinances-and-regulations/ordinances/students/

8.6 Exam Stationery
In August the Registry’s Senate and Academic Review Team will write to departments to ask for examination stationery requirements for the coming year – stationery orders will be delivered directly to named contacts in departments at the beginning of November.

8.7 Re-sit Examinations

If a student fails an examination, they are permitted to retake that examination once more only. Re-sit marks are capped to a Pass grade. The External Examiner(s) must approve the re-sit paper.

8.8 Deferring Examinations

Students can defer taking their exams until the next year. The mitigating circumstances should be presented to the Examination Board. When results are reported to Registry, the results should be reported as a deferred decision. The relevant records team in Registry should also be informed of the deferral.

8.9 Projects

Master’s projects are normally supervised by a member of academic staff (sometimes in partnership with an industrialist if the project is carried out in industry). Projects may be undertaken outside the College provided that regular contact is maintained and the relevant policy and procedure followed. A project can be undertaken in the field with direct supervision from the home academic department providing that the College’s off-site working procedures are adhered to. However, where provision of a project involves a third party organisation acting as host (i.e. a placement provider) a co-supervisor at the host organisation would ordinarily be appointed. In all cases, the project supervisor should have regular meetings with the student.

For more information on placements in particular see Section 13 of this Handbook in the first instance.

8.10 Oral assessments including viva voce examinations

Oral assessments are defined by Imperial as a conversation or oral presentation on a given topic. This definition also includes the viva voce examination which is used in specific circumstances, such as for the defence of a thesis, to determine the final result for the award and inconsideration of borderline candidates or to determine prizes. All oral assessments must be conducted by not less than two examiners acting together. Viva voce examinations must include an external examiner and no-one may attend the examination except the examiners and the candidate.

For see the document Conduct of Oral Assessments (including viva voce examinations) for Undergraduate and Master’s Level Programmes for more information.

MRes programmes: In all cases MRes students should have at least one oral assessment.

9. External Examiners

All information relating to the external examiner process and procedures can be found in the Regulations for the Examination of Taught Master’s Degrees

10.1 Roles & Responsibilities
The role of the External Examiner is that of a moderator. Their main duties are to:

- Approve examination papers
- Review coursework
- See all examination scripts and research project dissertations
- Attend the Final Board of Examiners meeting
- Complete a report to the College within one month of the Examination Board

Further details of the role and function of external examiners can be found on the external examiner website.

9.1 Appointment

External Examiners can be drawn from other universities, research institutions and industry in the UK. External examiners are nominated by departments via an External Examiner Nomination Form and the nominations are scrutinised and approved by the Vice Provost (Education) or nominee. The College has detailed guidelines for departments on the nomination and approval of external examiners, incorporating the requirements of the QAA. All of which can be found at:

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

When completing the nomination form, it is necessary to clearly state any postgraduate teaching and examining experience the nominee has; it is not sufficient to simply attach a CV. An inexperienced examiner may be nominated, provided that they will be working with an experienced examiner. Heads of Department should also complete the section on the form that asks which existing external examiner (if any) the proposed new external examiner will be replacing.

The Regulations for the Examination of Taught Master’s degrees contains the criteria that external examiners must fulfil.

Examiners can normally serve a maximum of four years but can be considered to serve a fifth year in exceptional circumstances (a special case should be put to Vice Provost (Education)).

All external examiners are invited to attend an Induction Day organised by the Senate and Academic Review Team. The day consists of a formal session of background briefing on the College academic structure, its expectations of external examiners and how it responds to external examiner reports. Examiners are also given the opportunity to visit the department to which they are appointed.

Appointing New Examiners

It is recommended that new examiners are appointed whilst experienced examiners are still in post so that the newer examiner can benefit from working with them.

9.2 External Examiner’s Report
External examiners are asked to submit a written report giving detailed feedback on the assessment process and the academic standards of the awards. The reports are considered by departments which are required to provide a formal response to the comments made by the external examiner. The report, with the departmental response, is then sent to the Vice Provost (Education) for scrutiny. The Vice Provost (Education) will highlight areas where further action is required (and therefore seek further assurances from a department on the resolution of a particular problem) and will also highlight instances of good practice. In cases where further action is required, the report is then returned to the department to take appropriate action.

A College-wide summary report on all reports is produced and considered by the relevant MQC and this is subsequently reported to Senate. Following consideration of the reports, the Registry provides feedback to external examiners. From 2011-12 external examiner reports, and the departmental responses to them, have been available on the College’s intranet.

If the examiner suggests changes to the programme(s) and the department wishes to follow their recommendations, these will need to be approved by the relevant Master’s Quality Committee – see Section 16.2 on programme modifications.

10. Transferring and Interrupting Programmes of Study

10.1 Transferring to a different programme

In exceptional cases, students may transfer to another Master's level programme in the College. This needs the consent of both Programme Directors and the Registry. Students wishing to transfer to a programme in another department will also need to obtain the agreement of the DPGS in both departments before transferring.

10.2 Interruption of Studies

Some students may need to take a temporary break from their studies due to personal, health, financial or other. An interruption of studies usually lasts for a full year, during which time the student is not considered to be a registered student of the College. This means they are likely to be liable for Council Tax and, if they are from outside the EU, may be required to leave the United Kingdom for the period of their interruption. Further information is available at:

http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/currentstudents/registrationchanges

11. European Credit Transfer & Accumulation System (ECTS)

The College’s main academic credit currency is ECTS.

The ECTS system is part of the Bologna Process, the project to integrate higher education qualifications across Europe. In practice, this means that all programmes are assigned a certain number of credits, based on the student workload required. The Bologna Process defines three cycles of higher education: Bachelor’s, Master’s, and doctoral. The typical credit ranges are 180-240 units for the first (Bachelor's) and 90-120 units for the second (Master's) cycle; for the latter, a minimum of 60 units must be at second cycle level. There is no credit range for the third (doctoral) cycle.
Generally, a standalone Imperial Master’s programme (MSc, MRes, MBA or MPH) should be assigned 90 credits and should last for 12 months, normally starting in October and finishing no earlier than mid-September.

A single ECTS credit represents between 25-30 nominal hours of student workload. (At Imperial the standard is 25 hours per ECTS). The ECTS assignment should be completed at the proposal stage for a new programme and kept up to date thereafter.

Further information is available from:

http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/ectsinformation


The European Commission’s website:


Although ECTS are formally awarded by the College for the successful completion of a programme of study, all programmes must also be aligned with the UK’s Framework for Higher Education Qualification (FHEQ) – see:

http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/qualifications

Programme learning outcomes must also be aligned with the relevant subject benchmark statement:

http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements

12. Student Feedback

12.1 Feedback on Academic Progress

Students must receive regular feedback on their progress throughout their programme. Students regard feedback as key to identifying ways in which they can improve their performance. Feedback provides vital reassurance for highly performing students who lack personal confidence but is also useful to those students who may be struggling and require more support.

Feedback can be provided to students using a variety of methods which include; written, oral, group, individual and online. Students should expect to receive feedback throughout the year.

Where possible, students should receive feedback on their work within 2 weeks.

12.2 Student Feedback

Students must also have opportunities to give feedback on their programme and their wider College experience. It is important that departments communicate to students how they have addressed any issues raised by students. See the section on Surveys below for further information.
12.3 Staff-Student Committees

The Staff-Student Committee provides an important forum for students to express their views. The departmental year representatives should ensure that all students have the opportunity to have their views expressed at these meetings and the minutes of these meetings should be circulated to all students.

**Staff-Student Committees**

Guidance on good practice for Staff-Student Committees and a model agenda is available at:

http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/qualityassurance/goodpractice/goodpracticeguides

12.4 Surveys

Details of the all surveys run centrally by the College can be found at:

www.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/surveys

The main College-wide surveys are:

**PG SOLE Lecturer/Module Evaluations**

The PG Student On-line Evaluation (SOLE) lecturer/module survey contains questions relating to the modules taught on each programme and the lecturers who teach those modules. PG SOLE results for individual members of staff included in the survey are sent electronically first to the relevant Head of Department and DPGS for review before they are sent direct to individual staff. PG SOLE runs at the end of the autumn and spring terms.

The Registry Surveys Team will contact Programme Directors at the beginning of the autumn and spring terms to collect details of the module and lecturers which are needed to run the survey.

Further information regarding PG SOLE is available online at:

www.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/surveys/pgsole

**Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)**

The Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) is a national survey of Master’s students which invites them to comment on their programme and experience. Imperial takes part in PTES on a biennial basis and is next due to take part in PTES in 2016.

Master’s (MSc, MRes, MBA and MPH) students are asked to complete the survey however, students on collaborative programmes, distance learning programmes, postgraduate certificates and postgraduate diplomas and 1st year part-time students are not be included.

Further information regarding PTES, including results, is available online at:

www.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/surveys/ptes
Student Experience Survey (SES)
The SES is a survey for all students concerned with a broad range of non-academic services and facilities provided by the College and the ICU. For Master’s students it runs in alternate years to PTES. It is therefore next due to run in 2017 and will be in two phases: Phase 1 at the beginning of the autumn term with a focus on arrival and induction and Phase 2 in the spring term with a focus on the student experience, wellbeing and support arrangements.

If you have any queries on the above surveys, you can contact the Registry’s Survey Team via email at surveys.registrysupport@imperial.ac.uk or call +44 (0) 20759 48013.

12.4.1 Student Survey Policy

The College’s Student Survey Policy can be found at:

http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/surveys/additionalinfo

Please read this before implementing any surveys of your students.

Surveys

The Registry’s Survey Team has created a Good Practice for Surveys website with advice, resources and case studies on improving participation rates, responding to student feedback and using surveys to enhance the student experience. This is available at:

www.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/surveys/additionalinfo/goodpracticeforsurveys

13. Placements

The College’s Placement Learning Policy outlines the College’s definition of a placement (see below) and the responsibilities of the College to students selected and preparing for and undertaking a placement, the rights and responsibilities of placement students themselves and what is expected from placement providers.

This policy is supported by a framework of Good Practice for curriculum-based placements at all levels of study. The aim is to assist a department in managing the “placement” process in a risk-based but proportional manner, with due regard for example to the regularity of use of a particular placement provider, the volume of students involved, the location of a placement, the content of a particular placement and, of course, the student concerned. There will naturally be some placements which require more work to support their management, from planning, through approval to completion.

The definition of a placement is: work experience, assessed project work, a period of course-based study or a period of research (for which academic credit is awarded and/or where the student remains subject to College student regulations during the relevant period) where there is a transfer of direct supervision of the student to a third party (i.e. where a member of staff at the third party acts as the day-to-day supervisor/manager) for a period of 2 weeks or more.
The third party would normally be external to the College Estate; however, the College may itself serve as a “third party” by providing a placement (e.g. UROP projects undertaken by students in an area of College other than their home department). Placements may themselves incorporate a further “placement” elsewhere; in such cases it would be the responsibility of the original placement provider to act as the primary supervisor/manager of the further placement, unless such supervision is formally ceded back to the College.

Please note that the Placement Learning Policy and Good Practice are interwoven into the College’s Off-Site working policy.

While many Master’s level programmes clearly promote/manage such opportunities the Placement Learning Policy and Good Practice seeks also to provide a template routine for Programme Directors to follow where their programme does not commonly see placements taking place.

It is also perfectly agreeable for a Programme Director to rule out the possibility of a placement as part of their programme.

While most placements which are agreed to by a Programme Director tend to take place in the UK, they can also be considered for where location is abroad. A Placements Abroad Handbook (maintained by Registry) is available for use of by all students.

Where a placement is managed within the framework of a student exchange agreement the management of the student exchange agreement itself is dealt with in accordance with the College’s Procedure for the Establishment, Renewal & Review of Student Exchange Partners, available here. All exchange links are normally subject to renewal every five years by the relevant quality committee. For Master’s level programmes this is the MQC.

The Placement Learning Policy and Good Practice guidance is available at:

www.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/qualityassurance/collaborative/placements

Guidance and advice can be sought from the Assistant Registrar (Placements)

13.1 Erasmus+

The College participates in the European Commission’s Erasmus+ Programme (2014-2020) which provides a framework for placement activity where the location is ordinarily within Europe (terms and conditions apply). Participation in Erasmus+ enables the College to access a system of mobility grants, while departments who pursue Erasmus activities can apply on an annual basis for access to organisational funding. Further enquiries can be made to the Assistant Registrar (Placements).

14. Co-Curricular and Extracurricular Studies

14.1 Allocation of ECTS Credits to extra-curricular activities
Senate has approved College procedures for allowing students to gain formal recognition (ECTS credits) for academic work which is not part of the curriculum. Such credits could be accrued for approved extra-curricular courses (run for example by the Centre for Languages, Culture and Communication (CLCC) or the Business School) during term time.

Further information is available at:

http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/ectsinformation

15. Programme Information

The College has a responsibility and, in some cases there is also a regulatory requirement, to ensure that a definitive record of each programme of study is held.

Consumer Law Advice

The Competitions and Marketing Authority (CMA) has produced some guidance for Higher Education Providers and students to help them understand their rights under Consumer Protection Law:

https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/higher-education-consumer-law-advice-for-providers-and-students

15.1 Programme Specifications

A programme specification is a concise description of the intended learning outcomes of a higher education programme and the means by which these outcomes are achieved and demonstrated. All programmes must have a programme specification, in the College’s agreed format, which is available on the programme's webpages for current and/or prospective students.

The Registry’s programme specification webpage should have a link to all Master’s programme specifications. Programme Directors own and are responsible for ensuring programme specifications are up to date, and for providing the Registry with the relevant web link. Programme specifications must be up-to-date, easily accessible and correspond with the information provided in student handbooks. A programme specification template and guidance notes are available for use in the updating process. It has been agreed that all departments should use this template to ensure consistency of approach and that a programme specification should be available for each programme. Where appropriate a single programme specifications document may be produced for different variations/pathways of the same programme.

15.2 Academic Regulations

The Academic Regulations contain descriptions of all awards offered at Imperial and how they are assessed. It is a department's responsibility to ensure that all programmes adhere to the regulations and are kept up to date.

15.3 Departmental Student System (DSS).
DSS is the College’s ‘Departmental Student System’, which offers departments a standard way to manage information about programmes, modules and students. It interfaces with the central student system (OSS) and can feed other systems that require teaching data, such as VLEs, PG SOLE and the College websites. DSS also includes an interface to the College's Outlook directory and creates student distribution lists based on their selected modules and/or programme umbrellas. All departments are encouraged to use DSS.

By default, all College staff have read-only access to DSS at:

http://www.imperial.ac.uk/DSS

Further information on DSS can be found at:

wiki.imperial.ac.uk/display/ictdss/Home

If you are interested in using DSS to manage teaching data in your department, or would like to request full access to the functionality, please contact The Registry Systems Team at:

registry.systems@imperial.ac.uk

15.4 Archives and Records Retention

The College has a records retention schedule. This is a list of records with time schedules for their retention and disposal or transfer to College Archives for permanent retention.

Information on record retention for academic departments (e.g. examination scripts and papers) and further information is available at:

www.imperial.ac.uk/recordsandarchives/recordsmanagement/retschedule

16. Quality Assurance Processes

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is an independent body which is responsible for safeguarding the standard and improving the quality of UK higher education. The QAA develop and maintain key documents, such as the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which are used by higher education providers to help them meet UK expectations about standards and quality.

The UK public funding body, HEFCE has a legal responsibility for ensuring that the provision they fund is quality assessed and they contract the QAA to carry out this function on their behalf. The UK Research Councils stipulate that in order to receive funding, research organisations, such as Imperial, must adopt recognised quality standards for postgraduate training at least equal to the QAA’s codes/guidance for selecting, administering and supervising students throughout their period of training.

All UK institutions have their own internal quality assurance, standards and enhancement procedures based around the QAA’s key documents. The QAA reports on how well each institution meets their responsibilities for assuring quality and standards, using processes of peer review. The QAA review involves a thorough evaluation of the institution’s educational provision and results in a
published report that makes judgments and recommendations about academic standards and quality, as well as highlighting good practice. The QAA publishes their findings on their website.

The College is next due to undergo a review by the QAA in 2016/17. However, this may change as HEFCE are currently tendering for the role of a quality assessor and it is not currently known who by or what form the 2016-7 review will follow.

At Imperial, the quality assurance, standards and enhancement procedures are collectively termed the “Quality Framework”. Key procedures in the Quality Framework are list below:

16.1 Approval of New Programmes

A proposal for a new programme must initially gain approval from the host department and, if applicable, by their Faculty also. Once this has been obtained, the Programme Director (in consultation with their Director of Postgraduate Studies) should submit a completed new programme approval form for review to their relevant MQC secretary.

The programme proposal will undergo an external review prior to being considered by the relevant Master's Quality Committee (MQC) and then Senate.

The College will comply with the College’s Master’s Level Precepts when considering the approval of new Master’s level programmes. Departments proposing new MRes programmes should also refer to the Code of Practice for MRes programmes.

For further details and guidance, please refer to the webpages on programme approval and review.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Programme Proposals</th>
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<tr>
<td>It is good practice to consult with existing students when proposing a new programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departments are also strongly encouraged to contact the Education Development Unit (EDU) in the early stages of planning a new programme. The EDU can advise on all aspects of learning, teaching and assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/edudev">http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/edudev</a></td>
</tr>
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16.2 Amendments to Existing Programmes

If you wish to make a change to any part of a programme (including examination and assessment criteria), you will need to submit a programme modification form. The modification form is considered by the relevant Departmental Teaching Committee and by the appropriate Master’s Quality Committee. Proposed changes to the programme must be submitted to the Master’s Quality Committee before they are implemented. Minor changes do not need approval of the Master’s Quality Committees but should be reported to ensure an overview is kept at institutional Level. Major changes will also require Senate permission.

The levels of approval document will help you decided whether modifications should be classed as minor or major. For further advice please contact the Registry’s Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team.
Suspension or withdrawal of a programme for whatever reason needs approved by the relevant Masters Quality Committee and Senate.

Changes to programmes should be submitted to the relevant Departmental Teaching Committee and Masters Quality Committee using the Modifications to Postgraduate Masters Level Programmes of Study Form which can be downloaded at the following link:

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

Where a change is deemed necessary during the session then the student cohort in that year must be consulted and agree to the changes. Retrospective changes require MQC and Senate approval regardless of whether the change is minor.

If you wish to suspend or withdraw a programme for whatever reason, this also needs to be approved by the relevant Master's Quality Committee via submission of the Programme Modification Form. If approved, the MQC will recommend the suspension/withdrawal for Senate approval.

Programme Modifications

Modifications to programmes should be submitted for approval well in advance of the start of the academic year in which they are expected to be implemented.

It is always good practice to consult with existing students and to invite comments from external examiners over changes for ensuing years.

Departments are also strongly encouraged to contact the Education Development Unit (EDU) in the early stages of planning programme modifications. The EDU can advise on all aspects of learning, teaching and assessment.

http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/edudev

Higher Education and Consumer Law

The Competitions and Markets Authority (CMA) have published advice for higher education providers and students to help them understand their obligations under consumer protection law:

https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/higher-education-consumer-law-advice-for-providers-and-students

16.3 Programme Review

At an institutional level, the College assures the quality and standards of its Master’s level programmes by carrying out Routine and Periodic reviews. Routine Reviews are an internal paper-
based peer review exercise whereas Periodic Reviews include departmental visits and consideration by external assessors.

16.3.1 Routine Reviews

During the 2015-6 academic session the College will move to departmental level annual monitoring of Master’s level programmes.

Annual monitoring returns will considered in detail by the relevant Master’s Quality Committee, who will use the exercise to not only evaluate the provision but also to identify good practice that can be highlighted to Senate for wider circulation. The review of external examiner reports will be incorporated within the annual monitoring process as will the review of the management of any departmental collaborative provision.

All new Master’s programmes will be required to submit a second stage review to the relevant quality committee in their second year of operation.

Further details of the routine review of programmes can be found at:

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

16.3.2 Departmental Periodic Review

Periodic reviews of departmental Master’s provision take place normally every five years and are closely aligned with accreditation where appropriate so that the same or similar documentation compiled for accreditation can be used for periodic review, thus reducing the burden placed on departments. The annual monitoring returns (and pre-2015-6 programme reviews) also form part of the periodic review documentation. As part of the review, Master’s programmes are asked about their alignment to College’s Master’s Level Precepts which draw together existing College regulations and QAA guidelines.

A review panel, comprising both internal and external members as well as a student representative, is invited to spend a day in the department under review to consider documentation, meet with staff and students of the department and to see departmental facilities. A report is produced by the internal Chair of the review panel. The department is then required to make a formal response to the report. The report of the panel and the department’s response to the report are considered by the Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee (QAEC). A report is then made to Senate and any appropriate period of follow-up agreed.

Further details of the periodic review of departments and the review schedule can be found at:

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

17. Master’s Level Precepts
All Imperial Master’s awards should, normally, comply with the College’s Master’s Level Precepts. The Precepts allow departments to have a degree of latitude in implementing and reflecting on their own systems and procedures but also ensure that there is consistency of standards across Imperial.

The Master’s Level Precepts draw together the College’s Master’s level degree regulations and procedures with QAA guidance. The Precepts are aligned with the QAA’s UK Quality Code for Higher Education and took effect from AY 2013-4

Departments are asked to demonstrate their compliance against set of “Master’s Level Precepts” during their periodic review of postgraduate Master’s level provision. The College will also ensure departmental compliance with these precepts when considering the approval of new Master’s level programmes.

The precepts can be found at:

http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/qualityassurance/approvalandreview/postgraduateresearchprogrammeapprovalandreviewprocesses/masterslevelprecepts

18. Code of Practice for MRes Programmes

The College introduced a code of Practice for MRes programmes with effect from 2013-4. The code can be found at:

http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/qualityassurance/codesofpractice/codeofpracticeformresprogrammes

The Code should be referenced in MRes programme handbooks. The College will check compliance with the code as part of the approval, routine and periodic review processes for programmes.

19. Short Courses

A growing number of Programme Directors are offering modules/units of their Master’s level programmes as continuing professional development short courses to bring in additional income.

Guidelines to support this activity can be found at:

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

Short Courses must have the approval of the Short Course Quality Committee (and, in some cases, also Senate) before they can be offered. For further details and how to obtain approval see:

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

20. Further Sources and Examples of Good Practice

20.1 Imperial
The Registry’s Senate and Academic Review Team publish good practice highlighted as part of periodic reviews on their website annually at:

www.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/qualityassurance/approvalandreview

The Registry’s Senate and Academic Review Team also publish summaries of External Examiners reports on their website annually:

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

A document by the Director of Student Support regarding the student experience is available at:

workspace.imperial.ac.uk/registry/Internal/Improving%20the%20student%20experience.pdf

20.2 Quality Assurance Agency

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is available at:

http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality

20.3 QAA Case Studies:

The QAA provides case studies supplied by higher education providers, giving full details of the initiatives regarded as good practice, why these were developed, and how they were evaluated. The QAA hope that these will stimulate discussion among practitioners and students in higher education, and promote enhancement of the learning experience.

http://www.qaa.ac.uk/improving-higher-education/good-practice

20.4 Guidance for higher education providers and current and prospective students

The QAA, working with partners across the higher education sector, publish guidance on a variety of subjects, including:

- workload
- class size
- staff teaching qualifications
- how institutions respond to student feedback

The guidance is intended to support providers in making information available to current and prospective students, and advise students on the questions to ask and the aspects of the learning experience to consider when applying for a higher education programme.

http://www.qaa.ac.uk/improving-higher-education/research

20.5 Good Practice Knowledgebase

The Knowledgebase contains features of good practice taken from QAA’s main review methods and is available at:
20.6 Higher Education Empirical Research (HEER) database

The HEER database provides a quick and easy way to keep up to date with the latest research in higher education. The database provides summaries of the latest published research on a range of higher education topics, and has been redeveloped by QAA to provide a user-friendly service. It is free to register.

heer.qaa.ac.uk/pages/default.aspx

20.7 Higher Education Academy (HEA)

The HEA supports institutions to enhance the student learning and teaching experience through a range of services - for individual learning and teaching professionals, for senior managers in institutions, and for subject and discipline groups.

The HEA resource Centre is available at:

www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources