

QUALITY ASSURANCE & ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

**The minutes of the Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee (QAEC)
held on
Monday 1st July 2013**

Present:

Professor Debra Humphris, Pro Rector (Education) - Chair
Professor Andrew George, Director of the Graduate School
Professor Nigel Gooderham, Senior College Consul
Mr Doug Hunt, ICU Deputy President (Education)
Mr Nigel Wheatley, Academic Registrar
Dr Simon Archer, College Tutor
Professor Sue Smith, Faculty of Medicine
Dr Paul Lickiss, Department of Chemistry
Dr David McPhail, Deputy Director of the Graduate School
Mr Ebrahim Mohamed, Imperial College Business School

In attendance:

Mr Chris Harris, Quality Assurance & Enhancement Manager, Faculty of Medicine
Ms Sophie White, Senior Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance & Enhancement)
Mr Richard Monk, Assistant Registrar (Senate & Academic Review)
Mr Dan Smith, Management Trainee
Mrs Clare Scheibner, Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance & Enhancement), (Secretary)

Apologies:

Professor Dot Griffiths, Imperial College Business School
Professor Omar Matar, Department of Chemical Engineering
Professor Richard Thompson, College Consul for Natural Sciences
Professor Denis Wright, Director of Student Affairs
Professor Robin Leatherbarrow, College Consul for Natural Sciences

MINUTES

- 1. Welcome and Apologies**
Professor Humphris welcomed members to the meeting and apologies, as listed above, were noted.
- 2. Minutes**
The minutes of the Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee (QAEC) held on 30th May 2013 were approved. **QAEC.2012.107**
- 3. Matters arising from the Minutes**
 - 3.1** Matters arising not appearing elsewhere on the agenda were discussed.

3.1.1 Further to Minute 5 regarding re-sit opportunities, it was reported that the revised regulations for resit examinations for all undergraduate degree programmes was approved by Senate in June 2013. There was general discussion regarding the communication of these changes to both staff and students. Mr Nigel Wheatley confirmed that the information could be included in current communications sent to students from the Registry during October. A text outlining the changes would also be produced by Registry and distributed to Departments for their use and inclusion in Student Handbooks.

Action: Sally Baker

3.1.2 Further to Minute 6 regarding the conduct of Examination Boards, it was noted that Senate had approved revisions to the 'Conduct of Undergraduate Examination Boards' guidance document, which now includes the requirement for the identity of examination candidates to remain anonymous. It was further reported that the revised 'Conduct of Undergraduate Examination Boards' would be fully effective from 2013-14 in the Faculties of Medicine and Engineering. The Faculty of Natural Sciences would harmonise this procedure and pilot the new arrangements in 2013-14 with a view to full implementation in 2014-15.

3.1.3 Further to Minute 7 regarding undergraduate year weightings, it was reported that the Senate had approved a new College policy outlining undergraduate year weightings for the Faculties of Engineering and Natural Sciences which would harmonise weightings within the two Faculties. The policy would be introduced on a rolling basis and would be applied to Year 1 with effect from October 2013.

3.1.4 Further to Minute 10.2 it was noted that the wording for the diploma supplement for the award of integrated Master's had been agreed and would be introduced for all MEng/MSci awards from 1st Aug 2013.

3.2 A list of actions from the previous QAEC meetings was received, it was noted that the following action completion dates had been postponed until the QAEC meeting in October 2013.

QAEC.2012.108

- Procedures for checking the quality of teaching and learning materials for programmes which have e-learning/blended learning element: The E-learning Committee are to consider whether centralised guidelines are required. (Professor Omar Matar)
- School of Professional Development Courses, the School of Professional Development would develop courses for staff appointed to those roles described in the College's roles and responsibilities document and a course on how to increase student engagement with courses. (Professor Andrew George)
- Reviewing student engagement, the ICU and the Registry would develop a list of KPIs which could be used to assess and review annually the opportunities for students to engage in their education with a view to enhancing policies and processes appropriately. (Mr Doug Hunt)

4. QAA Institutional Audit

4.1 The Committee received the latest version of the College's 2010 Institutional Audit Action Plan. **QAEC.2012.109**

4.1.1 Following discussion it was noted that work was in progress regarding MSci/MEng final year pass mark vs. stand-alone MSc pass mark. Professor Humphris reported that she was in discussion with the Faculty of Natural Sciences.

Action: Debra Humphris

4.1.2 It was further noted that the methods for dealing with borderline candidates at Master's level was being taken forward by the Quality Assurance Team.

Action: Quality Assurance Team

5. Education and Student Strategy

5.1 Professor Humphris provided a verbal update regarding the Education and Student Strategy. The strategy document had now been approved by Management Board and focus would now turn to planning the implementation of the strategy. Professor Humphris agreed to circulate the document considered by the Management Board and it was noted that this document was confidential and not for further circulation.

Post Meeting Note

The Education and Student Strategy document has been circulated to Committee members.

5.1.1 Professor Humphris informed the Committee that the current College Strategy (2010-14) was due for review. It was noted that the current strategy had not kept pace with the fast moving changes in teaching delivery methods and technology.

5.1.2 It was further noted that the President and Rector was currently in the early stages of forming the new College Strategy for 2015, a HoD and Senior Management Team away day would be held in January 2014 to discuss the future College Strategy.

6. Surveys

6.1 Surveys Working Party

The Committee noted that a Working Party on Surveys, to be led by Ms Michelle Coupland, Director of Strategic Planning, would be established to develop a strategy to achieve the ambition in the new Education & Student Strategy to *"Implement a student survey and feedback framework which will rationalise the current range of surveys, systematically inform enhancement and create a robust feedback loop to students and staff."* This working party would focus on implementing changes for the 2014-5 academic session.

6.1.1 Following general discussion regarding the current College surveys a concern was raised about whether the numerous student research related surveys would be included in the remit of the Working Party. It was noted that if the Working Party were going to include research surveys in their review, ethical considerations would need to be taken into account.

Post Meeting Note

It was agreed that academic surveys were currently outside of the remit of the surveys working party.

- 6.1.2** A further issue raised was the requirement for a clear framework to be provided to departments outlining the conduct and content and feedback of surveys.
- 6.1.3** The Committee heard that the Faculty of Medicine currently has a large number of staff who teach for short one-off periods and they would welcome a solution to effectively survey this group, such as, instant mobile phone applications or in lecture surveys, allowing students to complete a survey at the end of each lecture.
- 6.1.4** Mr Doug Hunt raised the issue of the lack of student feedback following surveys. Mr Hunt reported that recent comments from the student body have indicated that actions taken as a direct result of student comments given through surveys were not being communicated. Mr Hunt further commented that if more feedback was given to students following survey completion this may help decrease the current apathy toward participation. It was noted that Mr Hunt would be meeting with Michelle Coupland shortly to discuss this further.
- 6.1.5** The concerns raised were noted and it was agreed that these comments would be raised with the Surveys Working Party.

Post Meeting Note

All comments have been sent for consideration to the Surveys Working Party.

- 6.2 UG SOLE Results – Spring Term 2012-13** **QAEC.2012.110**
 The Committee considered the results from the Spring Term UG SOLE lecturer/module evaluation and the Spring Term UG SOLE overall course evaluation. It was noted that the overall participation rate had increased in comparison to 2011-12 Spring Term SOLE.
- 6.2.1** It was further noted that 2nd Year Medicine had particularly low participation rates; the Committee heard that the Department are trying to address this issue. Feedback from medical students regarding the SOLE survey included the unacceptable length of time it took to complete due to the number of lecturers a student may have during one term. It was agreed that issues raised regarding the survey will be addressed to the Survey Working Party.

Post Meeting Note

All comments have been sent for consideration to the Surveys Working Party.

- 6.2.2 UG SOLE overall course evaluation: responses from departments** **QAEC.2012.111**
 The Committee noted the responses from departments to their UG SOLE course evaluation results.
- 6.3 PG SOLE Results – Spring Term 2012-13** **QAEC.2012.112**
 The Committee considered the results from the Spring Term PG SOLE

lecturer/module evaluation and the Spring Term PG SOLE overall course evaluation. It was noted that the participation rate had risen slightly compared to PG SOLE Spring Term 2011-12.

- 6.3.1 PG SOLE overall course evaluation: responses from departments** **QAEC.2012.113**
QAEC.2012.113i
- The Committee considered the responses from departments to their PG SOLE overall course evaluation results. It was felt that the Chemical Engineering Department feedback report, which included both department and student responses to the survey results, was a good example model for other departments to adopt. However, there were some reservations about whether the entire Chemical Engineering student body were aware of the responses or survey results.
- 6.4 UG/PG SOLE overall course evaluation** **QAEC.2012.114**
- In place of paper QAEC.2012.114 the Committee received a response from the Faculty of Engineering concerning the UG/PG SOLE overall course evaluation survey.
- 6.4.1** It was noted that the Faculty of Engineering intend to provide clear and unified response to SOLE. It was further noted that Faculty of Engineering DUGS had expressed concern that the most recent SOLE surveys only had two questions. It was commented that previous surveys with more questions had produced better insights and been more useful, the Faculty would make an alternative suggestion. It was also commented that these changes had been made with little consultation with the Faculty. The Faculty further expressed their wish to focus on a small number of surveys, particularly the NSS and SOLE.
- 6.4.2** It was noted that changes to the SOLE Survey had been introduced by the previous Surveys Working Party and that there had been representation from the Faculty of Engineering on this group. It was agreed that the new Surveys Working Party should ensure that the Faculty of Engineering had adequate representation. It was further agreed that any changes to the SOLE survey and the reasons for those must be submitted to QAEC for approval. It was also agreed that the comments would be forwarded to the Survey Working Party.
- Post Meeting Note**
All comments have been sent for consideration to the Surveys Working Party.
- 6.4.3** It was enquired whether any comparison of the overall SOLE survey results and National Student Survey results had been compared. It was agreed this would be investigated.
- Action: Sophie White**
- Post Meeting Note**
A comparison of National Student Survey (NSS) results 2010, Autumn SOLE 2010 and Spring Sole 2010 had been carried out in June 2011. A similar comparison would be prepared for QAEC once the NSS 2013 results were available in August/September 2013.
- 6.5 PRES 2013**
- 6.5.1** The Committee considered a comparison of results from the PRES 2013, PRES 2011 and PRES 2008 surveys. The Committee noted that overall there had been **QAEC.2012.115**

an increase in positive responses year on year.

6.5.1.1 Further noted was the lowest number of positive responses across all surveys and subjects was to the question “*My institution values and responds to feedback from research degree students*”. However, this was also the area which generated the highest or second highest number of neutral responses across all surveys and subjects (2008: 41%, 2011: 28.6% and 2013: 31.5%). Themes in the textual comments on this subject in PRES 2013 included departments not caring about or addressing problems students had concerning poor supervision and the lack of any visible responses/changes being made as a result of student surveys. The closure of the Holland Club and Health Centre services for Postgraduate students were given as examples of how there was no “Postgraduate voice”.

6.5.1.2 The Committee noted that the textual comments regarding supervision indicated that the students who were not satisfied with their supervisor were at the extreme end of the spectrum and were, in most cases, very unhappy. Dr Simon Archer confirmed that this mirrored the student feedback to College Tutors. It was noted that the current suggested maximum number of students per supervisor was 6. It was agreed that an action plan to improve supervision would be developed and submitted to the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee in October 2013 and then presented to QAEC for consideration in November 2013.

Action: Andrew George

6.5.1.3 Professor Andrew George confirmed that Graduate School would be collating responses from departments to the PRES results which would be considered at the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee in October 2013 and then presented to QAEC in November 2013.

6.5.1.4 The Committee noted that despite the increase in positive responses to the statement “I have a suitable workspace” the free text comments revealed an on-going issue for some students with the lack of space, crowding, noise levels and poor working environments.

6.5.1.5 Professor Humphris informed the Committee that the Education and Student Strategy would address the issue of ensuring students are clear as to what the College offers in term of support. The Committee agreed that support resources at all College campuses needed to be considered.

6.5.2 The Committee considered the HEA sector and benchmarking PRES 2013 reports. It was noted that the College was in the lower quartile in the areas of Supervision, Progress and Assessment and their Rights and Responsibilities.

QAEC.2012.116

7. Master’s Degrees and Research Degrees Awards for 2011-2

QAEC.2012.117

The Committee considered a paper detailing the Master’s degrees awarded by course and research degrees awarded by department for 2011-12. It was noted that failure rates of above 10% would necessitate further discussion by the Master’s Quality Committee and the Department. The full awards report can be found [here](#).

8. Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for Reviewing Student Engagement

Mr Hunt confirmed that the ICU was currently preparing a paper regarding KPI's which could be used to assess and review annually the opportunities for students to engage in their education with a view to enhancing policy and processes appropriately. The paper will be discussed at the next QAEC meeting in October.

Action: ICU Deputy President Education

9. Research Student Handbooks

QAEC.2012.119

9.1 The Committee considered guidance on items to be provided in the Research Student Handbooks. It was suggested that the postgraduate proposition that will be developed as part of the Education & Student Strategy by a Working Party led by Professor Donal Bradley, should be included in the content. A further suggestion was that the order of contents be reconsidered, particularly the order of the registration procedures and policies section which includes information regarding academic integrity and plagiarism. Professor George informed the Committee that further narrative was to be added to the template and the suggested amendments would be made. It was noted that this may be too late for 2013-14 as many departments had written their handbooks already but would be in time for 2014-15. A template would be produced and submitted to QAEC by Easter 2014 for consideration.

Action: Graduate School Director & Sally Baker

10. Procedures for Providing External Examiners with Examination Scripts

QAEC.2012.120

The Committee considered a procedure for providing external examiners with examination scripts.

10.1 The Committee considered the recommendations for revisions to the current guidance on protocols for double marking with effect from 2013-14. The Committee requested that the External Examiner form and cover sheets where applicable, be amended to include the method of marking used, double marking or blind double marking, to ensure this is clear to external examiners and that the correct evidence of the marking used is provided. It was further noted that the form of marking used should also be made clear to students and included in student handbooks. The previous revisions were approved.

Action: Sally Baker

10.2 The Committee also considered changes to Section 18 of the Regulations for the Examination of BSc, MSci, BEng and MBBS Degrees and to the corresponding changes to Section 11 of the Regulations for the Examination of Taught Master's Degrees which would take effect from 2013-14. The proposed changes were approved and it was agreed to recommend them for Senate approval.

10.3 The Committee considered whether the moderation practices on MEd in University Learning and Teaching should be disseminated as an instance of good practice, the Committee agreed. It was further agreed the practices should be collated to provide a library of resource to exchange and share good practice.

11. Periodic Review Schedule

QAEC.2012.121

11.1 The Committee were invited to approve the periodic review schedule for 2013-14.

11.1.1 It was noted that departments had raised concerns regarding the timing of periodic reviews and requested they coincide with external accreditation reviews. It was also noted that the timing of reviews must be mindful of other College events. It was further noted that the Periodic Review Schedule was set 5 years in advance. Professor Humphris reported she was in discussion with departments regarding the review schedule.

Action: Debra Humphris

11.1.2 The Committee noted that the routine, periodic and accreditation reviews require similar data, it was therefore suggested that paperwork be harmonised where possible. Professor Nigel Gooderham felt that although periodic review generated a large volume of paperwork, it was nevertheless very valuable information. Professor Gooderham further commented that the current data requested for periodic review was fairly well harmonised with that required by the Graduate School and professional accreditation.

Action: Sally Baker

11.1.3 A concern was raised regarding the burden on Senior Staff, such as Consuls, who Chair reviews. It was agreed that staff such as members of QAEC could also Chair the reviews.

12. QAA – UK Quality Code for Higher Education

12.1 Chapter B2: Recruitment and Admission to Higher Education

QAEC.2012.122

The Committee considered a draft response to the QAA consultation on *Chapter 2: Recruitment and Admission to Higher Education*. For further details regarding the consultation please see:

www.qaa.ac.uk/Newsroom/Consultations/Pages/recruitment-admission.aspx

It was noted that the consultation was open until 1 August 2013. Ms. Mel Peter, Senior Assistant Registrar (Admissions) was leading the response. All Committee members were requested to forward any comments to Ms. Peter by 15th July 2013.

Post Meeting Note

No comments were received by the 15th July deadline and response was submitted.

12.2 Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards, Chapter B1: Programme design and Approval, Chapter B6: Assessment of students and Recognition of Prior Learning and Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring & Review

QAEC.2012.123

The Committee received the consultation questions on the draft versions of Part A: Setting and maintaining academic standards, *Chapter B1: Programme design and approval*, *Chapter B6: Assessment of students and recognition of prior learning*, and *Chapter B8: Programme monitoring and review* of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. For further details regarding the consultation please see:

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Newsroom/Consultations/Pages/qc-consultations.aspx>

It was noted that the consultation was open until 1 August 2013. All Committee

members were requested to forward any comments to Sophie White by 15th July 2013, a draft response would then be circulated for the consideration of the Committee.

Post Meeting Note

No comments were received by the 15th July deadline.

12.3 Higher Education Review Handbook

12.3.1 The Committee noted that the handbook for Higher Education Review had now been published. The handbook draws on the results of a formal consultation. The Committee noted various amendments that had been made as a result of the consultation.

12.3.2 It was further noted that Professor Denis Wright, in preparation for the College's next review, was in the process of preparing the "Self Evaluation Document" (SED).

12.4 QAA Implementation Timetable for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education **QAEC.2012.124**
The Committee noted the UK Quality Code timescales for future revision.

12.5 Review of subject benchmark statements

The Committee noted that the QAA's next review of subject benchmark statements was due and the QAA were welcoming feedback about any aspect which needs updating in individual statements. The feedback received would be taken into account in deciding the level of revision required for individual statements. As the review gets underway, the QAA will be inviting professional, statutory and regulatory bodies and subject associations and networks to be involved in the review of the relevant statement. It was agreed that Imperial College should register its interest in being involved in the review.

Post Meeting Note

The College's interest has been registered with the QAA and volunteers are being sought.

13. Our Principles

The Committee were invited to review and approve "Our Principles", the College's Student Charter for 2013-14. The Student Charter was originally approved by Senate in June 2012 and it was agreed that QAEC should review it annually. It was agreed that no amendments were required to the Charter at this time.

14. Revision to the College Strategy (2010-14)

This item was covered during agenda item 5.

15. QAEC Terms of Reference & Membership

QAEC.2012.125

The Committee noted that the Senate, held in June 2013, approved the new terms of reference and membership for the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC) with effect from October 2013. The terms of reference had been modified to repatriate to QAEC the consideration of the periodic reviews of undergraduate and postgraduate taught provision. A further amendment was noted, the removal of 'postgraduate research provision' from

'To undertake periodic review of undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research provision in Departments'. It was noted that the Strategic Education Committee (SEC) had now been disbanded.

16. RCUK Statement of Expectations for Doctoral Training

The Committee noted that the Research Council had published its "*Statement of Expectations for Doctoral Training*", which sets out common principles for the support of all Research Council-funded students. It was noted that the Graduate School would take this further. It was further noted that research degree precepts may need to be updated.

Action: Andrew George, Sophie White & Sally Baker

17 Any Other Business

17.1 It was reported that due to new legislation all External Examiners would be required to provide their passports and the External Examiner forms would be updated accordingly.

17.2 There was a vote of thanks for Mr Nigel Wheatley as this was his final QAEC meeting.

18. Dates of next meetings 2013-14

Tuesday 8th October 2013, 10am-1pm, Ballroom, 58 Prince's Gate
 Tuesday 26th November 2013, 10am-1pm, Ballroom, 58 Prince's Gate
 Thursday 16th January 2014, 10am-1pm Ballroom, 58 Prince's Gate
 Tuesday 4th March 2014, 10am - 1pm, Ballroom, 58 Prince's Gate
 Tuesday 1st April 2014, 10am - 1pm, Ballroom, 58 Prince's Gate
 Thursday 5th June 2014, 10am -1pm, Ballroom, 58 Prince's Gate
 Tuesday 1st July 2014, 10am -1pm, Ballroom, 58 Prince's Gate

19. Reserved Areas of Business

There was no reserved business.