

Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC)

Minutes from the meeting held on
Wednesday 9 October 2019

Present

David Ashton, Academic Registrar – Chair

Dr Lorraine Craig, Faculty of Engineering representative

Claire Stapley, CLCC/CHERS representative

Ashley Brooks, ICU Deputy President (Education)

Karen Tweddle, Business School representative

Laura Lane, Head of Strategy and Operations, Graduate School

Professor Peter Openshaw, Senior College Consul

Martin Lupton, Faculty of Medicine representative

Judith Webster, Head of Academic Services

Rebecca Middleton, Faculty of Natural Sciences representative

Dr Edgar Meyer, Chair of Programmes Committee

Mohit Devgan, GSU President

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

In attendance

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

Alexis Hillier, Quality Assurance Administrator – observer

Scott Tucker, Assistant Registrar (Monitoring and Review), attending for item 6 and observer

Robert Cashman, Education Evaluation Manager, Strategic Planning Directorate, attending for item 6

Bojan Cvijan, Strategic Planning Officer, Strategic Planning Directorate, attending for item 6

Serena Cacciamalli, Strategic Planning Officer, Strategic Planning Directorate, attending for item 6

Apologies

None

1 Welcome, apologies and announcements

1.1 The Chair welcomed the attendees to the meeting, extending particular welcome to the new members attending their first meeting of the Committee. The Chair also welcomed those observing the Committee.

1.2 The Chair expressed on behalf of the Committee their gratitude to Lucy Heming for whom this would be her last meeting before taking up a post at another institution and welcomed Scott Tucker who would be taking up her post.

2 QAEC Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership, and schedule of delegation

2.1 Revised QAEC Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership

QAEC.2019.01a

- 2.1.1** It was noted by the Committee that a governance review would be taking place, and so it was agreed that beyond updating the membership and titles as appropriate that no changes would be made prior to the completion of the review.
- 2.2** **Revisions to terms of reference for subordinate committees, Faculty Education Committees (FECs), Programmes Committee and Regulations and Policy Review Committee** QAEC.2019.01b
- 2.2.1** The Committee agreed that the changes to the terms of reference for FEC would be approved in principle, pending approval at the Imperial College Business School FEC due to be held in November.
- 2.2.2** In the discussion about the FEC terms of reference, it was noted that postgraduate research provision was not prominent. It was noted that research matters were considered by the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee, and also at relevant Staff-Student committees. These would feed concerns, innovative methodology and identified best practice into FECs and Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee.
- 2.2.3** The Committee discussed the workload of the FECs and its potential impact on the quality of scrutiny. Potential solutions that could be put in place were considered such as the Faculty Teaching Committee in the Faculty of Engineering, which allowed the FEC content to be separated out between the two committees.
- 2.2.4** It was agreed to accept the changes to the terms of reference for Programmes Committee to include all aspects of taught provision and for agreeing updates to entry requirements. It was agreed that there would be further discussion with regards to non-credit bearing short courses and how they were approved for delivery.
Action: Consideration of short course approval process to be taken forward by Quality Assurance Team
- 2.2.5** The Committee agreed to make the Regulations and Review Policy Group a formal sub-committee. The remit of the new Regulations and Review Policy Committee were agreed as well as the proposed membership with the addition of a representative from the Graduate School as an ex-officio post.
- 2.3** **Schedule of Delegation** QAEC.2019.01c
- 2.3.1** The Committee agreed the minor update to the schedule of delegation, noting further changes may arise from the governance review.
- 3** **Minutes of the Previous Meeting** QAEC.2019.02
- 3.1** The Committee confirmed the minutes of 3 July 2019 as an accurate with a single amendment to point 5.1.15 to provide greater clarity with regards to focus of the statement.
- 4** **Review of Committee Actions** QAEC.2019.03
- 4.1** The Committee noted the status of the points of the action sheet. In particular the Committee noted the following updates.
- 4.1.1** October 2018 4.1: this item was superseded by the policy in consideration at the meeting in regard to admission of ex-offenders

4.1.2 September 2017 16.1.2: The Committee noted that this action had been repeatedly delayed and needed to be addressed. Concerns regarding the current SOLE surveys were discussed, and it was stressed that lowering engagement with the survey meant that its usefulness and statistical relevance were hampered. It was noted that under current College procedures SOLE data was utilised for promotion and the reduced engagement potentially was impacting on the prospects of those seeking promotion, particularly those on teaching only, or predominating teaching contracts.

4.1.3 The Committee were informed that changes were being considered for SOLE in the short term, with longer term changes also being discussed. It was agreed that the Chair would raise the concerns of the Committee with the Vice Provost (Education) and request an interim report from the surveys working party to be provide to the Committee.

Action: Chair to raise Committee concerns regarding SOLE engagement with Vice Provost (Education)

Action: Chair to request for interim report from Lecturer and Module Evaluation Group to be presented to the Committee

4.1.4 March 2019 5.1.4: the Committee discussed the policy in place to avoid timetabling on Wednesday afternoon for all programmes but noted that there were some areas on which this had proved difficult or not practical. This had meant that exemptions had been granted. It was agreed that where possible the principles in the policy would be adhered to, so that the support was available for students to have the time on Wednesday afternoons.

5 Matters arising from the Minutes

5.1 The Chair reported that the College had passed its recent audit by UK Visa and Immigration in relation to its tier 4 license, with some minor follow ups points to be completed.

6 Annual Monitoring

QAEC.2019.04

6.1 The Committee welcomed Robert Cashman, Bojan Cvijan and Serena Cacciamalli to the meeting.

6.2 The Committee were informed that the annual monitoring process had been updated as agreed at previous meetings to add the approval by students of the reports, and to change the timeline of the process.

6.3 The Committee were reminded that there was discretion within the process as to how sign-offs could be completed to suit individual needs, and that additional support and guidance can be provided as requested.

6.4 In disseminating the outcome of the annual monitoring process, the reports are to be shared locally, with the Quality Assurance team ensuring that the College level action plan be disseminated as needed across the College.

6.5 It was reported to the Committee that the data for consideration had been matched to the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) metrics, and dashboards in Power BI had been developed to display the data from this academic year.

6.6 Robert Cashman provided the Committee with a demonstration of the Power BI dashboard and highlighted that in the development of the dashboard items such as sector TEF benchmarks had been included to provide a reference point. The Committee were reminded that the sector benchmark data may be at a less refined level than the

programme of study under consideration, due to the aggregation used in the TEF. For example, for most engineering programmes the benchmark is for 'engineering' rather than differentiated into the specialisms available at the College.

- 6.7** It was noted that the team were working on enabling all 'with management' programmes to be considered together, as well as within their home departments, and that as the change from Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) to Longitudinal Educational Outcomes (LEO) surveys takes place there will need to be further development.
- 6.8** It was noted that the dashboard was based on static data points and was not live. The Data in the dashboard would be updated yearly following the statutory returns in November.
- 6.9** The Committee were also provided with a demonstration of the National Student Survey (NSS) dashboard that had been developed in Power BI. It was noted that data was shown where the minimum threshold response rate had been reached. This meant that in some areas there had been a suppression of data, to ensure that the data was statistically relevant and would not enable the identification of specific individuals.
- 6.10** The Committee were requested to encourage feedback to the team about the dashboard and were informed that the Strategic Planning Team would be able to demonstrate to teams if requested. A link to the dashboards would be forwarded to Committee members in order to facilitate access. Following the development of the current dashboards, the team would be developing similar dashboards for other data areas such as the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey.
- 6.11** The Committee discussed that whilst actions could be put in place to address areas in which improvements were needed, it was then difficult to ascertain which actions effected a change, or where changes were significant or within usual tolerances or fluctuations between cohorts.
- 6.12** The Committee welcomed in the improvement of the metrics now available, noting the changes in the regulator towards a metrics, risk-based approach.
- 6.13** The Committee expressed concern that recent changes had meant admissions data was not available for review during the recruitment cycle. This was thought to be due to the changes in database systems and would be kept under review.

7 Relationship between Quality Assurance and the Learning and Teaching Strategy

QAEC.2019.05

- 7.1** The Committee discussed the paper in which the links between the Learning and Teaching Strategy, the recent review of its impact, and quality assurance processes had been described.
- 7.2** It was noted that the evidence to support the areas within the strategy were being met was currently disparate, and it was needful to ensure that the ownership, location and accessibility of evidence was clear, so that it could be utilised as needed.
- 7.3** In addition to ensuring that the data was available it was considered important that the College considers the metrics that it needed and to develop them where they are not currently available or in a format that was less than ideal. This might include reviewing the external examiner report to provide the evidence for aspects of the strategy related to the provision of assessment. The Committee agreed the recommendations in the paper.

7.4 The Committee considered the specific quality assurance recommendations from the review of the Learning and Teaching Strategy. The Committee accepted and agreed to implement changes to QA processes to include prompts and consideration of key strategy points.

Action: Quality Assurance team to review QA processes to ensure Learning and Teaching Strategy aims are clearly embedded

7.5 The Committee considered that further clarity was required in order to understand the focus of the second recommendation.

Action: Head of Academic Quality to seek clarification with regards to the perceived barriers as part of Quality Assurance processes to innovative programme design

7.6 The Committee representatives were encouraged to ensure that where programme teams were considering new or redeveloped programmes that there was early engagement with relevant support services, such as the Quality Assurance team or Educational Development Unit.

7.7 The Committee were informed that some providers in London were currently being inspected under the new Quality Standards Review methodology, based on risk-based indicators. It was noted that the random sampling selection for consideration methodology had not yet been published.

7.8 It was noted that the College has not been inspected by the QAA since 2010, and that it was necessary to ensure that it would be ready for an inspection whenever it may occur, by being aware of the evidence required, how it would be maintained and how it could be accessed promptly.

7.9 The Committee discussed that it was necessary to understand any risks that could trigger a risk-based review and to be able to mitigate for them. It was noted that areas that may prompt a risk-based review included external reporting from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) based on significant changes in the number of complaints raised under their scheme or evidence of systemic issues within the cases received by the OIA.

7.10 The Committee agreed that there should be a review of admissions data in relation to the fair access agreements in place and how this is considered by the College through the committee structure and in quality assurance processes.

Action: Secretary and Admissions to put forward details of, or proposals for, the consideration of admissions data in respect to widening participation

7.11 The Committee also discussed the availability of timeliness of data in relation to quality assurance process, particularly annual monitoring. It was considered the staff may not be aware of the periods in which data became available.

Action: Quality Assurance team to co-ordinate a calendar of data availability, to be potentially added to the Academic Calendar

Action: Assistant Registrar (Monitoring and Review) to consider how data availability be considered as part of the regular review of data as it becomes available

8 Statement of Policies and Procedures for Assuring Quality and Standards 2019/2020

QAEC.2019.06

8.1 The Committee considered the updated statement of policies and procedures, noting the updates to reflect changes in titles or structure.

8.2 The Committee reviewed paragraph 2.3, which detailed the second stage review of new programmes in year 2 or 3 of implementing new provision and confirmed its continued application to College policies and procedures. It was agreed that the College Community would be reminded of the requirement to adhere to this policy.

Action: Assistant Registrar (Monitoring & Review) to add prompts to the Annual monitoring process for Postgraduate taught programmes regarding new programme review

8.3 The Committee further considered that changes may be required to the consideration of second stage review of new programmes as part of curriculum review.

Action: Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance & Enhancement) to ensure process for new undergraduate taught provision is considered by Programme Committee

8.4 The Committee further considered that there was a lack of overt visibility of postgraduate research provision with regards to the College's quality assurance procedures. It was noted that there was a sub-committee of Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee to consider postgraduate research matters. Concern was raised regarding the support available for postgraduate research students in particular. It was agreed that there should be a review by Postgraduate Research Quality Committee (PRQC) of the updated support arrangements, to report to the Committee. In addition, considering the concerns raised, the Head of Strategy and Operations for the Graduate School agreed to meet with the Imperial College Union Deputy President (Education) to explore the concerns further.

Action: PRQC secretary to request review of updated support arrangements for postgraduate research students for PRQC

8.5 It was agreed to add details of the Graduate School training programmes to the statement.

Action: Secretary to update the statement to include information about the Graduate school training programmes.

9 Annual Quality Assurance Report

QAEC.2019.07

9.1 The Committee noted that the Annual Quality Assurance Report has been circulated for consideration by Senate at the same time as to the Committee due the timings of the meetings.

9.2 It was reported that the template and data set had been updated to meet the request of members of Council, to whom the final version would be provided as part of the annual monitoring of College provision. The changes had been to focus on Office for Student conditions of registration and be more outcomes focused.

9.3 As the report would be considered at Senate later that day the Chair agreed to take forward any comments to be added to Senate's consideration of the report, prior to submission to Audit and Risk Committee and then to Council.

10 Draft Protocol with regards to Regulation 9

QAEC.2019.08

10.1 The Chair informed the Committee that he had requested a draft protocol to be provided to the Committee for discussion in regards to paragraph 9 of the Regulations for Students (known as Regulation 9), following recent concerns of a lack of process to support staff and students.

10.2 Following significant discussion, it was agreed not to take forward further development of the protocol, as it was expected that development of the College's Fitness to Study

Procedures would be completed shortly and that it would be more appropriate to concentrate efforts on this.

11 Update to admissions policies including Admission of Ex-Offenders

QAEC.2019.09

11.1 The Committee received the annual update to admissions policies and approved the updates for implementation. A verbal update to the page 2 of the Undergraduate Admissions Policy (Paragraph 1.3) was noted.

11.2 The Committee considered the Admission of Ex-Offenders policy. It was noted that the policy had been developed following changes to the University and College Admissions Service procedures following the introduction of the General and Data Protection Regulations. The policy had been reviewed by the College Legal Services team to ensure it was compliant with current legislation prior to dissemination to the Committee.

11.3 The Committee requested further information with regards to the list of offences at paragraph 1.5, and how this list had been agreed.

Action: Deputy Director of Admissions to provide update to the Committee with regards to the selection of offences listed at paragraph 1.5 of the Admission of Ex-Offenders Policy

11.4 Concern was raised by the Committee for the appropriate management of admission of minors and ex-offenders, where there may have been specific conditions of probation to be maintained by an ex-offender and it was confirmed that this formed part of the risk management processes for both groups.

11.5 The Committee agreed that greater clarity was required at sub paragraph 7 of paragraph 1.6 with regards to the person/role of the persons required to review applicant declarations.

Action: Deputy Director of Admissions to review of paragraph 1.6 to provide greater clarity

11.6 The Committee approved the Admission of Ex-Offenders policy, subject to the clarifications requested.

12 Proposed Student Casework Reporting Schedule

QAEC.2019.09

12.1 The Committee considered the proposed student casework reporting schedule. It was noted that due to its nature it was difficult to designate a point at which all cases are complete for an academic year, and as such it was agreed to have an agreed census point which would be used in each year to provide a set period for comparison with previous years, as was noted is the practice for the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education.

12.2 The Committee noted that casework in relation to admissions and to Fitness to Practise needed to be included in the review of casework. It was also noted that agreement with the Central Secretariat was required, due to the split in casework management between the Central Secretariat and Registry.

12.3 Subject to the agreement with the Central Secretariat, and that the schedule would be reviewed annually, the Committee agreed the proposed schedule.

- 13 Programmes Committee** QAEC.2019.11
- 13.1** The Committee received the report from Programmes Committee on 10 September 2019 and **approved** the MSc in Strategic Marketing (Online) subject to the recommendations of Programmes Committee being met.
- 13.2** The Committee noted that there were no major modifications, new short courses, suspensions or withdrawals considered at the meeting.
- 14 Surveys** QAEC.2019.12
- 14.1** The Committee noted the report regarding the undergraduate SOLE results for the Summer term of 2019 and the Spring and Summer term results from the Business School survey.
- 14.2** It was also noted that the Quality Assurance team would be reviewing the format and data points for the report to improve its usefulness and clarity, and also to support any changes to SOLE as part of the deliberations of the Lecturer and Module Evaluation Working Group.
- 15 Academic Calendar**
- 15.1** The Committee were informed that the Academic Calendar would be going live imminently on the College website and a link to the calendar would be forwarded to the Committee once it went live.
- Action: Secretary to circulate link to Academic Calendar once live**
- 16 Learning and Teaching Committee Report**
- 16.1** Due to time constraints on the Committee, it was agreed that an update on the recent Learning and Teaching Committee meeting would be circulated following the meeting.
- Action: Secretary to provide update from Learning and Teaching Committee to the Committee members**
- 17 Chair's Action**
- 17.1** Due to time constraints on the Committee, it was agreed that details of the Chair's actions taken on behalf of the Committee would be circulated following the meeting.
- Action: Secretary to provide details of Chair's Actions to the Committee for ratification**
- 18 Any other business**
- 18.1** No additional items of business were raised.
- 19 Dates for Meetings**
- 19.1** The Committee were informed that there had been a change to the date of the November meeting from that reported in July. The invites to the meeting had been for the updated date.
- 19.2** The dates for meetings for the remainder of the Academic year were reported as:
20 November 2019(reporting to Senate on 11 December)
15 January 2020 (reporting to Senate on 11 March)
26 February 2020 (also reporting to Senate on 11 March)
22 April 2020 (reporting to Senate on 6 May)

3 June 2020 (reporting to Senate on 24 June)

20 **Reserved Areas of Business**

20.1 There was no reserved business.