

Quality Assurance Advisory Committee  
20 November 2012  
10am  
The Solar Room, 170 Queen's Gate  
South Kensington Campus

### Minutes

**Present:** Professor D Humphris (Chair), Dr S Archer, Professor N Bell, Professor A George, Professor N Gooderham, Mr D Hunt, Dr D McPhail, Mr E Mohamed, Ms R Penny, Dr N Rogers, Professor S Smith, Mr N Wheatley and Professor D Wright.

**Apologies:** Professor G Gillies, Professor D Griffiths, Professor R Leatherbarrow, Dr P Lickiss and Professor O Matar.

**In Attendance:** Ms L McConnell (Secretary), Dr J Cooke and Mr C Harris.

#### 1 Apologies

1.1 Noted: As given above.

#### 2 Membership and Terms of Reference

2.1 Agreed: To reflect the appropriate remit of the Committee it will henceforth be known as the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC).

Secretary

2.2 Reported: The Pro Rector (Education) has commissioned review of the governance of education and student experience which is being carried out by an external advisor. A report of the findings of will be presented to the Committee in due course.

#### 3 Minutes

3.1 Approved: Minutes of the previous meeting held on the 10 October 2012 subject to an amendment to minute 4.5.2 which clarifies that the Graduate School would advertise "our principles" in its newsletters.

Secretary

#### 4 Matters Arising

4.1 Received and Noted: A list of actions from the previous meetings and progress made so far to address these (**Paper QAAC/2012/25**).

### Items for Consideration

#### 5 QAA Institutional Audit 2010: Mid-Cycle Follow-up

5.1 Received: An update on action taken to address the recommendations made in the 2010 Institutional Audit (**Paper QAAC/2012/26**).

##### Advisable Recommendations

5.2 *Ensure that the Senate, or the relevant committee reporting to it, is provided with sufficient information on external examiners' reports to discharge responsibility for the oversight of academic standards.*

5.2.1 Reported: Senate now receives detailed reports from the Studies Committees and Master's Quality Committees on their consideration of the reports of taught course external examiners. Additionally, the QAAC summaries of external examiner reports have been enhanced to ensure that themes with College-wide implications are

highlighted and reported to Senate in more detail.

**5.2.2** Agreed: The Committee was pleased with progress made so far to address this recommendation and agreed that the Committee should continue to ensure that Senate was kept informed of action taken by the College to address College-wide themes highlighted by external examiners.

**5.2.3** Considered: Whether the College received sufficient oversight of themes highlighted by the reports of PGR external examiners.

**5.2.4** Reported: The Director of the Graduate School and the Academic Registrar automatically review any PGR external examiner report where a student fails or is required to undertake major corrections.

**5.2.5** Agreed: The Director of the Graduate School and Academic Registrar would be alerted to any serious College-wide concerns raised by external examiners as a matter of course. So far, no College-wide themes have emerged because concerns raised by external examiners relate to individual students and their individual examination.

**5.3** *Consider the appropriateness and use of the Diploma of Imperial College as both an academic award and a 'post nominal' title.*

**5.3.1** Agreed: The College had now fully addressed this recommendation.

**5.4** *Expedite its review of assessment procedures to ensure consistency in the management of academic standards within and across its degree structures, and ensure parity of treatment for examination candidates.*

**5.4.1** Reported: The College has made good progress so far in addressing this recommendation but the following work is still being carried out:

- The Registry is carrying out a review of the differences in undergraduate year weightings across Departments and across courses within in the same department to inform institutional policy to ensure parity of treatment
- The Faculty of Medicine is currently reviewing the difference in year weighting for the 4<sup>th</sup> year BSc Medical Sciences [with option pathway] programme and the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the BSc Biomedical Sciences degree course with the view to aligning them.
- A Working Group with student involvement is currently developing a revised College policy on penalties for submission of late work.
- A review of re-sit opportunities available to undergraduate and postgraduate students is being undertaken.
- The Faculty Studies Committees and Master's Quality Committees are currently considering a proposal from QAAC concerning the provision of model answers to examination questions for students.

**5.4.2** Agreed: In addition to this, the Registry would carry out a review of the conduct of Boards of Examiners meetings which would include a review of which Departments use algorithms or vivas to determine the outcome of borderline candidates and which Departments use anonymity or advocacy at Board meetings.

**Registry**

**5.4.3** Agreed: The Registry would also develop a template for the minutes of Boards of Examiners meetings.

**Registry**

**5.5** *Provide a full and consistent level of student representation in all its deliberative academic committees.*

**5.5.1** Reported: Student representatives are now invited to all College-level Committee meetings. Representation at departmental-level meetings has improved. The Registry is currently carrying out a review to identify those departmental-level committees which do not currently have student representatives (UG, Master's PGR) to ensure this is addressed. The incoming Pro Rector Education has increased the student representation on the Strategic Education Committee from 1 to 3 including the President of the Graduate Students Association

**Registry**

*Review its procedures for the approval and oversight of collaborative provision to ensure that relevant sections of QAA's Code of practice are taken into account.*

- 5.5.2** Agreed: Considerable work has already been undertaken to enhance the College's procedures for the approval and oversight of its collaborative provision. However, it was now timely to establish a Working Group to review the College's procedures in light of the revised Chapter of the UK Quality Code on the management of collaborative arrangements which will also now cover placements and work-based learning. The Working Group will also be tasked with proposing changes to College processes for dealing with collaborative arrangements to ensure full compliance with the revised chapter of the QAA Quality Code

Registry

Desirable Recommendations

- 5.6** *Extend the existing opportunities for student access to external examiners' reports.*

- 5.6.1** Agreed: The Committee was satisfied that appropriate action was being taken to address this recommendation.

*Strengthen procedures for checking the quality of teaching and learning materials for programmes which have e-learning /blended learning elements.*

- 5.6.2** Reported: The annual monitoring forms now ask specifically for information on any new e-learning components that have been introduced. E-learning is also covered in periodic review and from 2012/13 departments will be asked to ensure that review panels are provided with access to e-learning material. A review of the course approval procedures is underway to ensure that these adequately cover consideration of e-learning material.

Registry

- 5.7** *Draw more systematically upon the educational developments and good practice evident within its faculties and departments to enhance the support for student learning.*

- 5.7.1** Reported: The Enhancement Advisory Group's (EAG) strategy for sharing good practice in education will be implemented across the College during 2012/13. The EAG would report to the QAEC. The QAEG's terms of reference would be amended to reflect this.

Secretary

- 5.8** Noted: The College anticipates a request to submit its QAA mid-cycle review report in early 2013.

**6** **Quality assurance of undergraduate courses in the Centre for Co-Curricular Studies**

- 6.1** Reported: The Department of Humanities was disbanded on the 1 August 2012, with its undergraduate activities transferring to the Centre for Co-Curricular Studies.

- 6.2** Received: The 2011-12 undergraduate annual monitoring report from the [former] Department of Humanities (**Paper QAAC/2012/27**).

- 6.3** Reported: The second stage review of "with languages" took place last session and received a positive report from the review panel. The first intake of these students has now graduated.

- 6.4** Reported: In October 2012, Imperial Horizons was launched. The programme will be rolled out over the next few years with a view to making the programme available to all undergraduate students.

**6.5** External Examiner Reports

- 6.5.1** Reported: Course convenors were praised by external examiners for their transparency in marking and, depth of feedback which was reflected in the high standards achieved by students. The quality of teaching was also commended as was the diligence and

commitment of staff. Examples of good practice highlighted by external examiners included the integration of course material into students' main degree programmes, the conduct of oral examinations and the excellent design of assessments in particular summative assessment of listening skills. External examiners also commented favourably on the model answers to questions and the comprehensive annotation and double marking of scripts by markers.

**6.5.2** Reported: Some external examiners expressed concern over the proposed reduction in contact hours for the new language courses that form part of the Imperial Horizons programme. Other external examiners were puzzled as to why some courses were no longer offered for credit. In response to this, it was confirmed that the decision to reduce contact hours was taken by the College and not by the [former] Department but the Centre for Co-Curricular Studies remains hopeful that the Imperial Horizons programme will be credit bearing for future cohorts of students.

**6.5.3** Agreed: The College would not wish to adversely affect the quality of teaching provided to "with language" students. The Committee agreed that a strategic review of the "with languages" provision should be carried out just after Easter 2013. Centre staff would be fully involved in the review as would the ICU. Undertaking a review at this time would provide opportunity for the newly appointed Head of Centre to become more familiar with the Centre's provision.

**6.6** Agreed: The Committee thanked the external examiners for their contribution during 2011-12.

**6.7** Approved: The appointment of the Board Chair and external examiners for undergraduate courses in the Centre for Co-Curricular Studies for the 2012-13 session (**Paper QAAC/2012/28**).

**6.8** Agreed: Appointment of External Examiner. **Discussion reported in Appendix 1 [not published with the minutes]**

**6.9** Approved: Appointment of External Examiner. **Discussion reported in Appendix 1 [not published with the minutes]**

## **7 UK Quality Code for Higher Education**

### **Part B: Assuring and Enhancing Academic Quality**

#### **7.1 Chapter B5: Student Engagement**

**7.1.1** Reported: The QAA has recently published [Chapter B5](#) of the UK Quality Code: Student Engagement and [Outcomes from Institutional Audit 2009-11: Student Engagement \(3<sup>rd</sup> Series\)](#).

**7.1.2** Received: A report on the implications of Chapter B5 for the College (**Paper QAAC/2012/29**).

**7.1.3** Reported: Chapter B5 is a new Chapter of the UK Quality Code which covers student engagement at undergraduate and postgraduate level. The expectation is that:

**7.1.4** *Higher education providers take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.*

**7.1.5** Considered: Each indicator of the Chapter.

**7.1.6** Indicator 1: *Higher education providers, in partnership with their student body, define and promote the range of opportunities for any student to engage in educational enhancement and quality assurance.*

**7.1.7** Agreed: Students are actively encouraged to engage with the College's QA processes and to enhance and influence their own learning journeys.

7.1.8	<u>Reported:</u> Further work is being carried out by the Registry to review departmental level student representation (please see minute 5.4.2).	
7.1.9	<u>Agreed:</u> A question would be added to the new course approval form which asks Departments to comment on how they have engaged students in the design process for new courses. This would be added to the undergraduate and Master's approval procedures for new programmes.	Registry
7.1.10	<u>Agreed:</u> After the successful pilot last session, student representatives would continue to be members of periodic review panels. The Committee agreed that undergraduate student representatives may need additional support when acting as a panel member for postgraduate reviews.	
7.1.11	<i>Indicator 2: Higher education providers create and maintain an environment within which students and staff engage in discussions that aim to bring about demonstrable enhancement of the educational experience.</i>	
7.1.12	<u>Reported:</u> The Pro Rector (Education) would be working closely with the Students' Union to coordinate a College "you said, we did" campaign in order to assist Departments and Faculties in informing students of actions they have taken in response to student feedback.	Pro Rector (Education)
7.1.13	<u>Agreed:</u> The Registry would review whether it would be possible to add a summary of action taken by Departments in response to feedback received from SOLE to Student Viewpoint but noted that this would require Departments to provide information to the Registry on what action they had taken.	Registry
7.1.14	<i>Indicator 3: Arrangements exist for the effective representation of the collective student voice at all organisational levels, and these arrangements provide opportunities for all students to be heard.</i>	
7.1.15	<u>Agreed:</u> The Working Group established to review the College's collaborative processes (see minute 5.6.1) would also consider ways in which to increase collaborative student representation at College and departmental-level Committees.	Registry
7.1.16	<i>Indicator 4: Higher education providers ensure that student representatives and staff have access to training and on-going support to equip them to fulfil their roles in educational enhancement and quality assurance effectively.</i>	
7.1.17	<u>Agreed:</u> The Educational Development Unit (EDU) would consider developing a training course for staff on student engagement. The ICU would draft a Student Representative Roles and Responsibilities document.	EDU ICU
7.1.18	<i>Indicator 5: Students and staff engage in evidence-based discussions based on the mutual sharing of information.</i>	
7.1.19	<u>Agreed:</u> The Registry would add a requirement for Departments to provide a section explaining changes that have made to a programme as a result of student feedback to the <a href="#">Items to be Included in Taught Course Programme Handbooks</a> document.	Registry
7.1.20	<i>Indicator 6: Staff and students disseminate and jointly recognise the enhancements made to the student educational experience, and the efforts of students in achieving these successes.</i>	
7.1.21	<u>Agreed:</u> As part of wider education strategy development the Pro Rector (Education) would lead a group to consider ways in which to formally recognise wider student achievement.	Pro Rector (Education)
7.1.22	<i>Indicator 7: The effectiveness of student engagement is monitored and reviewed at least annually, using pre-defined key performance indicators, and policies and processes are enhanced where required.</i>	
7.1.23	<u>Agreed:</u> The Registry, in consultation with the ICU, would develop a list of Key Performance Indicators which could be assessed annually by the ICU via an annual	ICU/

	report which would be presented to QAEC.	Registry
<b>7.2</b>	<b>Chapter B11: Research Degrees</b>	
<b>7.2.1</b>	<u>Reported:</u> The QAA has recently published <a href="#">Chapter B11 of the UK Quality Code: Research degrees</a> . The new chapter replaces the previous 27 “precepts” with 18 “indicators of sound practice” and an overarching “expectation”.	
<b>7.2.2</b>	<u>Received:</u> A report on the implications of this Chapter for the College ( <b>Paper QAAC/2012/30</b> ).	
<b>7.2.3</b>	<u>Noted:</u> the Research Degree Expectation is:  <i>“Research degrees are awarded in a research environment that provides secure academic standards for doing research and learning about research approaches, methods, procedures and protocols. This environmental offers students’ quality of opportunities and the support they need to achieve successful academic, personal and professional outcomes from their research degrees”.</i>	
<b>7.2.4</b>	<u>Reported:</u> There are no substantial changes to the content of the indicators over the precepts, as the QAA has achieved this reduction by combining many of the original precepts into single “indicators”. There are however slight changes (mainly to do with updating content) or strengthening of emphasis in some areas.	
<b>7.2.5</b>	<u>Reported:</u> In light of the QAA’s revisions, the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee has now revised the College’s precepts to ensure continued compliance with the code. The revised precepts will take effect from 2013-4.	
<b>7.2.6</b>	<u>Reported:</u> One additional amendment to the College’s research degree precepts is the clarification that they relate to the doctorate awards of PhD, EngD, MD (Res) and the research Master’s award of MPhil. Master’s awards will have their own set of precepts (to be developed) but that, where relevant and practical, the indicators of Chapter B11 will be adhered to for the research elements of the College’s Master’s level awards (MSc, MRes, MPH and MBA).	
<b>7.2.7</b>	<u>Reported:</u> There are five areas in particular where the QAA has placed increased emphasis in their supporting notes, these are:  a) GTA training b) Students’ development needs c) The role of an independent chair in vivas examinations d) Support/training for student vivas e) Training/guidance/developmental activities for external supervisors	
<b>7.2.8</b>	<u>Agreed:</u> GTA training would be considered under the next item (Paper 31).	
<b>7.2.9</b>	<u>Agreed:</u> The process for identifying student developmental needs must be a more formalised process. The Graduate School would take this forward.	Graduate School
<b>7.2.10</b>	<u>Agreed:</u> A Working Group would be established to consider whether it would be appropriate to appoint independent Chairs to PhD vivas.	Graduate School
<b>7.2.11</b>	<u>Agreed:</u> That the Graduate School would ensure that the DVD it had created to provide training for students on viva examinations would be made available on the web.	Graduate School
<b>7.2.12</b>	<u>Agreed:</u> The Collaborative Working Party (minute 5.6.1) would be asked to consider developing more detailed procedures for appointing external supervisors to PhD students, in particular for PRI institutions. This would not apply to those external supervisors which belong to one of the College’s collaborative Joint PhD programmes.	Registry
<b>8</b>	<b>PhD Students and Teaching</b>	
<b>8.1</b>	<u>Received:</u> A proposal to establish a Working Party to review arrangements for training Graduate Teaching Assistants ( <b>Paper QAAC/2012/31</b> ).	

8.2	<u>Reported:</u> Many PhD students across the College are involved with teaching, supervision and assessment of both undergraduate and Master's students. These students are generally referred to as Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs).	Graduate School
8.3	<u>Reported:</u> Senate has previously agreed that all students involved in assessment should attend the Educational Development Unit's workshop 'A Practical Guide to Assessment and Marking for Research Students who Teach'. There is also a clear pay structure for GTAs outlined on the HR website. However, at present there is no clear College policy or guidelines outlining the level and type of training that GTAs should receive. The training that is currently provided for students is determined locally by departments and faculties and consequently the level and type of training received is variable.	
8.4	<u>Agreed:</u> In light of the guidance provided in Chapter B11 of the UK Quality Code and in order to ensure that the College is providing an appropriate quality of training to students who teach to meet the expectations of students (both those involved with teaching and those being taught by students) a Working Party would be established to review existing procedures and make recommendations to QAAC.	
9	<b>Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision</b>	
9.1	<u>Reported:</u> The QAA has published <a href="#">Part C of the UK Quality Code: Information about Higher Education Provision</a> .	Admissions
9.2	<u>Received:</u> A report on the implications of this Part of the Code for the College ( <b>Paper QAAC/2012/32</b> ).	
9.3	<u>Reported:</u> The expectation for this Chapter is:  <i>Higher education providers produce information for their intended audiences about the learning opportunities they offer that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.</i>	
9.4	<u>Indicator 1:</u> <i>Higher education providers publish information that describes their mission, values and overall strategy.</i>	
9.4.1	<u>Agreed:</u> The Committee was satisfied that the College meets the requirements of this indicator.	Pro Rector (Education)
9.5	<u>Indicator 2:</u> <i>Higher education providers describe the process for the application and admission to the programme of study.</i>	
9.5.1	<u>Agreed:</u> The College's guidelines for the use of APL and APEL should be made available on the admissions website. However the Committee cautioned that guidance should be provided alongside which clarifies under which circumstances these procedures apply.	Registry/ Graduate School
9.6	<u>Indicator 3:</u> <i>Higher education providers make available to prospective students information to help them select their programme with an understanding of the academic environment in which they will be studying and the support that will be made available to them.</i>	
9.6.1	<u>Agreed:</u> The Pro Rector (Education) would liaise with the College's Communication division to establish whether it would be possible to provide standard text on the College's prospectus pages which provide information about teaching, research, supervisory staff; learning support staff, learning and teaching spaces, libraries; specialist environments, VLEs and other communication and information technologies.	
9.7	<u>Indicator 4:</u> <i>The information on the programme of study is made available to current students at the start of their programme and throughout their studies.</i>	Registry/ Graduate School
9.7.1	<u>Agreed:</u> The Registry, in consultation with the Graduate School, would review the College's Items to be Included in Taught Course Programme Handbooks to make it clear which items should be mandatory and which should be made available internally only. A similar list could then be developed for PGR Handbooks.	

- 9.8 *Indicator 5: Higher education providers set out what they expect of current students and what current students can expect of the higher education provider.*
- 9.8.1 Agreed: The facilities used to support student learning would be added to the list of standardised items to be added to the prospectus webpages.
- 9.9 *Indicator 6: When students leave their programme of study, higher education providers issue to them a detailed record of their studies, which gives evidence to others of the students' achievement in their academic programme*
- and
- Indicator 7: Higher education providers :-*
- *set out their framework for managing academic standards and quality assurance and enhancement and describe the data and information used to support its implementation*
  - *maintain records (by type and category) of all collaborative activity that is subject to a formal agreement*
- 9.9.1 Agreed: The Committee was satisfied that the College meets the requirements of both these indicators.
- 10 Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching**
- 10.1 Reported: The QAA has recently published [Chapter B3 of the UK Quality Code: Learning and Teaching](#). A report on the implications of this Chapter for the College will be presented to the Committee in due course.
- 11 Chapter B4: Supporting Student Achievement**
- 11.1 Reported: The QAA is currently consulting on a new Chapter of the UK Quality Code. *Chapter B4: Supporting student achievement* focuses on the range of mechanisms and services that higher education providers put in place to enable every student to achieve their learning objectives and make the most of their student experience, whatever their mode of learning, prior educational background, or other needs. The deadline for responding to this consultation is the 3 January 2013.
- 11.2 Received: [Chapter B4: Supporting Student Achievement](#) – draft for consultation (**Paper QAAC/2012/33**).
- 11.3 Agreed: Members should send comments on the draft Chapter to the Senior Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance and Data). A draft response to the consultation would be circulated to the Committee in due course.
- 12 Periodic Review**
- 12.1 Received: Amendments to the Procedures for the Review of Departmental Research Degree Training (**Paper QAAC/2012/34**).
- 12.2 Reported: It is proposed to introduce time limited themed questions for Departments to address as part of the material which is submitted to review panels. For periodic reviews taking place in 2012-13, departments will be asked for examples of good practice on the following topics:
- First year student experience (supporting students' transition to a research programme, information provided by the department for first year students, assessment & feedback methods used to aid students new to UK education/research training, monitoring retention and progression)
  - Student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement
- 12.3 Reported: It is also proposed that Departments will be asked for a statement on supervisor workloads and maintaining regular student-supervisor contact. Departments

**Pro Rector  
(Education)**

**Members**

	will also be asked to provide information on creating a collegiate environment (cohort building), professional skills development, stakeholder engagement, continuing professional development for supervisors and links with employers.	
12.4	<u>Agreed:</u> Changes to the procedures, as outlined above, plus additional minor amendments to reflect changes to the College's Committee structure. The amended procedure would be submitted to the Senate for consideration.	Secretary
12.5	<u>Received and approved:</u> Amendments to the periodic review schedule for 2012-13 ( <b>Paper QAAC/2012/35</b> ).	
12.6	<u>Agreed:</u> The date of previous departmental reviews should be added to the schedule.	Secretary
13	<b>External Examiners</b>	
13.1	<u>Received:</u> Amendments to the External Examiners Serious Concerns Policy and corresponding amendments to the Taught Course External Examiner Report Templates ( <b>Paper QAAC/2012/36</b> ).	
13.2	<u>Reported:</u> <a href="#">Chapter B7: External Examining</a> of the QAA's UK Quality Code states that there must be an opportunity for taught course external examiners to raise matters of serious concern about institutional academic standards and quality of provision directly with the Head of the institution. In response to this, the Committee has previously approved a confidential reporting section of the taught course external examiner report template which took effect for the reports on the 2011-12 session.	
13.3	<u>Reported:</u> Since then, it has become clear that not all external examiners are using this section of the report template to report matters of <b>serious concern</b> to the President & Rector. Instead, external examiners are reporting on issues which could be and are dealt with as part of the main body of the report. In order to address this, it is proposed that the confidential report form be amended to clarify its purpose, namely to report matters of serious concern, and that it is separated from the main report template.	
13.4	<u>Reported:</u> The College's <i>Taught Course External Examiner Procedure for Raising Concerns</i> has also been revised to reflect these changes and to clarify the process for which serious concerns will be dealt with by the College, specifically that Heads of Departments will be provided with a copy of the Serious Concerns Report Form should an external examiner agree to this.	
13.4	<u>Reported:</u> The Engineering Studies Committee also wishes to propose a minor amendment to the external examiner report template concerning the question we ask external examiners regarding the double marking of scripts. It is proposed to amend the question to "were all scripts in the sample you reviewed double-marked internally?"	
13.5	<u>Agreed:</u> Changes to the Taught Course External Examiner Procedure for Raising Concerns Procedure, the Undergraduate Science, Engineering and Master's External Examiner Report Template, the Undergraduate Medicine External Examiner Report Template and the Taught Course External Examiner Confidential Serious Concerns Report Template which would now all be made available on the external examiner website.	Registry
13.6	<u>Agreed:</u> Responses to external examiner reports will be published on the intranet alongside the actual external examiner reports.	Registry
13.7	<u>Received:</u> The undergraduate external examiner report summary 2011-12 ( <b>Paper QAAC/2012/37</b> ).	
13.8	<u>Reported:</u> The report provides a general overview, highlighting good practice, common themes and key areas of concern identified in the 156 external examiner reports received for the 2011-12 undergraduate examinations in Science, Engineering, Medicine and Business.	
13.9	<u>Reported:</u> As was the case last year, external examiners reported that the quality and standards of undergraduate degree programmes at Imperial College compared favourably to other institutions within the UK and in some cases the standards were	

noted as being above those of students studying at other institutions of which external examiners had experience. It was largely felt that programmes continue to be coherently structured and appropriately taught for the level and subject area. Last year there were 8 themes highlighted by external examiners for Science, Engineering and Business which required action by the College. This year there are only 3. Last year there were 14 themes highlighted by external examiners for Medicine which required action by the College. This year there is only 1. The Committee was pleased with this improvement.

- 13.10** Reported: Of the 156 external examiner reports received, nearly all highlighted aspects of good practice. In particular, 11 external examiners praised the variety of assessment methods used by Departments, 5 external examiners commented on effective processes for moderating marks and 4 external examiners commended the course design and curricula.
- 13.11** Reported: External examiners in 4 Departments reported that scripts were poorly annotated. Reasons why marks are awarded and how they are agreed between markers is not always clear. These types of issues were raised by external examiners in 7 Departments in 2010-11 and were also raised, last year, by Master's external examiners.
- 13.12** Agreed: The amendment to the external examiner report template which clarifies that external examiners are asked to comment on whether double marking has taken place on the sample of scripts they have received should help to mitigate these issues.
- 13.13** Agreed: The Registry would send those Departments whose external examiners reported these issues a copy of the College's [protocol for double marking](#). The Registry would also develop a checklist for Departments to use prior to sending scripts to externals. The checklist would remind Departments to ensure that evidence of double marking is present and that where markers do not agree on marks initial, that an explanation of how the final mark was agreed is provided.
- 13.14** Reported: External examiners in 2 Departments expressed concern with arrangements for the conversion of marks awarded to students from institutions abroad. External examiners commented that results for students who have taken the year abroad option were, in some cases, higher than peers who did not opt to study abroad.
- 13.15** Noted: In order to try to mitigate this, Departments often weighted the year abroad lower than other years and applied scaling.
- 13.16** Agreed: The Departments of Aeronautics and Physics would be asked to look again at the methods used for translating marks to ensure that students who do not spend a year abroad are not disadvantaged.
- 13.17** Reported: External examiners in 3 Departments reported that they were not provided with marking schemes/criteria or model answers to questions. Other externals did receive model answers but recommended that there should be a standardised format for these. The clarity of model answers provided to external examiners and students and the provision of marking criteria to externals were both issues raised by external examiners in 7 Departments in 2010-11.
- 13.18** Agreed: Since these reports were submitted, the QAAC has undertaken work to develop a policy on the provision of model answers to questions. The Committee was waiting to receive feedback on the revised policy from the Faculties. However, as previously agreed external examiners should be provided with model answers to questions and marking criteria. Those Departments whose external examiners reported that they had not received these items would be reminded of this requirement.
- 13.19** Reported: Of the 17 year 6 reports received for undergraduate medicine, 6 external examiners reported that the repeated use of patients for different cohorts of students for the same clinical examinations held on different days/times potentially gives some students an unfair advantage because students may talk to previous cohorts about patients.
- 13.20** Reported: In response to this, the Faculty of Medicine confirmed that they were making

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- greater use of simulation for patient diagnosis testing and trying to increase their pool of patients.
- 13.21** Agreed: The Committee was satisfied that the Faculty of Medicine was taking appropriate action to address these concerns.
- 13.22** Agreed: The report would be circulated to the Studies Committees and to the Senate and would also be published on the web.
- 13.23** Received: The postgraduate programmes external examiner report summary for 2010-11 (**Paper QAAC/2012/38**).
- 13.24** Reported: As was the case last year, external examiners reported that the quality and standards of postgraduate degree programmes at Imperial College compared favourably to other institutions within the UK. Last year there were 5 themes highlighted by external examiners for postgraduate programmes which required action by the College. This year there are 7.
- 13.25** Reported: Of the 230 external examiner reports received, many aspects of good practice have been highlighted. External examiners for 16 programmes praised the course content and excellent range of topics available to students, external examiners for 15 programmes commented positively on the assessment methods used and on the marking and moderation processes and external examiners for 9 programmes praised the support provided by Departments and Course Organisers to their students, including regular meetings and pastoral care.
- 13.26** Reported: External examiners for 18 Master's courses reported issues relating to marking including that there was little evidence of double-marking and that the marking criteria were not being consistently applied. These types of issues were raised in last year's Master's reports (2009-10) by external examiners for 8 programmes. Undergraduate external examiners also raised these types of issues in their reports on the 2010-11 and 2011-12 sessions (please see Paper QAAC/2012/37).
- 13.27** Agreed: Actions as outlined in minute 13.13.
- 13.28** Reported: Although praised by some Master's external examiners, external examiners for 12 courses raised issues concerning course content including students lacking knowledge about core subject areas in particular, that course choice was too wide which resulted in some students not being able to undertake projects in their chosen specialism.
- 13.29** Agreed: The Committee was happy that the Master's Quality Committee would ensure that individual Course Organisers had satisfactorily responded to individual external examiners. The Committee agreed that option choice was important because it allowed students to specialise and pursue their own interests. No further action from the College was required.
- 13.30** Reported: External examiners for 13 courses commented that there was not adequate time to review scripts. Issues surrounding information sent to external examiners were noted across 6 Master's programmes in 2009-10.
- 13.31** Agreed: Quite often this type of complaint coincided with the departure of a key member of academic or administrative staff or as a result of rapid expansion of courses. The Graduate School was fully aware of such issues and as a result has amended its review procedures so that Departments are now asked to comment on succession planning and the resilience of their courses.
- 13.32** Reported: External examiners for 10 courses reported that the quality of feedback to students was not adequate. Last year external examiners for 6 courses reported that feedback should be improved
- 13.33** Agreed: The Committee was satisfied that the Master's Quality Committees had already ensured that individual Departments have taken appropriate action to address this when these reports were considered by the Committee.

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- 13.34** Reported: External examiners for 10 courses reported issues to do with the Conduct of Boards of Examiners.
- 13.35** Noted: This would be addressed when the Registry concluded its review of the conduct of boards of examiners.
- 13.36** Reported: External examiners for 7 courses reported examples of inconsistencies in the quality of student supervisors.
- 13.37** Agreed: The Master's Quality Committees would ask those Course Organisers to whose external examiners commented on the poor quality of supervisors to recommend that the EDU's course in supervision was completed by those members of staff.
- 13.38** Reported: External examiners for 6 Master's courses reported instances of grade inflation. This issue was raised last year by external examiners for 12 courses. As a reminder, the QAAC asked the Master's Quality Committees (and the Studies Committees) to ensure that Departments were taking appropriate action to address this issue and received reports from the Graduate School and the Studies Committees on this.
- 13.39** Agreed: The action undertaken during last session to address these matters was likely not yet to be reflective in the reports of these external examiners. The Committee would review whether similar issues are raised in next year's external examiner reports.
- 13.40** Agreed: This paper would be circulated to the Master's Quality Committees and the Senate and would be published on the web.
- 14** **Student Led Activities**
- 14.1** Received: An update from the Chair of the Student-Led Activities Working Group (**Paper QAAC/2012/39**).
- 14.2** Reported: When the Working Group submitted its recommendations for the management of Student-Led Activities, it suggested conducting a review of the procedure once it had been in operation for one year.
- 14.3** Reported: Since roll out, seven new projects have received recognition from the CAG, three of which are likely to involve overseas activity. Because the number of projects was small, it was found to be effective and time-efficient for key members of the separate boards to perform jointly a reduced number of review steps. Should the number of projects increase substantially, it might be necessary to reinstate these separate steps in order to manage the workflow.
- 14.4** Agreed: Until a completely new project has progressed into the field, it will not be possible to fully evaluate the procedure. The Working Group would be asked to review the process at that point.
- 14.5** Reported: Conference organisation and presentation was identified as one mechanism for dissemination of information about projects and reward and recognition of both student participants and their sponsors. This appears to be working well.
- 14.6** Reported: Provision of academic credit for essentially non-academic, albeit valuable activities is a potentially contentious area and the issue of allocation of ECTS credits was considered at length by the original team. Whilst Working Group members were sympathetic to the principle of rewarding students for their extra-curricular endeavours, concerns were raised about whether the assessment process for such projects can be made sufficiently robust to reward individuals. It is often hard to assess the personal contributions made by individual students to the outputs of projects, which normally rely on co-operative endeavours. It is therefore difficult to decide to what extent individuals should be additionally rewarded.
- 14.7** Reported: With specific regard to the proposal from the Department of Mechanical Engineering, the Working Group agreed that a robust level of assessment would require

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a closer level of staff involvement, which could potentially undermine the student-led concept. Additionally, as the majority of projects require the co-operation of students from multiple disciplines, it would seem inequitable to reward only those in Mechanical Engineering and the agreement of other Departments would be required to similarly recognise their student participants. Similarly, students take part in many other activities and achieve many worthy outcomes which contribute to their personal and professional development and often bring social benefit. The majority of these activities take place outside the umbrella of SLARB, but might be considered equally worthy of ECTS allocation.

**14.8** Reported: Imperial College Union is currently considering how students undertaking volunteer activities might be formally accredited for their contributions and achievements and intend to have a full scheme in place in time for the start of the next academic year. The creation of this scheme is a high profile project, funded by the College and will be led by a new member of staff, shortly to be appointed specifically for that purpose. In addition, Registry is currently considering the possible introduction of the HEAR (Higher Education Achievement Report), which might also be a suitable method of recognising and rewarding non-academic achievement.

**14.9** Agreed: This issue would be revisited when both the ICU and Registry have advanced their work around accreditation and it is more likely that at least one of these initiatives has developed a robust and equitable strategy which could be made available to all our students. This will part of the wider work on student achievement

## **15 Student Progression: Undergraduate Failure Rates 2011-12**

**15.1** Received: Undergraduate Failure Rates for 2011-12 (**Paper QAAC/2012/40**).

**15.2** Agreed: The report would be submitted to the Studies Committees for consideration. Those Departments where the failure rate in a particular year of the course exceeds 10% would be asked to respond to this and produce an action plan, if appropriate.

**15.3** Agreed: The Registry would clarify the data for the Faculty of Medicine.

## **16 Examination Disturbances (Paper QAAC/2012/41)**

**16.1** Reported: The Faculty of Engineering would like to propose a modification to the current procedures for dealing with fire alarms during examinations. Currently, students are supposed to take their question papers and examination scripts with them in the event of an evacuation. It is proposed that this instruction be rescinded and replaced by a different instruction to the effect that scripts and question papers should be left on each candidate's desk.

**16.2** Reported: In any evacuation, invigilators will strive to ensure that candidates do not engage in conversation with other candidates as far as this is practical. It is thought that conversation that might assist candidates with the examination would be less likely if they did not have their scripts with them. All fire alarm incidents are likely to be different but the above change is proposed as a more pragmatic approach. The proposal is also fully supported by the Faculty of Natural Sciences.

**16.3** Agreed: Amendments to the Notes for the Guidance of Invigilators, as outlined above. The amended document would be published on the web.

## **17 National Student Survey 2013**

**17.1** Received and Noted: The optional question bank selection questions for NSS 2013 (**Paper QAAC/2012/42**).

## **18 Student Exchange Links**

**18.1** Received and Noted: In accordance with the [Procedures for the Establishment, Renewal and Review of Student Exchange Partners](#), an annual report on the number of active exchange links in operation at the College during 2012-13 (**Paper QAAC/2012/43**)

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**Registry**

## 19 Monitoring Student Attendance on Placements and Field Trips

- 19.1 Received: A proposal to address the requirements of the UK Border Agency regarding the monitoring of attendance of students on a placement or field trip as part of their degree (**Paper QAAC/2012/44**).
- 19.2 Reported: The College has a responsibility for the welfare of all its students, both home and overseas, which includes an obligation to report to the UKBA on international students who are not participating. It is the College that retains this responsibility even when students are working away from College.
- 19.3 Reported: Regarding field trips, there are two types of field trip: one led and managed by academic staff, the other student organised. In both cases the period of time spent in the field is relatively short in the context of a degree programme and thus it is easy on a field trip to monitor the attendance and participation of all students especially given the obligation to have regard for students' health and safety. If a student disappeared during a field trip this would be reported to the College authorities as soon as practical with the involvement of the emergency services where appropriate.
- 19.4 Reported: Students on internships or UK Industrial placements will have a named contact at the organisation at which they are based: that contact must understand their responsibilities with regard to the welfare of students in their care. An internship or placement will generally involve the equivalents of full time employment which means that a student's absence without good cause [e.g. normal sick leave] should be readily detected and thus reported to College. There should be periodic email or telephone or Skype contact between the student while on placement with the Departmental Senior Tutor or Placement Coordinator: such contact should take place on a monthly basis as a minimum. Also students may also be visited at least once on their placement by College staff.
- 19.5 Reported: Students on a Year Abroad programme will have a named contact at the organisation at which they are based: that contact must understand their responsibilities with regard to the welfare of students in their care. Essentially the contact at the institution hosting the year's academic placement is acting *in loco* of the Senior Tutor and should maintain oversight of the Imperial students through the year according to the Learning Agreement governing the student's academic programme. This would include monitoring of a student's participation in the programme and submission of any local coursework. In addition to this local monitoring however, the principal responsibility for the student who is abroad rests with the designated contact at Imperial with whom the student should keep in touch normally by email or telephone or Skype on a monthly basis as a minimum. This contact would be supported by a visit by College staff to the student at least once during the placement. Another acceptable form of contact might be through social media such as Facebook.
- 19.6 Reported: Regarding students who carry out projects away from College, Course directors must agree with the hosting organisation adequate supervisory and welfare arrangements which must include the student maintaining regular contact with the course director and supervisor; contact between the student and the latter must be on a monthly basis as a minimum. This contact should be stipulated in the risk assessment. For those students who carry out their project at home, it is proposed that students must live within reasonable distance from the College and maintain a minimum of monthly contact with their supervisor.
- 19.7 Reported: Students researching at a PRI will have a named supervisor at the organisation at which they are based: that contact must understand their responsibilities with regard to the welfare of students in their care. Students must maintain the same level of contact at the PRI as is expected of PGR students based at a College campus. In addition students must maintain contact with their Imperial supervisor on at least a monthly basis through email or telephone or Skype. PRI students of course also attend transferable skills course run by the Graduate School.
- 19.8 Reported: The risk assessment for students on study leave or a split PhD must include details of local supervisory arrangements which must replicate normal monitoring of PGR students at a College campus. In addition students must maintain contact with their

Imperial supervisor on at least a monthly basis through email or telephone or Skype. Where the Imperial supervisor is also in the field for a substantial period of the research there must be regular reports [normally at least once a month] to the host Imperial department on a student's welfare and progress. All PGR students of course also attend transferable skills courses run by the Graduate School.

- 19.9 Agreed: The Committee would endorse these principles which would be developed into a policy document. The document would be issued to Departments together with the findings of the pilot UKBA audit which is currently being undertaken by Deloitte.

Registry

## 20 Key Information Sets

- 20.1 Received: The College's draft Key Information Sets Policy and Procedures (**Paper QAAC/2012/45**).

- 20.2 Reported: The policy states that the College's Quality Assurance Advisory Committee (QAAC) (now QAEC) sets and oversees the procedures for developing Imperial's KISs, which are prepared by the Registry. The Pro Rector (Education) and the QAEC provide reports to the Senate on the College's KIS submission. The College's Council is also kept informed of developments in this area via the regular reports it receives from Senate. Reports on the KISs are also provided to the College's Management Board.

- 20.3 Reported: Last year, institutional-level information was approved by the Pro Rector (Education) and course-level information by the Chairs of the Studies Committees who took overall responsibility for approving course-level information for their respective Faculties which has been agreed by individual Departments. It is proposed that this process remains in place.

- 20.4 Agreed: The Key Information Sets Policy and Procedures and an amendments to the QAEC terms of reference to include responsibility for overseeing the procedures for developing Imperial's KISs.

Registry

### Items for Report

## 21 UK Quality Code

### 21.1 Chapter B10: Management of Collaborative Arrangements

- 21.2 Received: The College's final response to the consultation on the draft [Chapter B10](#) which was submitted to the QAA on the 18 October 2012 (**Paper QAAC/2012/46**).

## 22 A Risk-Based Approach to Quality Assurance

- 22.1 Reported: That HEFCE has now published the [outcome of its consultation on a risk-based approach to quality assurance](#).

- 22.2 Received: A summary of the outcome of this consultation (**Paper QAAC/2012/47**).

## 23 Good Practice Knowledge Base

- 23.1 Reported: The QAA is in the process of constructing a Good Practice Knowledge Base which will bring together all the features of good practice (FGPs) identified in its reviews in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Each FGP will be linked to the corresponding supporting evidence, which is currently publicly available, but not routinely published. This format will enable users quickly to identify good practice in areas of interest.

- 23.2 Reported: In addition, the QAA intends to establish a set of short case-studies based on some of the features of good practice identified during reviews. Following a review which identifies good practice, institutions will be invited to submit one or two such case-studies, using a standard template, to be linked to the Knowledge Base. Alongside this development, a Knowledge Base of Recommendations will also be established, following a similar structure. These two Knowledge Bases taken together offer a valuable resource to the sector, in addition to providing individual institutions with the opportunity to showcase their own good practice.

**24 Any Other Business**

24.1 None reported.

**25 Dates of Next Meetings**

25.1 17<sup>th</sup> January 10am – 1pm, Solar Room 170 QG  
5<sup>th</sup> March 10am – 1pm, Solar Room 170 QG  
10<sup>th</sup> April 10m – 1pm, Solar Room 170 QG  
30<sup>th</sup> May 10am – 1pm, Solar Room 170 QG  
1<sup>st</sup> July 10am-1pm, Solar Room 170 QG