

## **Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC)**

Minutes from the meeting held on  
Wednesday 13 March 2024

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### **Present**

Judith Webster, Director of Academic Quality and Standards - acting Chair (in place of David Ashton)

Dr Clemens Brechtelsbauer, Chair of Programmes Committee

Dr Lorraine Craig, Faculty of Engineering representative

Matthew Easden, Head of Market Insights and Data (in place of Katharine Manley, Head of Admissions)

Dr Cloda Jenkins, Business School representative

Laura Lane, Head of Strategy and Operations, Graduate School

Martin Lupton, Faculty of Medicine representative

Prof Jonathan Mestel, Senior College Consul

Jordon Millward, ICU PGR Representation Chair

Prof Jason Riley, Faculty of Engineering representative

Claire Stapley, CLCC/CHERS representative

Dr Mike Tennant, Faculty of Natural Sciences representative

Karen Tweddle, Business School representative

Dr Jeffrey Vernon, Faculty of Medicine representative

Yi Yang, ICU Deputy President (Education)

Scott Tucker, Deputy Director (Academic Quality and Standards) – Secretary

### **In Attendance**

Annemarie Gupta, Assistant Registrar (Academic Policy)

Chris Kerr, Education and Quality Assurance Coordinator, Faculty of Natural Sciences

### **Apologies**

David Ashton, Academic Registrar

Naraana Enkhjin, ICU PGT Representation Chair

Katharine Manley, Head of Admissions

Rebecca Middleton, Faculty of Natural Sciences representative

## **1 Welcome, apologies and announcements**

1.1 The Chair welcomed attendees. Apologies for absence were noted.

## **2 Minutes of the previous meeting**

2.1 The Committee confirmed the minutes of 7 February 2024 as an accurate record.

QAEC.2023.47

### **3 Matters arising from the minutes**

3.1 No matters arising.

### **4 Update on QAEC actions**

4.1 The Committee noted the updated action list.

QAEC.2023.48

### **5 External examiner**

#### **5.1 Summary of postgraduate taught external examiner reports 2022-2023**

QAEC.2023.49

5.1.1 The Committee considered the report, which summarised feedback from external examiner 2022-23 reports in relation to the College's postgraduate taught provision. The summary was based on 168 reports received.

The Committee noted the responses to the overall confidence statements:

- 99% agreed that “The degree awarding body is maintaining the threshold academic standards set for its awards in accordance with the FHEQ and relevant Subject Benchmarks Statements.”
- 98% agreed that “The assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended learning outcomes of the programme and is conducted in line with the College's policies and regulations.”
- 99% agreed that “The academic standards and the achievements of students are comparable with those in other degree awarding bodies of which you have experience.”

The responses showed a small decrease to the previous year's responses. This would be kept under review. For the examiners who did not fully agree that their programmes met the above statements, they found that these were mostly met.

5.1.2 Four themes were identified from analysis of the recommendations put forward by external examiners. The Committee agreed that, where appropriate, these would be referred to the College's Assessment and Feedback Working Party. The QA Team would provide historical external examiner comments relating to assessment and feedback to the Party to inform discussion. It was agreed that both UG and PGT issues should be considered together.

**Action: Secretary**

(i) Resources, organisation and management

- Ensure that sufficient staffing is maintained, to support the programme and maintain minimum standards (teaching and support).
- Ensure Examiners are provided with relevant information in a timely manner in order to support the programme.
- Ensures work is managed appropriately to support the function of the programme e.g. adequate time to mark, moderate and prepare for the Board of Examiners.

(ii) Assessment strategy

- Ensure the assessment load is balanced for students and staff and consider areas in which further adaptation may be necessary. For example, better use of formative assessment, and reducing 'pinch' points.

(iii) Marking, moderation and feedback

- Extend/develop marking schemes to support clarity and consistency in marking processes, ensuring marks are justified and in line with sector expectations for the marks given.
- Consider/address default scaling practices and ensure assessment is designed to provide appropriate test for achievement of learning outcomes and for stronger candidates to demonstrate extended learning.
- Ensure that students are provided timely and consistent feedback on their work, outlining areas for development and areas of strength, including examinations and final year projects.

(iv) Generative AI

- Consider impact of generative AI for students as part of their programme of study including, where relevant, within their assessment.
- Ensure that systems are suitably robust to prevent where possible, and identify where necessary, academic misconduct.

5.1.3 Recommendations for action, beyond that provided by the examiners, were made in the undergraduate summary report considered and endorsed at the previous QAEC meeting (paper QAEC 2023.49). On review of the postgraduate reports, no further specific recommendations were proposed that were not included in the undergraduate summary.

5.1.4 It was clarified that the following prompts in the external examiner report template were previously included as they built on the updated College Strategy and the Learning and Teaching Strategy:

- How sustainability has been embedded across the programme
- Development and opportunities for student entrepreneurship and co-creation

With regards sustainability, it was felt that some externals might find it challenging to confidently comment on whether sustainability had been embedded across a programme. This prompt could therefore be reframed.

**Action: Secretary**

## 5.2 External examiner nomination and extension forms

QAEC.2023.50

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5.2.1 The Committee considered the following forms:

- Revised Taught External Examiner Nomination Form
- Revised Taught External Examiners: Request for Extension to Remit
- Revised Taught External Examiners: Request for Extension to Term

5.2.2 It was noted that the following updates had been made:

- The forms had been streamlined to reduce duplication of information and rearranged to create a more logical flow. Sections that were important/requirements, such as conflicts of interest, and what experience/expertise was relevant to the nomination, were made more visible.
- A department approval section had been added as this was previously on a separate form.
- Further context was provided as to the purpose of the extension forms and the information required for the Deputy Provost (Education and Student Experience) to make an informed judgement on the request.

5.2.3 It was felt that some of the information currently required in the nomination form would normally be available directly from a CV. As a result, it was agreed that further rationalisation could be achieved before recommending the forms to the Vice Provost (Education and Student Experience) for approval.

**Action: Secretary**

5.2.4 It was noted that Right to Work checks were burdensome and felt particularly bureaucratic where the proposed external examiner worked at another UK higher education institution. However, it was confirmed that Right to Work checks were a legal requirement and must be conducted by the College.

## 6 Student surveys: Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) 2024

QAEC.2023.51

### 6.1 Proposed PTES 2024 dates and provider questions

6.1.1 The Committee approved the following survey window for PTES 2024:

- Open: Monday 13 May 2024
- Close: Monday 10 June 2024

The rationale for the survey window was as follows:

- A concentrated survey window to allow for focused advertising and communications.
- To avoid running in tandem with Spring MEQ, open from 6 March to 10 April 2024.
- To avoid opening over the Easter vacation period where staff availability is reduced for survey support or to send reminder emails.

- To close the College’s survey window prior to the latest available PTES close date (13 June) to address any unexpected technical issues.

6.1.2 The Committee approved the addition of the following institutional questions to the survey:

1. I am comfortable about discussing my wellbeing issues with my personal tutor or supervisor.
2. My research group is an inclusive and supportive community.
3. I am happy with my work-life balance.  
(Definitely disagree/Mostly disagree/Neither agree nor disagree/Mostly agree/Definitely agree/Not applicable).

These questions were previously approved by QAEC (with strong support from the ICU) and used in PTES 2022 and, despite some concern over the clarity of question 3, it was felt that continuity would allow for useful comparative data to be collected.

6.1.3 The Committee had previously raised concern over the lack of access to PTES programme level data. As a result, the Committee endorsed the recommendation that a dashboard was created to allow results to be viewed at a more granular level. This would be explored with the Strategic Planning Division.

**Action: Secretary**

## **7 Subcommittees**

### **7.1 Postgraduate Research Quality Committee**

7.1.1 The Committee considered the PRQC report from the meeting held on 26 February 2024. QAEC.2023.52

7.1.2 The Committee approved the following new and renewed CDT programmes:

- Mathematics for our Future Climate: Theory, Data and Simulation (Mathematics)
- Collaborative Computational Modelling at the Interface (Mathematics)
- EPSRC Centre for Doctoral Training in Statistics and Machine Learning (Mathematics)
- Centre for Doctoral Training in Green Industrial Futures (Chemical Engineering)

7.1.3 The Committee noted that the following CDTs had come to the end of their funding periods and would not continue from 2024-25:

- EPSRC CDT Mathematics of Random Systems (Department of Mathematics)
- EPSRC CDT Next Generation Synthesis and Reaction Technology (Department of Chemistry)
- EPSRC CDT BioDesign Engineering (Department of Life Sciences)
- EPSRC CDT Nuclear Energy Futures (Department of Materials)
- EPSRC CDT Advanced Characterisation of Materials (Department of Materials)
- EPSRC CDT Sensing, Imaging and Diagnostics for Future Engineering Structures (Department of Mechanical Engineering)
- Safe and Trusted AI (G5ZS)

The Committee approved the withdrawal of the following programme titles/codes in relation to the funding outcomes (*note: other CDTs to be discontinued were not set up as unique programmes in Banner so no programme titles/codes needed withdrawing for these CDTs*):

- Mathematics of Random Systems (PhD) – G1ZR
- EPSRC Centre for Doctoral Training in Nuclear Energy Futures – H8Z1
- Safe and Trusted AI - G5ZS

**Action: Secretary**

## **7.2 Programmes Committee**

7.2.1 The Committee approved the major modifications set out in the report. QAEC.2023.53

## **7.3 Regulations and Policy Review Committee**

7.3.1 The Committee noted the report from the RPRC meeting held on 21 February 2024, including the following items: QAEC.2023.54

- Proposal to de-weight year 1 of Physics undergraduate programmes
- Programme design: Stream v Pathway v Specialism
- Definition of Postgraduate Taught borderline candidates 2023-2024
- Proposal to change requirements for i-Explore in BSc (Hons) Biomedical Technology Ventures

## **8 Admissions Subcommittee**

8.1 The Committee noted that the QA Team was reviewing the approval process for entry requirements with Admissions. Following the formation of the ASC, there were some areas where the terms of reference require updating (FEC, PC, QAEC) to take account of entry requirement approval.

**Action: Secretary**

## **9 Sector updates**

- 9.1 On 20 February 2024, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) published the second edition of The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies, which includes The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of Degree-Awarding Bodies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ). QAEC.2023.55

The Committee noted the second edition of The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies, available at: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/qualifications-frameworks>

## **10 Chair's actions**

- 10.1 The Committee noted suspensions to regulations, approved by Chair's action. QAEC.2023.56

## **11 Any other business**

- 11.1 No other business reported.

## **12 Dates of QAEC meetings 2023-24**

- 12.1 The Committee noted the following dates of the QAEC meetings to be held in 2023-24:
- Wednesday 10 April 2024
  - Wednesday 5 June 2024