

Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC)

Minutes from the meeting held on

Wednesday 7 June 2023

Present

David Ashton, Academic Registrar – Chair

Dr Clemens Brechtelsbauer, Chair of Programmes Committee

Dr Lorraine Craig, Faculty of Engineering representative

Prof Richard Green, Business School representative

Laura Lane, Head of Strategy and Operations, Graduate School

Prof Jonathan Mestel, Senior College Consul

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

Judith Webster, Head of Academic Services

Jason Zheng, ICU Deputy President (Education)

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

In Attendance

Claudia Minett, Interim Head of Assessment Records

Apologies

Shangyi Liu, ICU PGT Representation Chair

Martin Lupton, Faculty of Medicine representative

Rebecca Middleton, Faculty of Natural Sciences representative

Chengning Yao, ICU PGR Representation Chair

1. Welcome, apologies and announcements

1.1 The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting. Apologies for absence were noted.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting and terms of reference

2.1 The Committee confirmed the minutes of 26 April 2023 as an accurate record.

QAEC.2022.55

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.2022.56

5. Academic Regulations

5.1 Regulations for Students

5.1.1 No significant updates that had not previously been approved were proposed for 2023-24. It was noted that the recently approved PGT degree classification algorithms (QAEC.2022.22) would be included.

5.2 General Regulations

5.2.1 No significant updates were proposed for October 2023.

5.2.2 It was noted that the General Regulations only apply to students on pre-curriculum reviewed PGT programmes, and PGR programmes.

5.3 Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study (The 'Single Set')

5.3.1 It was noted that no significant updates were proposed for October 2023.

5.4 Regulations for the Awards of MPhil and PhD

QAEC.2022.57

5.4.1 The Committee considered the proposed updates to the regulations for new and continuing students from October 2023, as set out in **Annex A**.

5.4.2 The Committee recommended the proposed updates to Senate, with the following addition:

Progression (Section 8: Regulation 8.1)

- Add reference to the Progress Review, in line with 8.17.

Action: Secretary

6. Early Stage Assessment and Late Stage Review Guidance

6.1 ESA and LSR deadline extensions: procedural updates to guidance

QAEC.2022.58

6.1.1 It was reported that the *Regulations for the Awards of MPhil and PhD* stated that any extensions to ESA and LSR deadlines required approval. The College had a well-established procedure in place to consider and agree extension requests to the final thesis submission deadline, as set out in *Guidelines for Requesting an Extension to the Thesis Deadline for PhD, MPhil, EngD and MRes candidates*, however, there was currently no equivalent College-level procedure to support the consideration of extension requests to the ESA or LSR milestone deadlines. In addition, any extension periods agreed locally by departments were not currently captured in Banner or made

visible to students via the PGR Milestones platform accessible via the My Imperial student portal.

6.1.2 The Committee approved the following proposals:

- That any approved extensions agreed by departments to ESA and/or LSR deadlines should be reflected in Banner, and subsequently surfaced to students via the PGR Milestones platform accessed via the My Imperial student portal alongside all other confirmed milestone deadlines.
- That Department-led extension and review procedures remained in place, supported by explicit reference of key principles in the College's Guidance for ESA and LSR procedures; an additional final step would be to inform Registry Assessment Records of the new extended deadline for milestone completion for capture in the College's central record system.
- That an ESA/LSR Extension Request Form was introduced to support department representatives with the coordination of extension request and review processes. This would be used as an interim measure only, until the additional development work scheduled to absorb the ESA/LSR workflows into the PGR Milestones platform was facilitated. Whilst encouraged, neither the use or submission of a completed ESA/LSR extension request form to Registry at the point of extension approval would be compulsory, providing evidence of the extension request and due consideration by relevant parties were held at department-level.

Following pre-meeting feedback from the Vice Provost (Education and Student Experience), the Committee approved the following additions:

- No maximum limit for extending an ESA/LSR deadline will be enforced but additional guidance would be produced that sets a normal limit (e.g. three months), noting that extending the ESA or LSR milestones would not automatically extend other milestones.
- As ESA and LSR guidance exists, it would be appropriate to develop corresponding Progress Review Guidance as this is a formal milestone.
- That 2.2 and 2.3 of the *Guidance Notes – Early Stage Assessment* should be combined.

Action: Secretary

6.2 It was noted that the College holds a record of the Graduate School's professional skills courses completed by students.

7. Appointment of Examiners for Research Degrees

7.1 The Committee considered the *Procedure for Appointment of Examiners for Research Degrees (MPhil, PhD, MD(Res), EngD)*, which had been updated following QAEC recommendations and those put forward by the Director of the Graduate School and the Head of Strategy and Operations (Graduate School). QAEC.2022.59

7.1.1 The Committee approved the document subject to some final minor revisions as follows:

- Para 4 – provide further clarify on the role of the second internal panel member.
- Para 5 - Remove 'Reader or Professor' as these terms are not commonly used internationally.
- Para 13 - Provide further clarity.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

8.1 Annual Monitoring

QAEC.2022.60

8.1.1 The Committee considered the Faculty undergraduate annual monitoring reports 2022-23 (reporting on 2021-22). Faculty representatives thanked report authors for drafting the reports. The following points were noted:

- It was positive that EDI considerations were referenced across a number of reports.
- Space constraints were an ongoing issue.
- The waiting time for the Disability Advice and Counselling Services was still very long.
- The MEQ needed improving.
- Timetabling issues remained for I-explore and Horizons modules.
- A review of annual monitoring was an action previously agreed by QAEC and that this would be prioritised to ensure the review takes place in 2023-24. Through the review of annual monitoring, the College needed to consider how issues raised are responded to effectively and where issues would be better raised directly with service providers following FEC scrutiny.

8.1.2 The Committee considered the College undergraduate annual monitoring report summary 2022-23 (reporting on 2021-22), which identified the following themes raised in Faculty level reports:

QAEC.2022.61

- Admissions
- Assessment and feedback
- Curriculum
- Progression and degree outcomes
- Student support
- Student voice
- Resources and space

8.2 Module Evaluation Questionnaire

8.2.1 The Committee considered the MEQ 2022-23 Spring Term College summary. The MEQ was used to evaluate modules on undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes delivered by the Faculty of Engineering (including iBSc students) and the Faculty of Natural Sciences. I-Explore modules (BPES, Horizons, STEMM, Multidisciplinary Project) were also within the scope of the MEQ.

QAEC.2022.62

8.2.2 The following results were noted at College level:

Percentage of respondents answering 'definitely agree' and 'mostly agree'

Question Categories	UG	Change	PG	Change
Teaching Delivery	77%	0%	82%	0%
Assessment and Feedback	65%	1%	73%	-1%
Engagement with Staff and Students	76%	-1%	84%	-3%
Access and Support	80%	-1%	87%	-1%
Overall Satisfaction	TBC	N/A	TBC	N/A

'Change' indicates the percentage point change from Spring 2022

8.3 The Committee considered the following recommendations put forward by the MEQ Review Panel:

QAEC.2022.63

- i. For 2023-24, the format should continue, including numerical assessments of detailed aspects of the module, and numerical measures of overall satisfaction with the module and with individual teaching. There should also be a section for free text comments on both the module and the teaching received.
- ii. The module scores should be made available to all students and staff via a new PowerBI dashboard. Students may require special access. Access to the free text comments should be restricted to the individual lecturer, and appropriate departmental, Faculty and College officers. All comments should be returned to lecturers, even if only a few are received, and the questionnaire should inform students that this will occur. This would not apply to comments deemed inappropriate by a departmental moderator, whose role would remain as at present.
- iii. Departments should produce and publish collected responses from lecturers to the comments and data received. The length and content of the responses should be up to individual lecturers and may quote free text comments from the questionnaire. These responses should be made available to future students.
- iv. Efforts should be made to improve the timeliness of MEQ and its participation rates. Questionnaires should be released at least two weeks before the end of term. Departments, individual lecturers and student bodies should be requested to promote the survey. Local incentive schemes to increase participation should be supported by College.
- v. The technical side of the MEQ should be developed further. For 2024-25 and beyond the College should consider the following:
 - a) The current splitting of modules with more than one lecturer into different modules involves extra effort for students, surveyors and departments and requires replacement, probably with a lecturer-specific box for each module, which need no longer be split.
 - b) A question bank could be produced, and each module surveyed could have some core questions and some module-specific questions selected by departments.
 - c) The questions and response scale should be reviewed. It could be considered whether to replace the generic agree/disagree responses with a question-specific scale, and whether to remove the “neither agree nor disagree” response.
 - d) The modules to be included in MEQ should be reviewed (e.g. PGT project modules.)

8.4 The Committee recommended the Review Panel’s recommendations to Senate, which would be reported via the QAEC report.

Action: Secretary

8.5 The Chair thanked the Senior College Consul for chairing the Review Panel.

9. Sub-Committees

9.1 Regulations and Policy Review Committee

9.1.1 The Committee considered the report from the RPRC meeting held on 17 May 2023.

QAEC.2022.64

9.1.2 The Committee approved the following documents, with some minor additions as noted:

- Conduct of Board of Examiners
- Board of Examiners Notes updates for 2022/2023
 - 3.1 (1)(c) – change “old” to “previous”
 - Guidance for postgraduate exam boards on disruption to assessment and managing missing marks would follow in due course.
 - Departments must ensure that any markers brought in as a result of the boycott are suitably qualified and meet criteria.
 - Boards should be cautious when confirming progression where there is a risk that a student might need to undertake resits alongside their studies in the following year, as this would not be in the student’s interest.
- In the next iteration of the Board of Examiners flow charts, consideration should be given to the ‘student has competed 30-45’ box – this could be split into two as it covers very different cases.
- Update to Academic Appeals Policy and Procedures
 - 4.9 – For consistency, add ‘normally’
 - Timescales in the Procedure are in line with the OIA Good Practice Framework, which sets out that it is good practice / an expectation to conclude academic appeals within 90 days of the formal procedure (i.e. 90 days from the student’s submission of a formal academic appeal). This includes the review stage. There is not a granular breakdown of the timescales for each part of the appeal within the Framework.

The Committee noted that the *Policy of Admissions Registration and Enrolment of Ex-Offenders* was not approved as RPRC requested additional legal scrutiny. Further advice will therefore be sought from the Director of Safeguarding and Director of Legal.

It was noted that ICT were currently updating the criminal offences declaration into the enrolment cycle but were unable to proceed if the policy was not approved. In order to expedite the approval process it was agreed that, following advice from legal and safeguarding, the updated document would be considered via email and considered for approval by Chair’s Action.

Action: Chair

9.2 Programmes Committee

9.2.1 The committee considered the report from the Programmes Committee meeting held on 16 May 2023. QAEC.2022.65

9.2.2 The committee approved the recommendations from the Programmes Committee, including the following:

PC.2022.91 Imperial College Business School
MRes Business (N1UQ)

The redesigned programme for delivery with effect from September 2023.

PC.2022.92 Imperial College Business School
MSc International Health Management (N1EG)

The redesigned programme for delivery with effect from September 2023.

PC.2022.93 School of Medicine
MBBS Graduate Entry Medicine

A new programme from the School of Medicine for delivery at the Cumbria School of Medicine (CSM) with effect from September 2025.

9.2.3 The Chair of the Programmes Committee asked QAEC Faculty representatives and Vice Deans (Education) that the following items are kept under review:

- Exit award provision – Programmes Committee was still experiencing resistance from some departments when it came to the provision of exit awards, which were expected in line with the *Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study*.
- Requests for programme specific regulations – More requests were being submitted than would normally be expected and it was felt that the pedagogic reasoning was not always strong.
- ‘New’ provision – Programmes Committee had received some proposals for new programmes and streams that appeared to use a significant number of exiting modules. The Programmes Committee Chair emphasised that the College should continue to prevent the fragmentation and dilution of the academic landscape.
- Modifications - Programmes Committee had received an increase in the number of major modifications and late minor modifications submitted. Although some modifications to undergraduate programmes might be expected following curriculum review, the new CMA guidance published was a reminder of the College’s responsibility in meeting consumer law obligations.

9.2.4 The Chair of Programmes committee thanked colleagues involved in curriculum review and that it had been a challenging process given the number of programmes.

9.2.5 The Committee received a verbal update on minor revisions to the *Procedure for the Approval of New Undergraduate and Master’s Level Programmes* and associated forms, which incorporated recommendations from Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions.

9.3 Postgraduate Research Quality Committee

9.3.1 The Committee considered the report from the PRQC meeting held on 10 May 2023

9.3.2 The following items were considered by QAEC as main agenda items:

- Updates to the Regulations for the Awards of MPhil and PhD (QAEC Item 5.4)
- ESA and LSR deadline extensions: procedural updates to guidance (QAEC Item 6.1)

The following items were noted by QAEC:

- Thesis submission checklist
- Special cases report – non-standard examiner nominations and thesis extensions
- Working Group to review GTA rates of pay
- Student representation at PGR Periodic Review panels
- Modality of Final Thesis Research Degree Vivas

10. Admissions Subcommittee

10.1 The Committee noted the draft minutes of the ASC meeting held on 30 March 2023

11. Chair's Business

11.1 Verbal update from Chair (or nominees) on relevant developments

11.1.1 It was reported that the approved additional student casework resource in Registry would not be in place prior to October but, once established, would manage student disciplinary procedures in addition to student complaints, academic appeals and academic misconduct.

12. Any Other Business

12.1 The chair thanked outgoing members Professor Richard Green, Jason Zheng, Chengning Yao and Shangyi Liu for their valuable contributions and support given to the committee.

13. Dates of QAEC Meetings 2022-23

13.1 The Committee confirmed the dates of the QAEC meetings to be held in 2023-24:

- Wednesday 20 September 2023
- Wednesday 22 November 2023
- Wednesday 7 February 2024
- Wednesday 13 March 2024
- Wednesday 10 April 2024
- Wednesday 5 June 2024

Annex A (minute 5.4 refers)

Proposed updates to the Regulations for the Awards of MPhil and PhD

1 Introduction

1.1 This paper sets out proposed updates to the *Regulations for the Awards of MPhil and PhD*. The updates have generally been proposed to reflect current College practices more accurately. If approved, the updates will apply to new and continuing MPhil and PhD students from October 2023.

2. Proposed updates for recommendation (blue text indicates a proposed update)

2.1 Principles (Section 3, Regulation 3.3)

3.3 Research degrees are not credit-rated but will be aligned with the academic levels of the FHEQ and the QF-EHEA as follows:

Qualification	FHEQ Level	QF-EHEA cycle	Learning at this level will reflect the ability to:
PhD	8	Third cycle (end of cycle) qualifications	make a significant and original contribution to a specialised field of inquiry, demonstrating a command of methodological issues and engaging in critical dialogue with peers and accepting full accountability for outcomes
MPhil	7	Second cycle (end of cycle) qualifications	

Rationale

- To provide clarity that the MPhil is a level 7 award.
- To remove the qualification descriptor as this information is detailed under the 'Requirements of a Thesis' section.

2.2 Post-Nominal Awards (new - to be included under Section 15: Notification of Results of Examinations or Section 2: Scope of the Regulations)

A student registered on a MPhil or PhD shall automatically be awarded the Diploma of Imperial College London (DIC) upon successful completion of that programme.

Rationale

- To confirm that all successful MPhil and PhD students will receive the Diploma of Imperial College London (DIC), in line with existing College practices.

2.3 Progression (Section 8, Regulation 8.1)

There is existing reference to a Progress Review under regulation 8.17:

8.17 A formal monitoring point must be completed by 36 months to ensure that the student's research is progressing and can be completed within the expected timescales. At this point students are normally expected to demonstrate that they are on track to complete all experimental work or collection of material related to their thesis. At this Progress Review students should submit a timetable of remaining work to be completed in order to meet the expected thesis submission deadline. The plan must be recommended by the Main Supervisor and approved by the Director of Postgraduate Studies (or nominee) who will confirm that the milestone has been completed.

It is proposed that reference to this is also included under regulation 8.1:

8.1 The College has identified a number of milestones for research degree students to achieve through their programme of Study. The College requires that a student's progress during PhD registration must be formally monitored at two key stages after the date of initial registration: Early Stage Assessment (ESA) **by 12 months** and Late Stage Review (LSR) **by 24 months**. **In addition, a Progress Review must be held by 36 months.**

Rationale

- To provide clarity that the Progress Review is a formal milestone that *must* be completed.

2.4 Progression, Early Stage Assessment (Section 8: Regulation 8.3)

8.3 The ESA must be completed by 12 months (full-time students) and 24 months (part-time students), which **may will normally** include one opportunity for re-assessment.

Rationale

- To provide clarify that one re-assessment opportunity would normally be provided.

2.5 Progression, Late Stage Review (Section 8: Regulation 8.7)

8.7 The LSR must be completed by 24 months (full-time students) and 48 months (part-time students), which **may will normally** include one opportunity for re-assessment.

Rationale

- To provide clarify that one re-assessment opportunity would normally be provided.

2.6 Progression, Writing Up Period (Section 8: Regulation 8.18)

8.18 A student can request to enter the Writing Up Period earlier than 36 months. Except in circumstances as set out in 4.5 and 6.1, a student must have completed 24 months of full-

time study or [48 months of part-time study](#) at the College before entering the Writing Up Period.

Rationale

- To confirm the requirement for part-time students.

2.7 Student Leave (new - to be included under Section 7: Attendance)

In line with the College's [Research Degree Student Leave Policy](#), MPhil and PhD students, including international students with a Student Visa, are entitled to a minimum of 30 days to a maximum of 40 days per year (including public holidays and College closure days) of annual leave (pro rata for part-time students).

Rationale

- To cross reference the regulations to the recently approved 'Research Degree Student Leave Policy.'

2.8 Aegrotat and Posthumous Award Provisions (new - to be included under Section 14: Conduct of Examinations)

In line with the College's [Policy for the Award of Posthumous and Aegrotat Postgraduate Research Degrees](#), examiners may recommend that a posthumous MPhil or PhD should be made following the death of a candidate.

In line with the College's [Policy for the Award of Posthumous and Aegrotat Postgraduate Research Degrees](#), examiners may recommend the award of an aegrotat MPhil or PhD if it is considered that a candidate's diagnosis of a terminal/debilitating illness or their incapacitation would preclude them from making the final submission of the thesis, undertaking the viva, modifications to the thesis or a resubmission of the thesis.

Rationale

- To cross reference the regulations to the recently approved 'Policy for the Award of Posthumous and Aegrotat Postgraduate Research Degrees.'

2.9 Submission of a Thesis (Section 9: Regulation 9.6)

A PhD student may be transferred to the degree of MPhil following an unsuccessful ESA or LSR. The revised thesis submission deadline is not currently stated for a transfer to MPhil following an unsuccessful ESA.

9.6 MPhil students must submit their thesis for examination within 24 months (full-time students) and 48 months (part-time students) of the date of the initial degree registration. [Where a student has had their registration transferred from PhD to MPhil following an Early Stage Assessment, they should normally complete the MPhil within 12 months \(full-time students\) and 24 months \(part-time students\) of the date of that Early Stage Assessment.](#)

Where a student has had their registration transferred from PhD to MPhil following a Late Stage Review they should normally complete the MPhil within six months (full-time students) and 12 months (part-time students) of the date of that Late Stage Review

Rationale

- To confirm existing College practice

Further recommendation made by QAEC:

2.10 Progression (Section 8: Regulation 8.1)

Add reference to the Progress Review, in line with 8.17.