

QUALITY ASSURANCE & ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

**The minutes of the Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee (QAEC)
held on
Tuesday 26th November 2013**

Present:

Professor Debra Humphris, Vice Provost (Education) – Chair
Professor Peter Cheung, Vice Dean (Education) Faculty of Engineering
Mr Jeremy Fernando, Senior Teaching Fellow Imperial College Business School
Professor Sue Gibson, Director of the Graduate School
Professor Nigel Gooderham, Senior College Consul
Ms Nat Kempston, ICU Deputy President (Education)
Dr David McPhail, Deputy Director of the Graduate School
Professor Andrew Parry, Senior Consul Faculty of Natural Sciences
Ms Lorna Richardson, Acting Academic Registrar
Professor Sue Smith, Deputy Director of Education Faculty of Medicine
Mr Andreas Thomik, GSU President
Ms Sophie White, Senior Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance & Enhancement)
Professor Denis Wright, Director of Student Support

In attendance:

Dr Niki Gounaris, Director of Postgraduate Studies, Life Sciences (for item 5.1)
Mr Christos Paliompeis, Student Representative, Department of Medicine (for item 5.1)
Professor Simon Taylor-Robinson, Director of Education (PGT) Department of Medicine (for items 5.1 & 5.2)
Professor Buchanan, Director of Studies, Earth Science and Engineering (for item 5.2)
Professor Jan Cilliers, Head of Department, Earth Science and Engineering (for item 5.2)
Mr Armando Esquivel García, Student Representative, Earth Science and Engineering (for item 5.2)
Professor Howard Johnson, Director of Studies, Earth Science and Engineering (for item 5.2)
Ms Sanam Nourbakhsh, Student Representative, Earth Science and Engineering (for item 5.2)
Ms Shweta Sangewar, Student Representative, Earth Science and Engineering (for item 5.2)
Ms Akela Silverton, Student Representative, Earth Science and Engineering (for item 5.2)
Mr Jorge de Le Torre Guzman, Student Representative, Earth Science and Engineering (for item 5.2)
Associate Professor Pang Weng Sun (PWS) – Vice Dean, Clinical Affairs, Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine
Dr Bernard Thong, Head of Quality, Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine
Mr Chris Harris, Quality Assurance & Enhancement Manager, Faculty of Medicine
Mr Callum MacLeod, Management Trainee
Mr Richard Monk, Assistant Registrar (Senate & Academic Review)
Mrs Clare Scheibner, Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance & Enhancement), (Secretary)

Apologies:

Dr Simon Archer, College Tutor

Professor Dot Griffiths, Head of Programmes Imperial College Business School
 Dr Paul Lickiss, Department of Chemistry
 Professor Alan Spivey, Director of Education Faculty of Natural Sciences

Paper

1. **Welcome and Apologies**
 Professor Humphris welcomed members to the meeting and apologies, as listed above, were noted.
2. **Minutes** **QAEC.2013.23**
 The minutes of the Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee (QAEC) held on 8th October 2013 were approved and the Action Plan was noted.
3. **Matters arising from the Minutes**
 Matters arising not appearing elsewhere on the agenda were discussed.
 - 3.1 Further to Minute 8, it was confirmed that Mr Colin Love, Director of Undergraduate Studies, Business School, would attend a Head of Department lunch on the 3rd December 2013 to share good practice and learning outcomes from the Business School Summer School Pilot in 2013.
 - 3.2 Further to Minute 11, the Committee noted that the E-Learning Strategy Committee recommendations for online programmes would be reported to QAEC on 1st April 2014.
 - 3.3 Further to Minute 13, the Committee noted that the example of the minimum level of feedback to students in the Faculty of Natural Sciences was shared as good practice through the Faculty Studies committees.
 - 3.4 Further to Minute 21, the Committee heard that a pilot of 'Starfish', a software logging student interactions with their personal tutors, would be undertaken during February and March 2014 and a report would be submitted to QAEC shortly afterwards. It was noted that the software may be suitable for other uses, such as student/supervisor interactions and postgraduate research student progression through their milestones and that these would also be explored.
4. **QAA Institutional Audit** **QAEC.2013.24**
 The Committee received an update on the College's 2010 Institutional Audit Action Plan and noted actions taken since the last update on 1st July 2013.
 - 4.1 The Committee also noted outstanding actions to be taken which included the harmonisation of Level 7 pass marks across all Faculties. The Committee heard that the Faculty of Engineering was due to discuss the issue shortly and would update the Committee on 16th January 2014. It was noted that the Faculty of Medicine had established a Working Party which was making progress towards addressing the issue.
5. **Periodic Reviews 2012-13**
 - 5.1. **Periodic Review of the Master's Programmes in the Department of Medicine** **QAEC.2013.25**
 The Committee considered the reports of the assessors for the periodic review of the Master's programmes in the Department of Medicine.

- 5.1.1** The following representatives of the review panel and Department were present, Dr Niki Gounaris representing the internal Chair of the panel, Professor Simon Taylor-Robinson, Director of Education Postgraduate Taught Programmes and Mr Christos Paliompeis student representative from the Department.
- 5.1.2** The Committee was pleased that the reviewers had noted the wide variety of Master's programmes offered by the Department of Medicine and were of an overall high quality with students expressing satisfaction. The Committee was also pleased to note that the panel had further praised the excellent organisation of individual programmes, the facilities available to students, the high teaching standards and the effective use of blended learning which again had been praised by the students.
- 5.1.3** The Committee noted that the panel had found a lack of coordination between different programmes and lack of a corporate identity for the programmes as a whole. The panel had recommended the sharing of good practice and where possible joint administration of programmes. The Department responded that they had instigated a process whereby each programme would have a programme convener and a student representative who would meet on a monthly basis to discuss synergies between programmes and to share good practice. The Department also felt that the recent appointment of a Faculty Academic Lead for postgraduate taught programmes by the Faculty of Medicine would help in this respect. The Department further informed the Committee that a review was currently underway in the Faculty of Medicine with a view to rationalising the current taught programme offerings.
- 5.1.4** The Committee asked the Department to comment on the panel's report that students lacked a sense of belonging outside of their individual programme. Most students did not identify themselves as being part of the Department, Faculty or College, leading to a feeling of isolation in some cases. The Department confirmed that cohort Identity would be enhanced by the introduction of new social events to be rotated between campuses, an extended welcome event and a new student common room which had recently opened at the Hammersmith campus. This would also help to address the concerns raised by the panel of student isolation. The Committee was sympathetic to the difficulties of building a cohort identity as a perennial issue for Faculties which ran a diverse range of provision and academic programmes on multiple sites.
- 5.1.5** The Department was asked to comment on the issue of general student dissatisfaction with feedback which had been highlighted by the panel. The Department confirmed that they had identified feedback as an area of weakness particularly with regards to NHS Trust staff teaching on the programme usually owing to other commitments. To help address this, personalised e-mails would be sent from Head of Department, followed by regular reminders to the NHS Trust staff to provide students with timely and meaningful feedback.
- 5.1.6** The Committee noted that the panel had commented that communication with students was lacking in some areas particularly around pastoral arrangements. The Department confirmed that all students were made aware of pastoral arrangements at the induction day and in the student handbooks but this would now be reiterated throughout the programmes. The Department also confirmed

that student representatives were invited to attend departmental committees which are held on a monthly basis.

5.1.7 The Department was asked to clarify what actions had been taken to address the highlighted issue of variability in student handbooks and the amount of information given in programme specifications. The Department confirmed that all student handbooks and programme specifications had now been updated and inconsistencies had been addressed. The Department also confirmed that it would work with Registry to ensure this remained the case.

5.1.8 The Committee congratulated the Department on an overall positive review and to its responses to the reviewer's findings and recommendations and asked the Department to update the Committee on progress made in respect of student feedback and student cohort identity by 1st July 2014.

5.1.9 The Committee agreed to recommend to Senate that the next scheduled Periodic Review would take place in 5-6 years' time.

5.2. Periodic Review of the Master's Programmes in the Department of Earth Science and Engineering **QAEC.2013.26**

The Committee considered the reports of the assessors for the periodic review of the Master's Programmes in the Department of Earth Science and Engineering.

5.2.1 The following representatives of the review panel and Department were present, Professor Simon Taylor-Robinson Internal Chair of the panel, Professor Jan Cilliers Head of Department, Professor Buchanan Director of Studies, Professor Johnson Director of Studies, Ms Shweta Sangewar student representative for the MSc in Petroleum Geoscience, Ms Akela Silverton student representative for the MSc in Petroleum Geophysics, Mr Jorge de Le Torre Guzman student representative for the MSc in Petroleum Geophysics, Mr Armando Esquivel García student representative for the MSc in Petroleum Engineering and Ms Sanam Nourbakhsh student representative for the MSc in Metals & Energy Finance.

5.2.2 The Committee congratulated the Department on an excellent review in which the panel had reported that the four programmes reviewed were considered to be the gold standard in their respective fields and had the highest international reputations. The Committee also noted that the panel had praised the Department's strong links with industry and the exceptional field trips, particularly Wytch Farm, which was highly praised by the students. The external reviewers had been extraordinarily impressed with the programmes on offer which the Committee felt to be a testament to the Department.

5.2.3 The Committee noted that the panel had found that the costs of some of the fieldwork trips, particularly to Colorado, were very expensive and that this may be problematic for self-funded students. The Department and student representatives present at the Committee confirmed that fieldwork costs were made clear to all prospective students on the website and again at the offer stage so that the students knew from the outset what their financial commitments would be.

5.2.4 The Committee further noted that the panel had reported that they were extremely impressed with the placement of students within industry however had raised the risk of adequate supervision being provided to students during an

industrial placement. The Department informed the Committee that several processes were in place to ensure supervision was adequate, these included, the issuing of yearly guidelines for all parties involved and regular Industry Advisory Boards. The Committee also heard that industry supervisors were involved in the formulation of projects and often attended the students' final project presentation and that all students had an Imperial College co-supervisor for the duration of their projects.

- 5.2.5** The Committee asked the Department for further details regarding the trial use of iPads for students on the Petroleum Geophysics programme. The panel had reported that this had been a source of some tension because students on the other programmes had felt that there was inequality in the level of provision. The Department confirmed that it had been an error to only issue iPads to students on one of the MSc programmes. Following the pilot they also now recognised that iPad functionality was not appropriate for the academic need of the students, particularly for the fieldwork phase. In light of this the Department had instigated a further pilot of PC tablets for use by PhD students. It is hoped that this new pilot would prove more successful and if this was the case tablets would be introduced for all MSc students from October 2014. The Committee requested that the Department share the findings of the pilot and their experience with the E-Learning Strategy Committee.

Action: Department of Earth Science and Engineering

- 5.2.6** The Committee noted that a panel member had commented that students had lamented the lack of free time on Wednesday afternoons to play sport or participate in other aspects of College life. However, the students that attended the Committee expressed their overall satisfaction with the social opportunities throughout the programme although did agree that time to participate in arranged sports was limited. The students further commented that the programme was a very full one and they appreciated that, due to time constraints, scheduling lectures on a Wednesday afternoon was preferable to scheduling them in the evenings.
- 5.2.7** The Committee agreed to recommend to Senate that the next scheduled periodic review would take place in 5-6 years' time.

6. Managing HE Provision with Others

QAEC.2013.27

The Committee considered the report from the Working Party led by Professor Denis Wright considering the approval, management and review of collaborative provision in light of Chapter B10, Managing HE Provision with Others, of the UK Quality Code.

- 6.1** Professor Wright provided the Committee with an overall update of the report; following this the Committee agreed that a summary document should be produced for further consideration by Faculties and Departments via Faculty Committees and Directors of Postgraduate Studies. Comments would be collated by the Working Party and a further report presented to QAEC by no later than 5th June 2014 in order for the new procedures to be agreed by Senate in time for the start of the 2014-5 academic session.

Action: Registry

- 7. Revising the Current College Periodic Review and Programme Monitoring** **QAEC.2013.28**

Processes

The Committee considered a paper outlining a number of proposals to streamline the current 'Periodic Review' and 'Programme Monitoring' processes. [Ref. Education and Student Strategy, objective 4.5].

- 7.1** Following general discussion of the proposals the Faculty of Engineering expressed a wish to have their Periodic Review conducted soon after external accreditation whilst the Faculty of Medicine would prefer two years following accreditation. It was confirmed that within the new procedures there would be flexibility to allow for local differences.
- 7.2** The Committee agreed the next stage would be to consult Faculties and Departments and that feedback on the proposal would be collated by the Registry. The next version of the preferred proposals to be submitted to QAEC on 5th June 2014 for agreement before presenting to Senate for approval before the end of the academic year.

Action: Richard Monk

Post Meeting Note

The proposal paper was circulated to senior faculty staff to seek their agreement on the most appropriate method to consult with their departments. The Faculties of Natural Sciences and Medicine confirmed that they would be discussing the proposals at their Faculty Teaching Committees. It is intended that the paper, along with comments received from Departments/Faculties, would then proceed through the formal committee structure as follows:

- Postgraduate Research Quality Committee – 3 February 2014
- Science Studies Committee – 12 February 2014
- Medical Studies Committee – 12 February 2014
- Engineering Studies Committee – 12 March 2014
- Master's Quality Committee (MLSPD) – 18 March 2014
- Master's Quality Committee (BEPS) – 21 March 2014

8. Quality Assurance of Undergraduate Programmes in the Centre for Co-Curricular Studies

8.1 Centre for Co-Curricular Studies Undergraduate Annual Monitoring 2012-3 **QAEC.2013.29**

The Committee considered the Centre for Co-Curricular Studies Undergraduate Annual Monitoring from 2012-13.

8.1.1 The Committee was satisfied with the Annual Monitoring Report and that issues raised were being satisfactorily addressed.

8.1.2 The Committee also discussed the option of the Annual Monitoring report for the Centre for Co-Curricular Studies to be considered by one of the Faculty Studies Committees in the future as it was felt that it was not appropriate for QAEC to carry out these types of functions. It was agreed that Professor Humphris would consult with the faculties to find an appropriate potential 'home' faculty.

Action: Debra Humphries

8.2 Centre for Co-Curricular Studies Board Chairman and External Examiners **QAEC.2013.30**

The Committee considered the appointment of the Board Chairman and External

Examiners for undergraduate programmes in the Centre for Co-Curricular Studies for 2013-14 and the External Examiner nomination for the Business School Undergraduate Summer School 2014.

Discussion reported in Appendix 1 [not published with the minutes]

- 9. Regulation Amendments for the Inclusion of E-Learning/Blended Learning** **QAEC.2013.31**
 The Committee considered a paper outlining suggested amendments to current College regulations to cover e-learning/blended learning. [Ref. QAA Quality Code, Chapter B3 – Learning and Teaching, Indicator 1 & 2].

- 9.1** The Committee approved the proposed changes and agreed to recommend them for Senate approval effective immediately.

- 10. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Student Engagement** **QAEC.2013.32**
 The Committee considered a paper from the ICU Deputy President (Education) proposing a number of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which would be used to assess and monitor student engagement in quality assurance and enhancement processes in light of the publication of Chapter B5 of the UK Quality Code relating to student engagement.

- 10.1** The Committee agreed that the KPIs would be a useful indication of student engagement at department level and should be reviewed annually by the Committee.

Action: Nat Kempston

11. Student Surveys

- 11.1 Imperial College Union (ICU) Response to National Student Survey (NSS) 2013**
 The Committee considered the Imperial College Union (ICU) response to the National Student Survey 2013. The Committee noted that the ICU had only made recommendations in areas which they considered to require improvement. The Committee further noted that some recommendations were being dealt with as a result of the Education and Student Strategy. The ICU NSS Survey response can viewed at:
<https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/news/nss-response-2013>

- 11.2 National Student Survey (NSS) 2014**
 The Committee received an update regarding the National Student Survey 2014 and noted that the survey would open on the 20th January 2014 and close at the end of April 2014 providing students with the maximum opportunity to complete the survey. The Committee further noted that a total of 41 questions would be asked, 23 being core questions and 18 optional. Optional questions had been selected using the rolling bank of optional questions used in previous years and an additional question regarding student placements had been included for 2014.

Post meeting note

As reported to Senate on the 11th December the NSS opening date for the Faculty of Medicine would be one week earlier, 13th January 2014.

- 11.3 PRES Response from Departments** **QAEC.2013.33**

The Committee noted a report from the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee (PRQC) regarding departmental responses to the PRES Survey 2013 and agreed with the recommendations which included a departmental survey response template and continued participation in the PRES survey. It was noted these recommendations would be shared with the Student Surveys and Feedback Working Party.

11.4 PRES Response from the College **QAEC.2013.34**

The Committee considered the response from the College to the Imperial College Union's response to the PRES Survey 2013 prior to its publication. The Committee approved the College response and its publication.

Post Meeting Note

The response was published and can be viewed at the following link:

[Imperial College PRES Response](#)

12. External Examiner Report – Business School Summer School 2013 **QAEC.2013.35**

The Committee considered the External Examiner report from the Business School Summer School Pilot which took place in July/August 2013 and was satisfied with the report.

- 12.1** The Committee agreed that the Business School Summer School External Examiner reports would be considered by the MQC (BEPS) in the future.

13. Annual report on Student Exchanges Links **QAEC.2013.36**

The Committee noted the annual report on the number of active student exchange links in operation at the College and further noted that a reduction in the number of exchange links and exchange partners had been due to departments not wishing to renew exchanges.

14. QAA – UK Quality Code for Higher Education

14.1 UK Quality Code - Chapter B2: Recruitment, selection and admission to higher education

The Committee noted that Chapter B2, Recruitment, selection and admission to higher education, was published on the 31st October 2013 and that a gap analysis would be presented to QAEC on 16th January 2014.

Action: Mel Peter

- 14.1.1** Further information can be found at the following link:
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/quality-code-B2.aspx>

14.2 UK Quality Code - Part A: Setting and maintaining academic standards, Chapter B1: Programme design, development and approval, B6: Assessment of students and the recognition of prior learning and Chapter B8: Programme monitoring and review

The Committee noted that Part A: Setting and maintaining academic standards, Chapter B1: Programme design, development and approval, B6: Assessment of students and the recognition of prior learning and Chapter B8: Programme monitoring and review, were published on the 31st October 2013 and that gap analyses would be presented to QAEC on 16th January 2014.

Action: Sophie White

14.2.1 Further information can be found at the following link:
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Quality-Code-Part-A.aspx>

14.2.2 The Committee further noted that the UK Quality Code had now been published in full.

15. Any Other Business**15.1 Making SOLE compulsory in the School of Medicine**

The Committee considered a paper submitted by the Faculty of Medicine outlining a proposal to make the completion of the UG SOLE Survey compulsory for medical students. The committee heard that the proposal was in response to a request by the Director of Education and Quality at Health Education North West London to address the issue of low participation rates in the survey. The Committee also heard that the proposal would be considered by the Medical Studies Committee on the 27th November 2013.

15.2 The Committee was supportive of the proposal but agreed that the final decision whether to make the survey compulsory was ultimately a matter for the Faculty of Medicine.

16. Dates of next meetings 2013-4

Thursday 16th January 2014, 10am-1pm Ballroom, 58 Prince's Gate

Tuesday 4th March 2014, 10am - 1pm, Ballroom, 58 Prince's Gate

Tuesday 1st April 2014, 10am - 1pm, Ballroom, 58 Prince's Gate

Thursday 5th June 2014, 10am -1pm, Ballroom, 58 Prince's Gate

Tuesday 1st July 2014, 10am -1pm, Ballroom, 58 Prince's Gate

17. Reserved Areas of Business

There were no reserved areas of business.