

QUALITY ASSURANCE & ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

**The minutes of the Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee (QAEC)
held on
Thursday 30th May 2013**

Present:

Professor Debra Humphris, Pro Rector (Education) - Chair
Professor Andrew George, Director of the Graduate School
Professor Nigel Gooderham, Senior College Consul
Mr Doug Hunt, ICU Deputy President (Education)
Professor Robin Leatherbarrow, College Consul for Natural Sciences
Professor Omar Matar, Department of Chemical Engineering
Professor Richard Thompson, College Consul for Natural Sciences
Mr Nigel Wheatley, Academic Registrar
Professor Denis Wright, Director of Student Affairs

In attendance:

Mr Chris Harris, Quality Assurance & Enhancement Manager, Faculty of Medicine
Ms Becky Lane, ICU Deputy President (Welfare) (for item 8.4 & 8.2)
Ms Jo Shearer, Head of International Student Research and Marketing, International Office
(for item 8.2)
Ms Sophie White, Senior Assistant Registrar (Secretary)

Apologies:

Dr Simon Archer, College Tutor
Professor Dot Griffiths, Imperial College Business School
Dr Paul Lickiss, Department of Chemistry
Dr David McPhail, Deputy Director of the Graduate School
Mr Ebrahim Mohamed, Imperial College Business School
Professor Sue Smith, Faculty of Medicine

MINUTES

- 1. Welcome and Apologies**
Professor Humphris welcomed members to the meeting and apologies, as listed above, were noted.
- 2. Minutes**
The minutes of the Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee (QAEC) held on 25th April 2013 were approved. **QAEC.2012.94**
- 3. Matters arising from the Minutes**
Matters arising not appearing elsewhere on the agenda were discussed.

- 3.1** Further to Minute 2.2 regarding the breakdown of minor cheating offences by department, it was confirmed that this report had been circulated to departments.
- 3.2** A list of actions from the previous QAEC meetings was received and the following progress was noted. **QAEC.2012.95**

- 3.2.1** Professor Omar Matar confirmed that the E-learning Committee had discussed whether centralised guidelines for checking the quality of for e-learning/blended learning should be introduced. The E-Learning Committee had felt that the existing arrangements were sufficient but that the Business School had plans to introduce an on-line MBA programme and that in this eventuality bespoke guidelines would be needed. Professor Humphris explained that a framework for mapping against [Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching](#) of the UK Quality Code was needed and Professor Andrew George asked that non-award bearing courses should also be included in the framework. Professor Matar agreed to present a report from the E-Learning Committee to the next meeting.

Action: Professor Omar Matar

- 3.2.1.2** In the course of this discussion, the Committee sought clarification on the College's policy for distance learning course.

Post Meeting Note

Following the meeting it was clarified that the current College Strategy on Education starts with the following statement:

"The College will remain primarily a residential university, offering research-led education in science, engineering, medicine and business subjects. We place importance on teaching, whilst recognising that teaching alone is not sufficient to provide a higher education, particularly in STEM subjects. A laboratory-based education is a fundamental requirement for a career in science, engineering and medicine because it is integral to intellectual development, the acquisition of experimental expertise and an understanding of research method. Hence, it is necessary for our taught students to be based at the College for the majority of their course to ensure that they can engage with leading academics and interact with their peers, whilst having access to required laboratory and other facilities."

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/collegestrategy/education>

- 3.2.2** It was confirmed that the Management Board would consider the updated mid-cycle review summary at their next meeting.
- 3.3.3** Professor Richard Thompson confirmed that he intended to meet with Dr Martyn Kingsbury over the summer regarding the proposal for Departmental Teaching Advisors with a view to bringing a refined proposal back to QAEC in the autumn.

Action: Professor Richard Thompson

- 3.3.3** It was confirmed that there was now a link to the APL/APEL guidelines on the Admissions website – see <http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/admissions>.

3.3.4 It was reported that both Graduate School Master's Quality Committees had now discussed the information Postgraduate Master's external examiners should receive for the courses they examine. The Graduate School were recommending that they should receive the following items: a copy of the latest completed course review form; copy of the course handbook; copy of the weekly course timetable (if not in course handbook) and access to any on-line and VLE materials. QAEC approved the recommendation with effect from 2013-4 and agreed to report it to Senate.

3.3.5 Professor Wright confirmed he was keeping the *Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedures* under continual review to ensure part-time students were considered fairly.

4. QAA Institutional Audit

4.1 The Committee received the latest version of the College's 2010 Institutional Audit Action Plan. **QAEC.2012.96**

4.2 Following discussion of some items on the current meeting's agenda, QAEC noted there would only a few remaining pieces of work left to do to complete the outstanding actions from the QAA's recommendations from the 2010 institutional audit. These included a report from the working party on collaborative programmes, MSci/MEng final year pass mark vs stand-alone MSc pass mark and methods for dealing with borderline candidates at Master's level.

5. Undergraduate and Postgraduate Master's Re-sit Opportunities

5.1 The Committee considered the responses from the Faculties regarding undergraduate and postgraduate Master's re-sit opportunities. **QAEC.2012.97**

5.2 It was noted that at the previous meeting QAEC had agreed that there were no discrepancies with postgraduate re-sit opportunities which needed to be addressed but that, with regards to undergraduates, the Faculties should look again at their practices and present to the May 2013 QAEC a robust response from their Faculty Teaching Committees which demonstrated why there should be differences between the Faculty practices.

5.3 QAEC accepted that reasonable differences between the Faculties were being suggested and noted that all Faculties had committed to ensuring harmonisation across their own departments.

5.4 QAEC approved the following arrangements and agreed to recommended them for approval with effect from 2013-4 at the June Senate:

Faculty of Engineering: Undergraduate Re-sit Opportunities and SQTs

1. Students are offered SQTs at the discretion of the Board of Examiners if they marginally fail the year.

2. The form of SQTs will normally be unseen assessments taken under examination conditions.
3. The pass mark for each SQT will normally be 40%.
4. Students taking SQTs cannot improve their examination total beyond that required to pass the year.
5. Students failing the year outright or failing SQTs are required to re-take **ALL** the written examinations at the next available occasion.
6. Those retaking the whole year's examinations do not have their marks capped.
7. Students are only allowed one re-sit per year.

School of Medicine: Undergraduate Re-sit Opportunities

For the award of the MBBS & BSc (including the Intercalated BSc):

Candidates who fail to satisfy the examiners in any of the examinations at the first attempt may be required to re-sit all or part of the examination

For the Direct Entry MBBS:

Years one, two, three and four: Candidates are required to pass all papers in order to progress. A candidate who **fails at the second attempt** of a paper will **normally** be required to withdraw from the programme.

Final Phase examinations: Candidates are permitted **three attempts** at final phase examinations, i.e. one initial attempt and two re-entries.

Therefore across the School of Medicine, students normally have the opportunity to re-sit once. During finals phase, students may be offered two re-sits. (This in part reflects the high-stakes, practical nature of the examination and also allows for the potential for some minor inconsistency among a very large cohort of examiners).

Faculty of Natural Sciences: Undergraduate Re-sit Opportunities for the award of BSc and MSci

Students may, at the discretion of the examiners, be permitted to re-sit examinations in which they have failed on no more than two occasions. Re-sit examinations may be taken on the first two available occasions. These may be in September or at the prescribed time during the two sessions immediately following the first failure. Students cannot proceed to the next year of a degree programme until they have passed all the examination requirements of their current year. Students may only be permitted to re-sit final year examinations in which they have failed where they have not qualified for the award of a degree.

6. Conduct of Examination Boards

6.1 The Committee considered the responses from the Faculties regarding the proposed conduct of Examination Boards for undergraduate programmes. **QAEC.2012.98**

6.1.1 The Committee were reminded that at their April 2013 meeting they had agreed that anonymity for examination candidates should be introduced across the College (as is currently practised in the Faculty of Medicine but not elsewhere) but the question of when and how to deal with mitigating circumstances whilst ensuring student anonymity needed to be addressed further. Overall, QAEC had agreed that there was a lot of commonality between the proposed approaches of the Faculty of Engineering and the Faculty of Natural Sciences and agreed that all the Faculties should come back to the May 2013 QAEC having got their departments on board with the introduction of anonymity and with a narrative describing how their examination boards would work in practice. The narrative would include a rationale for why there should be differences (if any) between their practice and those of other Faculties.

6.1.2 QAEC accepted that reasonable differences in implementing anonymity between the Faculties were being suggested and noted that all Faculties had committed to ensuring harmonisation across their own departments.

6.1.3 QAEC agreed to update the Conduct of Undergraduate Examination Boards document to provide a standard framework for examination boards but which allowed Faculties to operate their own procedures according to a set of common principles. It was agreed that QAEC would present the framework for Senate approval at the next meeting so that the procedure could take effect from 2013-4. A copy of the procedure is attached as Appendix 1.

6.1.4 It was reported that some departments in the Faculty of Engineering were considering trialling anonymity this academic session. However, QAEC advised against this as it was felt student consent may be required to change procedures during the same session.

6.2 The Committee considered the responses from departments following the Graduate School consultation on the proposed conduct of examination boards policy for Master's programmes. **QAEC.2012.99**

6.2.1 Professor George presented the responses and it was noted there had been a mixed reaction to proposal and also that not all departments had responded to the consultation.

6.2.2 It was therefore agreed that the Graduate School could have longer to consult with departments. It was noted that if the Graduate School rejected the proposal for anonymity then there would have to be a clear rationale for why there was the difference between undergraduate and postgraduate examination boards. It was noted that it would not now be possible to introduce changes for postgraduate examination boards for the 2013-4 academic session but that the Graduate School should work towards an agreed format for examinations boards for the 2014-5 academic session.

Action: Andrew George**7. Undergraduate Year Weightings**

7.1 The Committee considered the responses from the Faculties regarding the proposal to standardise undergraduate year weightings **QAEC.2012.100**

7.2 The Committee were reminded that at their April 2013 meeting it had been agreed that the proposed common policy to standardise year weighting would not apply to the Faculty of Medicine. It was noted that through their early years review, the Faculty of Medicine were currently in the process of harmonising the weightings which contributed to the BSc in Medical Sciences and BSc in Biomedical Science. It had also been agreed that there was no acceptable way to harmonise the weightings for intercalating BSc students from external institutions and therefore it had been agreed that this weighting should remain at 100%. It was noted that the Faculty of Medicine anticipated requesting a change through Senate during 2013-14 that would roll out for students entering the College in 2014-15.

7.3 QAEC considered the proposals from the Faculty of Engineering and the Faculty of Natural Sciences and accepted that reasonable differences between the Faculties were being suggested and noted that all Faculties had committed to ensuring harmonisation across their own departments.

7.4 QAEC approved the following arrangements and agreed to recommended them for approval at the June Senate for introduction on rolling basis with effect from October 2013:

Faculty of Engineering

Degree	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
BEng	1 (12.5%)	3 (37.5%)	4 (50%)	-
MEng	1 (11.1%)	2 (22.2%)	3 (33.3%)	3 (33.3%)
MEng (with 6 month internship)	1 (11.1%)	2 (22.2%)	2 (22.2%)	4 (44.4%)

Faculty of Natural Sciences

Degree	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
BSc	1 (11.1%)	3 (33.3%)	5 (55.6%)	-
MSci	1 (7.7%)	3 (23.1%)	4 (30.8%)	5 (38.5%)
BSc (with final year abroad where courses are taken abroad and project marked at Imperial)	1 (12.5%)	3 (37.5%)	4 (50%)	-
3 year BSc (with final year in the Business School)	1 (14.2%)	3 (42.9%)	3 (42.9%)	-
MSci (with final year abroad where courses are taken abroad and project marked at	1 (8.3%)	3 (25%)	4 (33.3%)	4 (33.3%)

Imperial)				
4 year BSc (with final year in the Business School)	1 (7.1%)	3 (21.4%)	5 (35.7%)	5 (35.7%)
Notes: All years taken away from Imperial with no tuition will normally have the year abroad year weighted as 0. All years taken away from Imperial but with courses taken abroad and project marked at Imperial will have that year abroad year de-weighted. Default de-weighting is normally by "1" (as shown in table) All BSc courses with final year in the Business School will have that year de-weighted. Default de-weighting normally aligns weighting of the Business School year with the final discipline year (as shown in table)				

8. Student Surveys

Professor Debra Humphris reported that she had spoken to Michelle Coupland in Planning regarding leading a working party to meet the objective from the new education strategy to *"implement a student survey and feedback framework which will rationalise the current range of surveys, systematically inform enhancement and create a robust feedback loop to students and staff"*. A preliminary meeting with Professor Humphris, Michelle Coupland, Sophie White and the Students' Union would take place shortly.

8.1 PTES

The Committee considered whether the College should take part in PTES in 2014.

QAEC.2012.101

8.1.1 It was noted that PTES was an annual survey of Master's level students, run by the Higher Education Academy (HEA), which allowed participating institutions to make comparisons against the sector and within benchmarking groups.

8.1.2 It was noted that the PTES survey could replace the PG SOLE overall course survey and therefore would not therefore increase the number of surveys Master's level students were requested to complete.

8.1.3 The Committee noted student survey results formed an important part of the evidence base considered in the QAA's Institutional Review and it was reasonable to expect that the QAA would want to see PTES results as part of this.

8.1.4 The Committee were supportive of the proposal and agreed that final decision whether to take part in PTES 2014 should be made by Michelle Coupland's group.

8.2 Student Barometer

The Committee welcomed Jo Shearer, Head of International Student Research and Marketing, International Office, to the meeting and considered whether the College should take part in the Student Barometer in 2014.

QAEC.2012.102

8.2.1 The Committee noted that the Student Barometer was an annual international survey run by the company *i-graduate* which surveyed all students in all years.

The survey allowed comparisons and benchmarking against other national and international participating institutions.

8.2.2 The Committee noted that the Student Barometer results were important to the Student Recruitment and Outreach Team, as students were surveyed early in the year (Oct-Dec) and this meant first year students could readily recall the influences which let them to choose Imperial.

8.2.4 It was noted that *i-graduate* would be meeting with the International Office on Monday 3rd June 2013 to discuss integrated survey solutions and rationalisation of surveys and QAEC members were invited to attend.

8.2.3 The Committee were supportive of the proposal and agreed that final decision whether to take part in the Student Barometer in 2013-2014 should be made by Michelle Coupland's group.

8.3 PRES 2013

The Committee considered the initial results from the PRES 2013 survey.

QAEC.2012.103

8.3.1 It was noted that that Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) was a biennial national survey of postgraduate research students (PhD, MPhil, EngD or MD(Res)) hosted by the HEA. The survey had been open at Imperial from Tuesday 5th March until Thursday 16th May 2013.

8.3.2 It was further noted that this was the third year Imperial had taken part in the survey and the first year the survey has been managed by the Registry Surveys Team. The participation rate had increased by 8.9% on the 2011 survey.

8.3.3 It was noted that 79.5% of research students (PhD, EngD & MD(Res)) students had described themselves as mostly or definitely agreeing with the statement "*Overall, I am satisfied with the experience of my research degree programme*" with 10.6% neither agreeing or disagreeing and 9.9% mostly or definitely disagreeing.

8.3.4 It was noted that 77.1% of research student had described themselves as confident that they will complete their research programme within their expected timescale.

8.3.5 It was noted that the College level results had been circulated to all departments and other appropriate sections and that the raw data, once the textual comments had been reviewed to ensure student anonymity, would be sent to the Students' Union, Graduate School and Education Office for further analysis. It was confirmed that departments would receive their standard departmental results reports and a copy of the raw data for their department shortly. It was further noted that all students had been sent a copy of the overall student experience ratings shortly after the survey closed.

8.3.6 It was further noted that the institutional benchmarking reports would be available from the HEA in mid-June.

8.3.7 It was agreed that Directors of Postgraduate Study (DPGs) should be asked to

comment on their departmental results and formulate an action plan and that these should be considered by the Graduate School and Faculties and a report made to the QAEC in the autumn. It was agreed that this process should take place once the College was in receipt of the HEA benchmarking reports.

Action: Graduate School Postgraduate Research Quality Committee & Faculties

Post Meeting Note

The College level results (and raw data) were also provided to the International Office, Careers Advisory Service, Postdoc Centre, Library and ICT. The Library and ICT were also provided with comparison data from the 2011 PRES survey.

8.4 Student Experience Survey 2012

The Committee welcomed Becky Lane, ICU Deputy President (Welfare), to the meeting and considered the results from the Student Experience Survey which ran from 3rd December 2012 to 7th January 2013. It was noted that the report could be found at <https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/campaigns/responses/student-experience-survey-2012-response>

8.4.1 It was noted that the results of the survey had been presented at the recent Welfare Day and the results would be circulated to key staff (i.e. Deans, Senior and Personal Tutors, HoDs, DUGs, DPGs, Heads of Professional Services) shortly. It was further suggested it might be useful to present the results at a HoDs lunch.

Action: Becky Lane

8.4.2 It was noted that the Students' Union were intending to run the survey again the next academic year and would be using the new survey platform, Qualtrics, which it was hoped would improve the format of the survey and the results reporting.

8.4.3 It was noted that there was overlap with the Student Experience Survey and other surveys, in particular, the Student Barometer, and it was agreed that Michelle Coupland's group should consider how to rationalise survey questions to guard against duplication.

8.5 NSS

The Committee noted a new report from the HEA "*Making it Count – Reflecting on the National Student Survey in the Process of Enhancement*" see http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/nss/Making_it_count

9. Staff-Student Committees Interim Summary Report 2012-3

The Committee considered the ICU's Interim summary report of Staff-Student Committees for 2012-3. It was noted that the report could be found at <https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/SSC>.

9.1 It was noted that that a key recommendation from the report was that departments with combined UG and PGT/PGR committees should consider having separate PGT and PGR committees to ensure postgraduate issues were adequately addressed.

9.2 It was stressed this was an interim report and departments therefore had the opportunity to correct any errors of fact and include any missing information. It was noted the report would be finalised in November.

10. Award of Bachelor's Degree alongside the integrated Master's Award

QAEC.2012.104

The Committee considered the recommendations of the Engineering and Science Studies Committees regarding the award of Bachelor's degree alongside the integrated Master's award.

10.1 QAEC noted that concerns had been raised by the Faculty of Natural Sciences about the international recognition of the MSci degree award. It had been reported that some employers and institutions, mainly in Europe and Asia, did not recognise or understand the MSci both a Bachelor's and Master's degree qualification.

10.2 QAEC rejected the proposal to award all MEng/MSci students with a Bachelor's degree simultaneously with their Master's degree and instead agreed that the current wording on the degree certificate was sufficient but that the wording on the diploma supplement should be strengthened to reflect the situation. The new wording would be introduced for all MEng/MSci awards from 1st August 2013.

Post Meeting Note

The wording for the diploma supplement was agreed as *"Students who are awarded the degree of MEng or MSci have achieved at the end of their third year of study the academic level required for a Bachelor's degree. 180 ECTS are completed by the end of the third year with the fourth year comprising at least 60 ECTS at Master's level. The Bachelor's degree is not formally awarded as a separate qualification however the MEng and MSci degree diploma indicates that these awards incorporate the Bachelor's level study."*

11. QAEC Terms of Reference & Membership

QAEC.2012.105

The Committee considered the Terms of Reference and Membership for QAEC for the 2013-4 academic session and it was reported that the document was a work in progress as Professor Humphris was currently in discussions over the College's governance arrangements and the College's committee structure was therefore likely to change.

11.1 It was agreed that the Faculty Vice Deans for Education would be added to the QAEC (or equivalent committee) membership for the 2013-4.

12. Audit of Key Information Sets (KIS) 2012-3

QAEC.2012.106

The Committee noted the response to key points raised throughout the HEFCE audit of Key Information Sets. It was noted that the paper was intended as an internal document as a separate reply had already been sent to HEFCE, since the deadline for reply was 20th May 2013.

12.1 It was noted that departments had not been routinely keeping their programme specifications up to date and there needed to be more focus on ensuring this happened in future. It was agreed that all Course Organisers

should be reminded by the Graduate School Master's Quality Committees and the Faculty Studies Committees of the importance of keeping these documents up to date.

Action: Graduate School Master's Quality Committees & Faculty Studies Committees

13. Roles and Responsibility Documents

It was noted that the roles and responsibility documents for the following student representative positions were now available on-line at: <http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/qualityassurance/goodpractice>

Year Representative (UG)
Departmental Representative (UG)
Academic Affairs Officer (UG)
Course Representative (PG)
Group Representative (PG)
Departmental Representative (PG)
Academic & Welfare Officer (PG)

- 13.1** Mr Doug Hunt confirmed the Union had also linked to these documents from the Students' Union website and that they would be made available to new reps and would be discussed as part of their initial training. Mr Hunt also reported that he had been arranging with Dr Jenny Cooke a time for the Education Office to be included in rep training.

14. QAA – UK Quality Code for Higher Education

- 14.1** It was noted that Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement of the UK Quality Code had now been published – see <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/qualitycode>

- 14.1.1** It was noted that this Chapter addressed the ways in which higher education providers enable students to develop and achieve their academic, personal and professional potential. The Chapter will be used as a reference point for QAA reviews from January 2014.

- 14.2** It was noted that Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints of the UK Quality Code had been published - see <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/qualitycode>

- 14.2.1** It was noted that this Chapter covered the effective management of academic appeals and student complaints. The Chapter will be used as a reference point for QAA reviews from August 2014.

15. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

16. Dates of next meetings 2012-3

Monday 1st July 2013, 10am – 1pm, Solar Room, 170 Queen's Gate

Dates of next meetings 2013-4

Tuesday 8th October 2013, 10am-1pm, Ballroom, 58 Prince's Gate
Tuesday 26th November 2013, 10am-1pm, Ballroom, 58 Prince's Gate
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 was no reserved business.