

Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC)

Minutes from the meeting held on
Wednesday 28 April 2021

Present

David Ashton, Academic Registrar – Chair
Dr Clemens Brechtelsbauer, Chair of Programmes Committee
Dr Lorraine Craig, Faculty of Engineering representative
Michaela Flegrova, ICU Deputy President (Education)
Professor Richard Green, Business School representative
Laura Lane, Head of Strategy and Operations, Graduate School
Martin Lupton, Faculty of Medicine representative
Rebecca Middleton, Faculty of Natural Sciences representative
Claire Stapley, CLCC/CHERS representative
Zixiau Wang, GSU President
Professor Stephen Warren, Consul (for Professor Peter Openshaw)
Judith Webster, Director of Academic Quality and Standards
Scott Tucker, Deputy Director (Academic Quality and Standards) – Secretary

In Attendance

Professor Omar Matar, Vice Dean (Education), Faculty of Engineering
Professor Emma McCoy, Interim Vice Provost (Education and Student Experience)
Professor Richard Thompson, Vice Dean (Education), Faculty of Natural Sciences

Apologies

Professor Peter Openshaw, Senior Consul

1. Welcome, apologies and announcements

1.1 The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting, noting apologies for absence.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

2.1 The Committee confirmed the minutes of 20 January 2021 as an accurate record.

QAEC.2020.59

3. Matters arising from the minutes

3.1 New Programme Proposal: MRes in Business (7.5.2 refers)

3.1.1 The Committee noted that the conditions set at the last meeting had now been met and approval granted by Chair's action, for October 2021 delivery.

4. Update on Committee actions

- 4.1 The Committee received the action list, noting that progress against each action had been reviewed and updated since the previous meeting. QAEC.2020.60

5. Academic Calendar

- 5.1 The Committee received an update on the academic calendar 2021-22 and 2022-23. QAEC.2020.61

- 5.2 The Committee agreed that the current academic calendar would be rolled over for the 2021-22 academic year. The reasons for this were as follows:

- After two significantly disrupted academic years, the College would not be able to fully evaluate the impact of changes to programme delivery as a result of the undergraduate curriculum review and the majority of postgraduate programmes are yet to undergo review.
- It is anticipated that in some areas of the College the changes to delivery and assessment of programmes made in response to the pandemic may also have an impact beyond the return to 'steady-state'.

- 5.3 It was noted that the Horizons module selection time for second and third years in the summer term is now aligned to the I-Explore enrolment period which this year is 12 May - 9 June. The 2021-22 calendar will be updated accordingly to include 'I-Explore and Horizons module selection' dates and circulated to the wider College.

Action: Secretary

- 5.4 The Committee agreed that a Core Working Group would establish a set of principles to inform the development of the 2022-23 academic calendar. The Group would consider events and processes that directly impact the student lifecycle, with a focus on the start of the academic year and end of year activities. There would be due consideration for variations in specific subject areas such as Business and the MBBS programme.

Action: Judith Webster

- 5.5 The Working Group would ensure that the scope of the 2022-23 calendar was discussed in full, and whether activities such as College open days and outreach activities would be included.

- 5.6 It was noted that the Faculty of Medicine was exploring more flexible modes of delivery and non-standard intakes. It was felt that the academic calendar should support such future developments, where possible, whilst ensuring clarity for students and staff.

6. Student Casework

- 6.1 The Committee received the Academic Misconduct Annual Report, which provided an analysis of academic misconduct data for undergraduate and postgraduate taught QAEC.2020.62

programmes (including MRes), based on the previously agreed annual census date of 31 January (for the period 1 February 2019 to 31 January 2020).

6.1.1 The cases under consideration of the report were considered under the College *Academic Misconduct Policy* introduced in October 2018, or the proceeding version *Cheating Offences Policy and Procedure*. Allegations of research misconduct were not included. Within the report there was reflection on the effectiveness of the procedure, the limitations within the data and recommendations for future action.

6.1.2 The Committee noted the following:

- In the last year the number of reported cases had significantly increased, which based on an interrogation of the raw data directly correlated with concerns raised in respect of Timed Remote Assessments (TRAs). Whilst this was a concern, the numbers were expected to decrease in subsequent years as understanding and expertise in the design and delivery of digital assessment develops.
- There were a number of 'not progressed' cases - in these cases, there were concerns that the instructions provided for the pieces of assessment were not sufficiently explicit to students, or that the evidence provided by the department, whilst indicative of some element of academic misconduct, would not pass the 'beyond reasonable doubt' requirement for proven cases.
- That there was not an even spread of academic misconduct cases across the College and that further exploration would be needed to ascertain why some Departments experienced higher rates. Early observation cited Timed Remote Assessments as a factor.
- That future annual reports would include percentages as well as absolute numbers.

6.1.3 The Committee agreed the following recommendations set out in the report:

- That the College develops further guidance on setting out clear marking criteria to ensure a consistent approach across all markers and to support staff in identifying poor academic practice, minor academic misconduct and misconduct which should be referred as more serious.
- That at the point an allegation is provided to the Casework Team for action, the rubrics and any relevant assessment criteria and candidate instructions are provided to with the other papers, as part of the evidence base of the Panel.
- That resource to support this area of College work for designated Department staff, the Casework Team in Registry and the availability of panel members would be kept under review.

Action: Secretary / Chair (to liaise with the Educational Development Unit and the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team)

6.1.4 The Committee felt that it would be helpful to circulate a small number of sufficiently redacted examples of academic misconduct cases being presented by Departments in a way that Panels find helpful.

Action: Secretary

6.2	Updated Academic Misconduct Procedures	QAEC.2020.63
6.2.2	<p>The Committee approved a number of updates in line with findings from the previous academic year, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity on the available sanctions of academic misconduct • References to timed remote assessments. 	
6.2.3	<p>The Committee agreed that a review on option 'C' – 'Assessment is awarded zero, with re-submission for an uncapped mark' should be reviewed, with a view to removing this option.</p>	
	Action: Secretary	
6.3	Student Complaints (Taught Programmes) Summary Report	QAEC.2020.64
6.3.1	The Committee noted that the report would be considered at a future meeting.	
7.	Annual Monitoring	
7.1	The Committee received Faculty Undergraduate Annual Monitoring Reports for the academic year 2019-20. Faculty and College level issues put forward by Departments were considered and instances of good practice were noted.	QAEC.2020.65
7.2	The Committee received a College UG Annual Monitoring Report Summary (reporting on 2019-20).	QAEC.2020.66
7.2.1	As would be expected, the Committee noted that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was a significant area of concern across most departments. Although many issues were identified in having to amend teaching and learning delivery (often at short notice due to changes in government restrictions), departments were also able to identify positive changes that had resulted and are likely to be continued once restrictions are lifted.	
7.2.2	The Committee noted good practice across the following areas: curriculum enhancement; student support; providing opportunities for student feedback; and Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion.	
7.2.3	The Committee noted the following cross College themes: space constraints, degree outcomes and grade inflation; and assessment and feedback challenges.	
7.2.4	College level issues raised by Departments were recorded through the annual monitoring process and will be responded to by service providers for dissemination to Departments via Faculty Education Committees. A log of College level issues would be reported periodically to QAEC with any updates on progress.	

8. External Examiners

QAEC.2020.67

8.1 The Committee received a College PGT External Examiner report summary for the 2019-20 academic year. QAEC noted that External Examiners broadly agreed with three overall confidence statements based on the requirements of the QAA's Quality Code:

- 100% 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."
- 97% 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."
- 98% agreed that "The academic standards and the achievements of students are comparable with those in other degree awarding bodies of which you have experience."

For the small number of examiners who did not fully agree that their programmes met the above statements, they did find that these were mostly/usually met.

9. Student Online Evaluation (SOLE) Results

9.1 The Committee considered the CLCC - Horizons – Autumn Term 2020 SOLE results. Overall satisfaction ('definitely agree' + 'mostly agree') was 85%, compared to a College average of 81%. QAEC.2020.68

9.2 The Committee noted the Faculty of Medicine - MBBS – 2019-20 SOLE results. QAEC.2020.69

9.3 The Committee acknowledged that providing feedback to students continues to be challenging. It was suggested that the outcomes from the Assessment and Feedback Working Group, which met in 2019-20, should be revisited.

Action: Secretary

10. Degree Outcomes Statement

10.1 The Committee noted that the College's Degree Outcomes Statement would be published at the end of the academic year. QAEC agreed that the Statement would set out quantitative trends in College student degree outcomes over five years, including split metrics as follows: QAEC.2020.70

- Male/Female
- BAME/White
- Disability Declared/No Disability Declared

QAEC agreed that the following external benchmarks would be used:

- Whole Sector
- Russell Group

10.2 The Committee noted that all undergraduate students would be included in the dataset, including those on integrated masters programmes. The College was not required by the

UK Standing Committee for Quality Assurance (UKSCQA) to consider PGT student outcomes within the scope of the statement. QAEC agreed that a breakdown of degree outcomes across College Faculties/Schools would not be published.

11. Programmes Committee Report

QAEC.2020.71

11.1 The Committee approved the recommendations set out in the Programmes Committee report from the meeting held on 30 March 2021.

11.2 The following new programme proposal was approved with effect from October 2021:

- MSc Digital Chemistry

11.3 The Chair of the Programme Committee raised a number of concerns regarding the existing new programme and modification approval process as follows:

- The College's submission deadlines of 31 March for major modification creates a significant bunching of work around the March committee meeting, which makes it difficult for committee members to manage and meet their obligations.
- Programme teams are increasingly asking for exceptions from the academic regulations. Where requests have wide ranging consequences, these should be considered by the Regulations and Policy Review Committee (RPRC) and any recommendations made to Programmers Committee.
- There were several cases where the formal and very linear committee way of working proved to be unhelpful in arriving at a solution and separate working groups had to be formed to enable a dialogue with programme teams to resolve issues. It was felt that a further review of the existing modifications hierarchy should be undertaken or that a more dialogic way of working should be introduced.

The Committee noted the concerns and agreed that these would be addressed through the existing QAEC action (November 2020 – 6.1.3).

The Chair of the Programmes Committee commented that the quality of the PGT curriculum review proposals was high across the board. The benefits of the undergraduate curriculum review were carrying over, which was very encouraging.

12. College Covid-19 Update

12.1 The Committee received a verbal update on the College's Covid-19 response and planning for 2021-22 delivery. A written report will be noted at the next meeting.

QAEC.2020.72

13. Any Other Business

13.1 Religious Observance and Assessment (Chair's action)

13.1.1 The Committee received the College Policy and Procedure on Religious Observance and Assessment for 2021 (and accompanying forms), which had been approved by QAEC by Chair's action. The Committee endorsed the College's approach to managing adjustments or accommodation for religious observance during the summer assessment period in 2021. It was noted that the policy was time limited and further discussion would take place before an updated version is agreed that covers the 2021-22 academic year. QAEC.2020.73

13.2 Framework for Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)

13.2.1 The Committee approved the proposed updates to the Recruitment and Remuneration section of the Framework for Graduate Teaching Assistants, subject to a reference to the Business School's award to recognise GTA achievement being included under 5.1.

12. Dates of Meetings 2020-21

12.1 The Committee noted the date of the remaining meeting to be held in 2020-21:

- Wednesday 26 May 2021, 10:10-12:00

12.2 It was noted that there might be a need for an additional meeting during this academic year.