

# Imperial College London

## Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC)

Confirmed minutes for the meeting held on  
Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2017

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### **Present**

Professor Simone Buitendijk, Vice Provost (Education) - Chair  
Mr David Ashton, Academic Registrar  
Dr Lorraine Craig, Associate Dean for Learning and Teaching  
Professor Sue Gibson, Director of the Graduate School  
Professor Des Johnston, Vice Dean (Education), Faculty of Medicine  
Dr Martyn Kingsbury, Director of Educational Development, EDU  
Professor Emma McCoy, Chair of the Programmes Committee  
Mr Luke McCrone, Imperial College Union, Deputy President (Education)  
Dr Edgar Meyer, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Programmes, Business School  
Mr Ahmed Shamso, Graduate Students' Union President  
Professor Alan Spivey, Vice Dean (Education), Faculty of Natural Sciences  
Ms Judith Webster, Head of Academic Services  
Ms Sophie White, Senior Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance & Enhancement) - Secretary

### **In attendance:**

Dr Ros Whiteley, Management Trainee, Education Office

### **Apologies:**

Professor Peter Cheung, Vice Dean (Education), Faculty of Engineering  
Professor Tony Magee, Deputy Director of the Graduate School  
Professor Myra McClure, Senior College Consul  
Professor Denis Wright, Director of Student Support

## **AGENDA**

### **1. Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and apologies, as listed above, were noted.

### **2. New Committee Structure**

Professor Simone Buitendijk introduced her plans to revise the governance structure.

**2.1** Professor Buitendijk explained that she wished to form a new Learning and Teaching Group with responsibilities for strategic decision making, overseeing the new Learning and Teaching Strategy and implementing College-wide proposals. The membership of the group would be the Vice Deans (Education) and it was envisaged that the group would work closely with QAEC. It was further proposed that membership of QAEC would be reviewed to avoid overlap between the two groups and that QAEC should take on responsibility for overseeing the work of the Academic Standards Framework Project now that the Steering Group had been disbanded.

**2.2** The Committee discussed whether the Learning and Teaching group should

be a formal committee with reporting lines to Senate; how to ensure the correct membership on both the Learning and Teaching Group and QAEC; how to avoid overlap of responsibilities; and the need for clearly defined terms of reference. It was agreed that changes to the committee structure should be considered holistically and the role and responsibilities of Provost's Board and Faculty Education Committees in particular needed to be taken into account. It was further noted that there were no immediate plans to change the Vice Provost's Advisory Group for Education (VPAGE) which would remain as a purely advisory group until the new Director of Student Services was established, when this could be re-visited.

- 2.3** It was agreed that Professor Buitendijk would discuss further with Ms Judith Webster with a view to bringing a proposal to the next meeting.

**ACTION: Professor Buitendijk and Ms Webster**

- 3.** **Minutes of the Previous Meeting** Qaec.2016.17  
QAEC.2016.17i

The minutes from the Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee (QAEC) held on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2016 were approved and Committee Actions were noted.

- 3.1** Mr Ashton reported that he would follow up on the outstanding "Policy for the Admission of Applicants who disclose Criminal Convictions" with view to either removing it from the agenda or presenting it at the next meeting.

**ACTION: Mr Ashton**

- 4.** **Matters arising from the Minutes**

The Committee discussed matters arising not appearing elsewhere on the agenda.

- 4.1** Further to Minute 7, it was noted that Senate had agreed to withdraw the Imperial College International Diploma (ICID) with effect from Oct 2017.

- 5.** **External Examiners' Summary Report 2015-16 – Undergraduate Programmes** Qaec.2016.18

The Committee considered the annual External Examiners' Summary Report for undergraduate programmes for 2015-16.

- 5.1** It was noted that the overarching theme was lack of consistency in practice. In particular, the reports covered:

- the inconsistency in the style, presentation and level of difficulty of examination papers within departments;
- the high number of errors in draft examination papers;
- the lack of consistency in the annotation of scripts and provision of comments to justify the award of marks, and comments that were inconsistent with the marks awarded. Some examiners also posited the view that markers could make further efforts to utilise the full mark range;
- evidence of second/double marking variable and not always apparent.
- variation in approaches to moderation / scaling and the level of transparency and consistency with which this process was applied;
- consistency of approaches to handling borderline classification decisions and

progression decisions

- 5.2** It was noted that some issues appeared regularly in the reports and this indicated that sufficient action had not been taken to close down the issues. It was noted that mechanisms (such as annual monitoring) were in place to ensure actions were taken but these could be used more effectively.
- 5.3** Professor Buitendijk explained that it was her intention that a new Learning and Teaching group would consider the annual external examiner report and would have the authority to ensure that actions were taken where needed. It was further explained that where good practice had been identified this would also be disseminated by the group who would help ensure implementation across the College.
- 5.4** The Committee were mindful that external examiners were often commenting on programmes in the context of practices at their own institution and that there may be sound reasons not to adopt suggestions from individual examiners (even when these had been raised by a number of examiners) such as zero weighting the first year.
- 5.5** It was agreed that it would be helpful for the Senate and Review Team to produce an annual College level response to the external examiners which would explain the institutional position on such issues such as zero weighted first years, etc. It was also agreed, that the summary, which would be provided in addition to the individual responses, should be presented at Senate to help demonstrate the importance and consideration given to external examiners' reports. It was agreed that a response would be produced for the next meeting, and that further thought would be given to how to manage the external examining process and responses in future years. It was further agreed that evidence in success in responding to external examiners' reports should be collected annually. It was acknowledged that this should not be just a simplistic measure of the number of external examiners' commenting on single issues and it was agreed that further thought should be given to how measure impact.

**ACTION: Judith Webster**

**6. Academic Feedback Policy**

QAEC.2016.19

The Committee considered the latest draft Academic Feedback Policy which it was proposed to be introduced with effect from January 2017.

- 6.1** It was explained that, following discussion by the Faculty Education Committees, it had not been possible to reach a consensus for the timespan in which feedback should be provided. It had generally been agreed that 10 working days was too short a period (especially if second marking/moderation had to be carried out first). The policy recommendation was therefore that ten working days should be described "best practice" but that all departments should set their own timescales which would be overseen by the Faculty Education Committees.

- 6.1** The Committee were supportive of the revisions to the policy but requested

one change, that work submitted late should be marked and feedback provided, provided that work was submitted within a reasonable timeframe and where it made educational sense to do so.

- 6.2** The Committee approved the policy and agreed that departments should adopt it with effect from January 2017 were possible and fully from October 2017.

**7. Releasing Provisional Marks to Students**

QAEC.2016.20

The Committee considered draft guidance regarding the releasing of provisional marks to students which it was proposed to be introduced with effect from January 2017. It was noted that this guidance would support the new Academic Feedback Policy.

- 7.1** The Committee agreed they were happy with the proposal to allow the release of actual provisional marks to students for examinations as well as coursework, however, they felt the proposed start date of January 2017 was too soon given that the spring term examinations were already underway. Mr David Ashton also reported that amendments to the regulations would be needed.

- 7.2** The Committee approved the guidance for release in April 2017 and agreed to recommend to Senate appropriate changes to the regulations with effect from April 2017.

**Post Meeting Note**

The Faculty of Engineering requested amendments to the guidance which were subsequently approved by Chair's Action.

**8. Late Submission Policy**

QAEC.2016.21

The Committee considered a draft Late Submission Policy to be introduced with effect from October 2017, noting this was a revised document which had been written following a period of consultation.

- 8.1** The Committee heard from the ICU who presented the results from their student consultation which favoured of a system of graduated grade reduction over a period of time. The Committee also heard from the Faculty representatives who reported support in their Faculties for either retaining zero tolerance or capping late submissions at the pass mark.

- 8.2** After discussion, it was agreed that the students' interests would be best served with late work being capped at the passmark for work which was up to one day (24 hours) late and a mark of zero being awarded for work which was more than one day (24 hours) late. It was agreed that this was preferable to an extended period of scaled penalties which would encourage students either to not come forward with mitigating circumstances in a timely manner or to game the system. These penalties also had the advantage of being easy to understand and implement.

- 8.3** It was agreed that the policy should be re-written with the penalties described in 8.2 above. It was further agreed that late work should be

marked if it was received within one day and that work received after one day would be marked, at the discretion of the department, when it was received in a timely manner and where it made educational sense to do so.

- 8.4** It was further agreed that the policy should apply equally to part-time students.
- 8.5** The Committee approved the revised policy, as described above, with effect from October 2017.
- 9. Regulations for the EngD in Quantitative Non Destructive Evaluation** QAEC.2016.22  
The Committee approved, for recommending to Senate, regulations for the new EngD in Quantitative Non Destructive Evaluation. It was noted that these regulations would replace the existing regulations for the discontinued EngD in Non Destructive Evaluation with effect from 2017-18. Existing students would continue on the EngD in Non Destructive Evaluation regulations.
- 10. Learning and Teaching Strategy Update** QAEC.2016.23  
Professor Buitendijk presented key themes emerging from the Learning and Teaching Strategy consultation. It was noted that the Education Office were in the process of compiling a full report of the results and this would be available shortly. It was agreed that this document should be circulated to QAEC members when available.  
**ACTION: Education Office**
- 10.1** It was noted that the responses showed an appetite for a more interactive learning experience and Professor Buitendijk reported that she and Professor Spivey would be travelling to Canada to learn from Canadian institutions who had already successfully embedded a culture of interactive learning.
- 10.2** Professor Buitendijk also reported that, as part of the learning and teaching strategy, work was underway around the themes of
  - on-line learning
  - institutional culture
  - learning space
- 10.3** It was noted that around 25 applications had been received for the Teaching Excellence Fund and decisions on these would be taken shortly.
- 11. Roles and Responsibilities for Personal Tutor and Senior Tutor (UG/PG)** QAEC.2016.24  
The Committee considered changes to the role and responsibilities documents for Personal Tutors, Postgraduate Tutors and Senior Tutors; the latter encompassing the current Senior Tutor and Postgraduate Tutor roles.
- 11.1** It was noted that changes to the Personal Tutor, Senior Tutor and Postgraduate Tutor roles had been agreed by the Provost's Board and that the roles and responsibilities documents had therefore been updated in line with the decisions taken by the Provost's Board. The changes included a

change to nomenclature for the Postgraduate Tutor. This post would be renamed Senior Tutor (PG). Similarly, Senior Tutors with responsibilities for undergraduate students would be renamed Senior Tutor (UG).

- 11.2** The Committee noted that a separate working party was considering pastoral support arrangements for research students and that Senior Tutors (PG) would no longer be responsible for postgraduate research students.
- 11.3** It was agreed that it would be helpful to add a line to the Personal Tutor role sign posting help for international students with immigration queries. It was agreed that Personal Tutors must not attempt to advise students in these matters.
- 11.4** It was noted that the changes to the Tutor roles would be implemented as resources became available to support the changes and, it was therefore agreed to approve the documents, including the change mentioned in 11.3, with the same caveat.
- 12. Request to withdraw the Business School pre-sessional English course** QAEC.2016.25  
The Committee approved a request from the Business School to withdraw their (currently suspended) pre-sessional English courses.
- 13. Periodic Review**
- 13.1 Follow up from the periodic review of undergraduate teaching in the Department of Mechanical Engineering**  
The Committee noted the response from the Department of Mechanical Engineering regarding their request for further information following their periodic review of undergraduate teaching relating to timetabling and reducing scheduling conflicts.
- 13.2** The Committee noted that the plan for the Faculty of Engineering to recruit to take forward a timetabling project went ahead in early 2016. Unfortunately, the results of this were disappointing and timetabling reverted to a manual process for the department during the summer.
- 13.3** Dr Craig reported that improvements to timetabling were ongoing and these were likely to be further helped with the implementation of the new College Space Policy.
- 14. Our Principles** QAEC.2016.26  
The Committee reaffirmed the Our Principles student charter with effect from October 2017.
- 14.1** The College noted that the charter had previously been supported by a lengthier document which sign posted and highlighted further assistance and guidance. It was agreed that this document should be considered at the next meeting with a view to the Charter and its supporting text being reinstated on the website from October 2017.

- 15. Programmes Committee** Qaec.2016.27  
The Committee considered the latest report from the Programmes Committee from the meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2016.
- 15.1** The Committee approved all of the recommendations contained in the report.
- 15.2** It was noted that it would be helpful if the structure of an MSc vs an MRes could be formally defined by the College so that programmes could be consistently described.
- 15.3** It was further noted that the new policy for minor and major changes was under development and would need to be approved by QAEC in due course.
- 15.4** It was agreed that QAEC should consider alternative approval process for existing programmes moving into the new modular format.
- 15.5** It was noted that the full Programmes Committee minutes/papers could be found at: [..\..\..\..\..\10.Committees\PC](#).
- 16. Faculty Education Committees (FEC)**  
The Committee considered the latest reports from the Faculty Education Committees, noting that the full minutes/papers could be found at: [..\..\..\..\..\10.Committees\FEC](#)
- 16.1 Business School Education Committee (BSEC) – 6<sup>th</sup> December 2016** Qaec.2016.28  
There was nothing for the Committee to formally approve.
- 16.2 Engineering Education Committee (EEC) – 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2017** Qaec.2016.29  
There was nothing for the Committee to formally approve.
- 16.3 Medicine Education Committee (MEC) – 8<sup>th</sup> December 2016** Qaec.2016.30  
QAEC approved the in-session changes to the LKC Medical School programme, noting that Chair's Action had recently been taken by Professor McCoy to approve the changes on behalf of the Programmes Committee.
- 16.4 School for Professional Development Education Committee (SPDEC) – 21<sup>st</sup> November 2016** Qaec.2016.31  
There was nothing for the Committee to formally approve.
- 17. Surveys**
- 17.1 Student Experience Survey (SES)**  
It was noted that the Student Experience Survey would be open from 25<sup>th</sup> November to 6<sup>th</sup> February 2017. Results and action plans from the various support services would be considered by VPAGE. It was further noted that the SES was surveying non-final year UGs and all Master's students. PGR students were excluded from the survey population as they would be included in PRES in the summer.

- 17.2 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) - 2016**
- 17.2.1** The Committee considered the ICU's PTES 2016 response noting that the College hoped to address many of the recommendations through the new Learning and Teaching Strategy. QAEC.2016.32
- 17.2.2** Due to lack of time, the Committee were unable to consider the summary of the Faculty level PTES action plans and reports and agreed to postpone this item to the next meeting when it was also hoped the Faculty of Engineering report would also be included. QAEC.2016.33
- 17.3 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey** QAEC.2016.34\*
- The Committee noted that the Faculty of Medicine had withdrawn their proposal to add additional questions to the PRES survey, however, it was agreed that the Faculties should be invited to submit, for consideration by QAEC, additional (ideally institutional level) questions for further PRES surveys.
- 17.4. SOLE Lecturer/Module Surveys**
- 17.4.1 Participation Rates Autumn Term 2016**
- The Committee noted that Autumn Term UG SOLE participation rate was 58% (the same as last year) and the PG SOLE participation rate was 54% (2% higher than last year). It was also noted that results would be circulated to departments shortly and considered at the next QAEC meeting.
- 17.4.2 SOLE Lecturer/Module Surveys Platform**
- The Committee noted an update on the planned new surveys platform for the centrally run SOLE surveys. It was noted that a report including a number of recommendations had been made to the Surveys Project Team. It has been agreed to wait to make a decision on the recommendations until after there has been a demonstration of a new Qualtrics product which was being designed specifically for lecturer/module type surveys: the Qualtrics classroom application. It was noted that the existing Qualtrics product could not be used for lecturer/modules surveys by the College without the development of a bespoke "dashboard". It is hoped Qualtrics would launch the "classroom application" early in the New Year.
- 18. Annual Report on Active Exchange Links 2016-7** QAEC.2016.35
- The annual report on Active Exchange Links was noted. It was noted that there were 162 exchange links active in 2016-17, involving 93 exchange partners.
- 19. Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Updates**
- 19.1** It was noted that a copy of the final College response to the consultation on the review of Transnational Education (TNE) activity could be obtained from the secretary on request and that Imperial's only TNE activities consisted of the LKC Medical School and the joint degree with Sao Paulo.

**20. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**20.1 NSS 2017**

It was noted that NSS had opened the previous day and that the ICU would begin promotion activities shortly. Promotion would be dependent on the outcome of the Union's decision whether to boycott the College's TEF submission.

**21. Dates for Meetings 2016-17**

**QAEC meetings**

Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> April 2017, 10:00 – 12:00, College Room, 58 Prince's Gate – papers by 21<sup>st</sup> March 2017

Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2017, 10:00 – 12.00, College Room. 58 Prince's Gate - papers by 9<sup>th</sup> May 2017

**22. RESERVED AREA OF BUSINESS**

There was no reserved business.