

## Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC)

Confirmed minutes for the meeting held on  
Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2016

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### Present

Professor Simone Buitendijk, Vice Provost (Education) - Chair  
Mr David Ashton, Academic Registrar  
Dr Lorraine Craig, on behalf of Professor Peter Cheung  
Professor Sue Gibson, Director of the Graduate School  
Ms Rebekah Fletcher, on behalf of Professor Des Johnston  
Dr Martyn Kingsbury, Director of Educational Development, EDU  
Professor Emma McCoy, Chair of the Programmes Committee  
Professor Tony Magee, Deputy Director of the Graduate School  
Professor Myra McClure, Senior College Consul  
Mr Luke McCrone, Imperial College Union, Deputy President (Education)  
Dr Edgar Meyer, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Programmes, Business School  
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  
Professor Denis Wright, Director of Student Support

### Apologies:

Professor Peter Cheung, Vice Dean (Education), Faculty of Engineering  
Professor Des Johnston, Vice Dean (Education), Faculty of Medicine  
Mr Ahmed Shamso, Graduate Students' Union President

### 1. Welcome and Apologies

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

### 2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes from the Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee (QAEC) held on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2016 were approved and Committee actions were noted.

QAEC.2016.01  
QAEC.2016.01i

### 3. Matters arising from the Minutes

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

**3.1** Further to Minute 3.1, it was noted that the Applicants with Criminal Convictions Policy would now come to the January meeting.

**3.2** Further to Minute 3.2, it was noted that Ms Mel Peter, Senior Assistant Registrar (Admissions), had confirmed that the website had been updated with the revised Special Cases Policy for Admission to Postgraduate Taught and Research Programmes of Study for 2017-18 and that a conversation with the Business School would take place shortly.

**3.3** Further to Minute 4.4, it was noted that the Centre for Languages, Culture

and Communication (CLCC) had now revised their Language Learning Statement and it would be available on their website shortly.

**3.4** Further to Minute 7.5, it was noted that the meeting with Professor Jeremy Sanders, the College governor responsible for quality assurance had been positive and it was planned to have additional update meetings throughout the year with him. Mr David Ashton, Academic Registrar, reported that he had recently attended a meeting of Academic Registrars from other universities and Imperial's planned annual report for quality assurance for Annual Provider Review appeared to be in line with the reports being submitted by other similar institutions.

**4. Responding to ICU's recommendations from NSS 2016** QAEC.2016.02  
It was noted this paper had been withdrawn as the Provost's Board had now met and agreed to action all of the recommendations in the ICU's NSS response. This would be the first year all recommendations had been accepted for action. The Academic Feedback Policy and Late Submission Policies (below) aimed to address some of those recommendations.

**5. Academic Feedback Policy** QAEC.2016.03  
The Committee considered a draft Academic Feedback Policy for Taught Programmes. It was noted that there was currently no defined College-wide policy which required feedback on assessment to be provided within a specified timescale but established College practice, arising from a discussion at the Record's Board in 2011, was an expectation that students would be provided with feedback on their assessed work within two weeks.

**5.1** It was further noted that, if approved, not all aspects of the proposed policy could be delivered for the 2016-17 academic year but that, where possible, the policy should be adopted with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017. It was further noted that the policy should be reviewed and updated as the College moved towards a modular approach to programme delivery.

**5.2** The Committee were broadly supportive of the policy and requested the following amendments:

- 1) The introduction should be amended to guide departments to consider the method by which feedback will be provided at the point the assessment is designed
- 2) The section on Principles should be amended to make clear students should be advised of the form of the feedback to be provided as well as the timescale (e.g. one to one, written, class based common errors discussion, etc).
- 3) The section on Communicating the Feedback Process should be amended to include arrangements for the return of academic feedback in vacation or College closure periods.
- 4) The section on Timescales for the Delivery of Feedback should be amended to read "10 working days" (in place of "two weeks") and to "15 working days" in place of "three weeks" to take account of weekends, bank holidays and College closure days. It was further agreed that the Head of Department (or equivalent), rather than the Faculty Education Committee,

should approve extensions to the 10 working days deadline.

- 5) That the policy should align with the Late Submission Policy in paragraph 11.

**5.3** It was further agreed that the new policy should be supported by further guidance on what is academic feedback and this should be circulated with the revised policy. It was also agreed that Faculties should have their own approach and guidance setting out their own expectations for their departments.

**Action: QA Team**

**5.4** The Committee were supportive of the proposal that feedback should include the release of actual provisional marks to students for both examinations and coursework. It was noted that further guidance was required regarding the release of provisional marks and that therefore the current Guidelines for Issuing Actual Coursework Marks to Students would be replaced. It was requested that the new guidance should make provision for students to view their examination scripts under the supervision of a member of staff.

**5.5** It was noted that QAEC representatives would like the opportunity to circulate the revised policy further for comment within their areas. It was agreed that a revised version would be circulated shortly and that QAEC would be asked to approve the policy, following a period of consultation, by email before the end of term.

**Action: QA Team**

## **6. Late Submission**

QAEC.2016.04

The Committee considered a revised policy on late submission of assessed coursework for taught programmes.

**6.1** In their discussions QAEC were mindful that they needed to design a policy which acted as deterrent to deliberate late submission (where students bargained the penalty against potential improvements to their work) but which encouraged late submission in preference to no submission.

**6.2** It was noted there were mixed views across the Faculties regarding withdrawing zero tolerance for late submission in favour of a sliding scale of penalties. It was further noted that a driver for removing zero tolerance was the student perception that they were severely penalised for returning work late but that there were no penalties for staff who failed to return academic feedback in a timely manner. It was hoped that the proposed Academic Feedback Policy would address this and that it may be that, once this was firmly established, the sliding scale of penalties could be revisited.

**6.3** The Committee broadly agreed that a 5 day sliding scale was too long and agreed that a lengthy period may encourage gaming of the system and was also inappropriate for small pieces of assessment. It was also noted that as deadlines may be extended for individual students (ideally in advance) in accordance with the mitigating circumstances policy a lengthy period of grace, albeit with penalties, was unnecessary for mitigation reasons. It was

further agreed that any new policy should be simple to operate and easy to understand.

**6.4** The Committee therefore proposed that the penalties should be:

- 1 calendar day late: capped at the pass mark
- 2 calendar days late: a mark of zero would be recorded

**6.5** It was agreed that Friday deadlines for submission of work should be permitted within the policy but that departments should be aware that setting deadlines on a Friday after 16.00 (or immediately before a bank holiday or College closure day) may cause difficulties in the event technical failures to submission processes (or other similar unplanned events) when staff were not normally readily available to resolve problems.

**6.6** It was further agreed that there needed to be clear guidance regarding what would happen in the event of non-submission (i.e. it should count as a fail, students would be permitted to resubmit but would be capped at the pass mark). It was also further agreed that departments needed to ensure they set submission deadlines throughout the year so that deadlines were not bunched together.

**6.7** It was agreed that the policy should be revised as above but that before the final decision Mr Luke McCrone, ICU Deputy President (Education), would consult with student representatives to find out the students' preferences and feedback to the Committee. Mr McCrone would be provided with text to help him explain the options and the reasons for the committee's draft proposal. Following the consultation, QAEC would be asked to approve a policy by email. It was hoped that a revised policy could be implemented with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017.

**Action: QA Team and Mr Luke McCrone**

**7. Proposal to withdraw the Imperial College International Diploma (ICID)** QAEC.2016.05  
QAEC approved a recommendation from the Admissions Task and Finish Group to withdraw the Imperial College International Diploma (ICID) with effect from 2017-18 and agreed to recommend the withdrawal to the next Senate.

**8. Periodic Review**

**8.1 Follow up from the periodic review of undergraduate teaching in the Department of Mechanical Engineering** QAEC.2016.06  
The Committee noted that a response from the Department of Mechanical Engineering to a recommendation from their periodic review of undergraduate teaching regarding timetabling and reducing scheduling conflicts was outstanding. It was noted the response would be requested for the next meeting.

**Action: Dr MJ Bluck**

**8.2 Periodic Review Timetable for PGR programmes 2016-17**  
It was noted that the departments due to undergo periodic review of their

research provision in 2016-17 were:

- Electrical & Electronic Engineering – 6 February 2017
- Physics – 27 March 2017
- Bioengineering – 28 March 2017
- Centre for Environmental Policy – date to be confirmed

- 9. Postgraduate Research (PGR) Special Cases** QAEC.2016.07  
QAEC approved a recommendation from the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee (PRQC) for handling “special cases” for postgraduate research admissions and registrations. With immediate effect, PGR special cases would be considered by the Deputy Directors of the Graduate School rather than a Special Cases Panel.
- 10. Working Party for Strengthening Discussion of Postgraduate Issues at Staff-Student Committees (SSCs) – Annual Report** QAEC.2016.08  
The Committee considered the annual report from the working party looking at improving postgraduate student representation at SSCs.
- 10.1** Professor Sue Gibson reported that she was happy with the progress achieved in this area. She felt that group should continue to meet for a further year to further embed the achievements and further work on populating the rep places on committees which continued to prove challenging, especially for Master’s level programmes.
- 10.2** It was noted that dates had agreed for the College Level Staff-Student Committees (for UG, PGT and PGR students) in January and February 2017.
- 11. Programmes Committee** QAEC. 2016.09  
The Committee considered the latest report from the Programmes Committee from the meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2016 and approved all the recommendations contained in the report which included two programme withdrawals in the National Heart and Lung Institute (NHLI).
- 11.1** It was also noted that the Programmes Committee had considered a first draft of new Programme Modification Policy which aimed to ensure the College complied with its obligations under Consumer Protection Law as described by the Competitions and Markets Authority (CMA). Programmes Committee members had feedback after the meeting and it had been agreed that a revised policy should be circulated for consultation so that a final version would be presented to QAEC for approval following further consideration by the Programmes Committee.
- 11.2** The Programmes Committee minutes/papers can be found at:  
[..\..\..\..\10.Committees\PC](#)
- 12. Postgraduate Research Quality Committee (PRQC)** QAEC.2016.10  
The Committee considered the latest report from the PRQC from the meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2016 and approved the recommendation to amend the milestones for the four year PhD in the CDT for Advanced Characterisation of Materials.

- 12.1** QAEC also noted that the PRQC were actively considering establishing an alternative PhD Thesis format whereby students could include published (or publication level) work from peer reviewed journals or conferences. A refined proposal would be considered by the PRQC in February 2017 with a view to a recommendation being made to QAEC and Senate in due course.
- 12.2** It was noted that the PRQC minutes/papers could be found at:  
<..\..\..\..\10.Committees\PRQC>
- 13. Faculty Education Committees (FEC)**  
 The Committee noted the following reports from the Faculty Education Committees (FECs):
- |   |              |
|---|--------------|
| Engineering Education Committee (EEC) – 28 <sup>th</sup> September 2016                           | QAEC.2016.11 |
| Natural Sciences Education Committee (NSEC) – 12 <sup>th</sup> October 2016                       | QAEC.2016.12 |
| School for Professional Development Education Committee (SPDEC) – 26 <sup>th</sup> September 2016 | QAEC.2016.13 |
- 13.1** It was noted that there were no recommendations for QAEC to approve in the reports but that QAEC would be asked to approve Master’s level entry requirements as a single document once they have been approved by each FEC.
- 13.2** It was noted that the FEC minutes/papers can be found at:  
<..\..\..\..\10.Committees\FEC>
- 14. Surveys**
- 14.1 NSS** QAEC.2016.14  
 QAEC noted the new questions to be used in NSS for 2017 onwards. It was noted that this was the first time that substantial changes had been made to the NSS since its launch in 2005. There are three new sections, on learning community, learning opportunities and student voice, and nine new questions on student engagement, as well as updated questions on assessment and feedback and learning resources.  
<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/news/newsarchive/2016/Name,110347,en.html>
- 14.2 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) – 2016 HEA Report**  
 The Committee noted a report on PTES 2016 from the Higher Education Academy.  
[https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/downloads/hea\\_ptes\\_2016\\_report\\_final\\_10\\_oct.pdf](https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/downloads/hea_ptes_2016_report_final_10_oct.pdf)
- 14.2.1** It was further noted that the Faculty Education Committees (FECs) would be considering their departmental PTES action plans in the autumn term and reporting Faculty level outcomes and themes to QAEC in January 2017 for onward reporting to Senate.
- 14.3 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) – 2017** QAEC.2016.15  
 The Committee considered the revised window for PRES and agreed the PRES 2017 survey window as Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> April 2017 to Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> May

2017.

- 15. Transforming Learning and Teaching** QAEC.2016.16  
QAEC noted a paper by the Vice Provost (Education) which had previously been presented to Senate.
- 15.1** QAEC members were encouraged to circulate details of the project to develop a College-wide Learning and Teaching Strategy and to take part in the consultation process.  
<http://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/leadership-and-strategy/provost/vice-provost-education/learning-and-teaching-strategy/>
- 15.2** It was noted that the Strategy would inform discussion about investment priorities in the next Planning Round and would be implemented from 2017-18.
- 16. Department for Education (DfE) Updates**
- 16.1 Teaching Excellent Framework (TEF)**  
The Committee noted new DfE guidance on the TEF. The guidance set out additional detail about how to participate in Year Two, and on how the application, submission and assessment process would operate. The assessment would be based on a holistic judgement by the TEF Panel of how each provider's metrics and submissions demonstrated performance against assessment criteria covering different aspects of learning and teaching.  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/teaching-excellence-framework-moves-forward>
- 17. HEFCE Updates**
- 17.1 Annual Provider Review (APR) 2016-17**  
The Committee noted HEFCE had published further guidance concerning Annual Provider Review for 2016-17.  
<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/Year/2016/201629/>
- 17.2 Teaching Excellence Framework Year Two: HEFCE guidance published**  
The Committee noted HEFCE had released guidance and metrics to support providers, and announced further details of panel members and assessors  
<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/news/newsarchive/2016/Name,110700,en.html>
- 17.2.1** It was confirmed that the College had received its metrics and Strategic Planning were now putting together the 15 page submission of written evidence.
- 17.2.2** It was further noted that the government may have additional plans for the use of TEF ratings (for example TEF ratings may now be used when deciding how many international students institutions can accept). Achieving a good TEF score was therefore appearing to be increasingly important for a range of reasons and opting out was not a likely option for the College.

**17.2.3** It was further noted that the TEF metrics covered three years of data and it was therefore important that initiatives to enhance the student experience should translate into improved NSS scores.

**17.2.4** It was further noted, that despite a number of applications, there are no Imperial staff or students on the recently published TEF Assessor list, although Chun-Yin San, ex-ICU Deputy President (Education) and current postgraduate student, had been appointed to the TEF Panel.

## **18. QAA Updates**

### **18.1 Digital Capability and Teaching Excellence**

The Committee noted new research commissioned by QAA and carried out by Sheffield Hallam University which explored ways of using technology in teaching that were best for improving the student experience, and how institutions could put the findings into practice. <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/newsroom/how-can-digital-capability-promote-teaching-excellence#.WBignS2LSU>

**18.2** The report found that:

- technology may have the capability to transform teaching but is not always used to its full potential
- technology can aid teaching, but is never a substitute for good teaching practice (such as student-centred learning)
- institutions can and should measure student satisfaction with technology-assisted teaching, but only as one element of effective teaching
- it is important to raise the digital skills of all staff, rather than just a few specialists.

**18.3** Professor Simone Buitendijk reported that she had employed an elearning and digital technology consultant to help develop a College-wide Digital and Online Strategy. It was planned that the strategy would be ready by the end of the Autumn Term and would eventually form part of the Learning and Teaching Strategy.

**18.4** It was further reported that there was now a fund available to support innovation in learning and teaching. QAEC members were encouraged to circulate details of the fund and submit proposals for consideration. See the Excellence Fund for Learning and Teaching Innovation: <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/leadership-and-strategy/provost/vice-provost-education/the-excellence-fund-for-learning-and-teaching-innovation/>

### **19. Research Informed Teaching Case Studies Booklet**

The Committee noted the University Alliance and the Higher Education Academy have published a collection of case studies highlighting examples of research-informed teaching from across Alliance universities, covering a broad range of existing practice. These aim to explore what research-informed teaching looks like across different disciplines and how it benefits

students, academics and universities, as well as employers and the wider community.

<http://www.unialliance.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/What-does-research-informed-teaching-look-like-WEB-UA-HEA.pdf>

**20. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**20.1 UK-wide standing committee for quality assessment announced by HEFCE**

QAEC noted that Professor Andrew Wathey CBE, Vice-Chancellor of Northumbria University, had been appointed as Chair of the new UK-wide Standing Committee for Quality Assessment for HEFCE. The committee would provide sector-led oversight of those aspects of quality assessment arrangements that continue to be shared across the UK. It would play a key role in promoting quality, standards, and the student interest, and would support a co-regulatory approach by bringing together academic expertise and students with regulatory and other bodies.

<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/news/newsarchive/2016/Name,110713,en.html>

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

Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2017, 10:00 – 12.00, College Room, 58 Prince's Gate – papers by 20<sup>th</sup> December 2016

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.