

SENATE

Minutes of Meeting held on 1 March 2023

Present: Professor Ian Walmsley (Chair); Professors, Brady, Ces, Craster, Evans, R Green, T Green, Hanna, Haynes, Lindstedt, Matar, Meeran, Mestel, Spivey, Xu; Drs Bluck, Costa-Pereira, Craig, Field, Fobelets, Rutschmann, Tennant; Mr Lupton, Mr Tebbutt, Mr Zheng, Ms Bannister, Ms Wong, Ms Yao Mr Ashton (Secretary), Ms Webster (Minute Secretary).

In attendance: Professor Jason Riley for Professor Brandon; Professor Terry Tetley for Minute 2721

Apologies: Professors Brandon, Craster, Kingsbury, Lindstedt. Matar, Weber; Dr Malhotra

2716 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Senate held on 14 December 2022 were confirmed as an accurate record.

2717 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were noted as above.

2718 Matters Arising

There were no matters not covered by the agenda.

2719 Chair's Action

There was no Chair's Action to report.

2720 Provost's Business - to receive: a verbal report from the Provost.

Reported: **(1) Strategy Consultation** – The President has launched the first phase of consultation on a new strategy for the College. This first phase, which runs to 31 March 2023, will focus on the pillars of the College's academic mission – our student experience and education; our research and enterprise and the College's global and societal impact. Work in underway on the key enablers for the strategy including people, the physical and digital infrastructure and finance, and cross cutting themes such as sustainability. A Survey is available for all staff to complete and staff can sign up to attend focus group sessions, as departments own meetings and discussions on the strategy

(2) Appointment of Vice-Provost (Education and Student Experience) – Professor Peter Haynes has accepted appointment as Vice-Provost (Education and Student Experience) with effect from 1 February 2023, for a term of five years. Professor Haynes has held the role of Interim Vice-Provost (Education and Student Experience) since October 2022.

Reporting to the Provost and working closely and collaboratively with key colleagues, in this role Professor Haynes will be responsible for leading the delivery of the College's strategic

aims for the provision of a of high-quality education and delivering an exceptional student experience. He will be responsible for enhancing the quality, impact, coordination, and delivery of education at the College.

2721 Student Discipline Procedure Review

Received: A Report from the Student Discipline Review Group (**Paper Senate 2022/09**) presented by the Chair of the Group and the Academic Registrar

Reported: (1) That Senate had established a Working Group to review the Student Discipline Procedure about a year ago. The Review was set up to address concern from staff and students that the procedure was in need of review to improve the transparency of the procedure and address the support available for students under consideration. There are an increasing number of complex cases being considered by the College. There were also external drivers for review including increasing publicity over student discipline cases. The Office for Students are also consulting on a new Condition of Registration following their 'statement of expectation for preventing and addressing harassment and sexual misconduct affecting students in higher education'.

(2) That the Working Group had represented a wide range of interested parties and involved evidence from Evidence Groups from across the College and took legal advice in order to undertake a root and branch review. The Group established a set of principles to guide the work of the Group. The Group was recommending a series of documents to Senate to support the work around Student Discipline and related casework. A revised Ordinance which separates out the procedure which it previously contained and instead sets out high level requirements for managing student discipline and is overseen and will need to be approved by Council. The detailed Procedure was now set out in a separate document and would be approved by the Senate. In addition, the Student Code of Conduct sets out positive and negative behaviours previously embedded in the Disciplinary Procedure, has been amended slightly since last being presented to Senate. The Investigation Protocol and the Precautionary Action Protocol have also been separated out from the Procedure document as they can be applied to other procedures, such as Fitness to Study and Fitness to Practice. Senate was also presented with the draft guidance for students to accompany the procedure.

(2) That the major procedural changes included the removal of Residential Tribunals to allow the Wardens to concentrate on welfare support and to ensure that there was consistency across outcomes for students. The Working Group had also reaffirmed that students, including responding parties, should be supported to continue with their studies while cases were ongoing and had determined that procedures should only be paused in exceptional circumstances. As a result of concern about the length of time police investigations could take, and on the basis of the legal advice the Group had received, the Group agreed that the College would no longer necessarily pause proceedings where cases were going through legal investigation or the law courts. This was on the basis on the lower standard of proof required for the College's procedures. Finally, the Group had recommended the addition of exceptional re-opening of cases following the completion of procedures on a limited basis. There had also been some recommended changes to information sharing to allow for more information to reporting parties about sanctions and to confirm that there would be no information sharing with the Police unless there was a legal obligation to do so.

(3) That in terms of student support, the Group had tried to address a gap in the range of sanctions by recommending the introduction of restorative justice measures as a sanction to fill the gap in the 'middle ground' of the current penalties in the procedure. This could include aspects of community service but is likely to be bespoke to the individual and their circumstances. The Group considered that this provided a better solution for poor behaviour and provided a chance to encourage positive behaviours. The Group also thought that it was important that all parties were offered support beyond the conclusion of the procedure and any sanctions that had been applied. A sub-group, led by the Director

of Student Support had been established, to consider the support available for students involved in the procedure and to ensure that the support was appropriate and signposted to students.

(4) That the Group had reviewed the existing penalties in the procedure and looked to fill a perceived gap in the middle of the available sanctions that could be applied to students. A new sanction involving developmental activities which would be tailored to the individual. Further consideration was being given to how mediation could be implemented as well. The Group had agreed that financial penalties, except perhaps to pay for damage to property or items, were no longer appropriate as the impact on some students was disproportionate to others.

(5) That Panel membership should be broadened to include professional services staff to consider cases and that more training was required for members. In terms of resources, the Group was conscious that they were introducing additional work for areas which were already under-resourced in supporting the full range of student casework. The Group had benchmarked the staff numbers to other institutions, and this showed a significant difference. A bid has been made to increase staff numbers across the areas which support student casework. It was also noted that discovery work was being undertaken through the Student Lifecycle Administration Board (SLAB) to look at a case management system to improve the tools available to manage and monitor casework.

(6) That the Group recommended that the revised procedure was implemented with effect from the 2023/24 academic year so that students can sign up to the new Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures as they (re)enrol. There was some additional work to be completed on the guidance which will accompany the procedure and the Group had also identified the need to look at what happens when a student makes a complaint of misconduct against a member of staff. The group will be taking this forward with Human Resources.

(7) Considered in discussion: That on the issue that for a student making a report of a sexual assault by another student, but the College not suspending the other party can leave the reporting party feeling disbelieved and unsupported. It was felt that other institutions would suspend a student against whom very serious allegations were made. There was a suggestion that the College should also consider using external investigators, such as ex-police staff, to investigate such allegations. Senate was advised that such allegations are taken seriously and the College does look at securing the safety of the reporting party but also has an obligation to the responding party, especially where the outcome is, on the balance of probabilities, not found. External investigators have been used in the past for sexual misconduct cases but that thought was also being given to how the college might support, or employ, staff to conduct investigations internally with proper support and training.

(8) That strong support was expressed for the resourcing required to support the delivery of student casework across the college and for the Casework Team in particular, who it was acknowledged are not resourced to deal with the volume and complexity of cases that come in.

(8) That there was a need for some additional guidance where a case crossed assessment and discipline, for example, unsafe working in a laboratory which might be considered through the Discipline Procedure but where an academic penalty or sanction would be more appropriate. It was noted that these cases needed to be handled on an individual basis to determine the most appropriate route. There are options to move between procedures, but we want to avoid students having to go through more than one. It is hoped that the proposed addition of case conferences into the procedure will help to identify at an early stage the most appropriate procedure to deal with the allegation.

(9) That the contribution of the three Imperial College Union Officer Trustees was crucial to the work of the Review Group and that thanks were extended to them all from Senate for their hard work.

Senate approved the Ordinance, which would be forwarded to Council for final approval, the revised Student Discipline Procedure

2722 Agreed Implications of Natural Language Processing

Received: A Report from the Vice Provost (Education and Student Experience) (**Paper Senate 2022/10**)

Reported: (1) That the paper, which included the College's approach to the use of natural language processing models and a draft webpage with guidance, was taken as read but that there were a couple of additional points to draw members attention to. Firstly, that the College's current definition of plagiarism refers to the work of the person and so the wording will need to be tweaked to be clear that that this will also refer to AI generated work and, secondly, that the note that Departments could have the right to conduct random interviews of students to assure themselves that submitted work is that of the student.

Considered in discussion: (2) That the technology was developing rapidly to be able to tackle numerical calculations or coding problems and that while the final answers might not always be correct, Chat GPT had been able to use the correct equations. Some staff felt that this meant the end of assessment as currently delivered and of students undertaking un-invigilated exams or online examinations off-campus. There was also a concern that the viva option could be very time consuming for departments. It was acknowledged that the pace of change was rapid and that the documents presented for Senate would be kept under regular review to ensure they remained current.

(3) That there may be some technical solutions such as lock-down browsers which meant the internet could not be accessed during an examination. Members discussed the different impact on different departments depending on their assessment methods. The impact of AI on employment and the need to see this technology as an opportunity was also discussed. It would be a mistake to ban the use of AI or tell students it couldn't be used at all.

(4) That ICT was actively looking at lockdown browser solutions but that there were issues in deploying these with bring your own device exams. Members also discussed solutions which allowed students to handwrite answers but for them to then be scanned and marking could be managed electronically. There was also a feeling that this provided an opportunity to rethink assessments and how AI might be integrated into what people do at the College and to best prepare them for employment in the future. This would be an ongoing conversation for the College.

2723 Algorithms for Postgraduate Taught Awards

Received: A Paper from the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC) (**Paper Senate 2022/11**) presented by the Chair of QAEC

Reported: (1) That this has been proposed following a significant number of requests through the postgraduate Curriculum Review process for programme specific regulations being made in respect of degree classification algorithms to accommodate different programme and curriculum structures and the weight of, for example, the dissertation. It is proposed that the academic regulations should be adapted to allow three postgraduate algorithms with the requirement that programmes choose one algorithm which is applied to all students on the programme.

Considered in discussion: (2) That this would not remove borderline considerations or the need for external examiner involvement. There was some concern about what would happen if it was found that a programme team had chosen the wrong algorithm for their programme or how individual students could be assisted if something had gone wrong. On the latter point, Senate was advised that the current arrangements where a Board could make an exception decision and have it approved as a suspension of regulations would apply. The College does have to clearly set out its arrangements for all assessment processes to students in advance but if there was a circumstance where something had gone very wrong, there would be an opportunity to resolve it. It was suggested that some re-wording of the final paragraph of the paper to make that clear would help understanding of this.

(3) That a query on why the rounding up that occurs where a student has a programme overall weighted average of 0.5% of a boundary for classification occurs but the rounding up of an individual project mark does not and a comment that rigorously defined algorithms should never replace academic judgement.

(4) That Senate was happy to **approve** the proposal for the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee to take forward.

2724 Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee

Received: A report from the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (**Paper Senate 2022/12**) from the meeting of 23 November 2022.

Reported: (1) That there was one item for Senate approval – the Policy for the Award of Posthumous and Aegrotat Postgraduate Research degrees. This proposal had been brought forward to being the Research Degree regulations in line with the taught programme. There were a number of principles set out in the paper which would apply to these awards. Senate was very supportive of the proposals and recommended approval of the proposal

Considered in discussion (2) That approval was subject to a minor amendment to 4.3 which should read PGR Senior Tutor. There was some concern expressed about paragraphs 4.5 and the additional burden that collating a student's work could place on a supervisor and that it was clear from the context what this might involve, there was a reference to data sets and whether that should be a published data set with a digital object identifier?

(3) That the policy had raised a couple of related issues which were that the Policy makes it clear that the MRes is regulated as a Taught degree but there was concern that it was then marketed as a Research Degree. Secondly, that section 9 raised an issue about intellectual property and ownership when a graduate dies and has been awarded a degree under the usual regulations, which might need to be considered by Enterprise. Finally, that the Student Death Protocol might need to be updated in the light of this policy.

(4) That in addition, QAEC had considered:

- (a) Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey 2022 department results summary
- (b) Module Evaluation Questionnaire (MEQ) Autumn Term results summary
- (c) Student Exchange Partnerships 2022-23 report

2725 Dates of Terms

Received: A note from the Academic Registrar (**Paper Senate/2022/13**)

Noted: A minor adjustment to the summer term dates in 2028-2029 and to the start of the Spring Term in 2031.

Senate **approved** the term dates for 2024-25 and noted the rest of the provisional and proposed dates

2726 Date of Next Meetings

Wednesday 10 May 2023

Wednesday 28 June 2023

All meetings start at 15.00hrs