Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC)
Minutes from the meeting held on
Wednesday 20 November 2019

Present
David Ashton, Academic Registrar – Chair
Ashley Brooks, ICU Deputy President (Education)
Dr Lorraine Craig, Faculty of Engineering representative
Mohit Devgan, GSU President
Milia Hasbani, GSU Vice President (on behalf of Mohit Devgan)
Laura Lane, Head of Strategy and Operations, Graduate School
Professor Peter Openshaw, Senior College Consul
Dr Edgar Meyer, Chair of Programmes Committee
Rebecca Middleton, Faculty of Natural Sciences representative
Claire Stapley, CLCC/CHERS representative
Karen Tweddle, Business School representative
Judith Webster, Head of Academic Services
Scott Tucker, Deputy Director (Academic Quality and Standards)

In attendance
Kirstie Ward, Assistant Registrar (Academic Standards) (Items 6, 9 & 11)
Andrew Stevenson, Strategic Planning Officer (Item 7)
Alex Beddall, Management Trainee, Strategic Planning (Item 7)

Apologies
Mohit Devgan, GSU President
Martin Lupton, Faculty of Medicine representative

1.   Welcome, apologies and announcements

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

2.   Minutes of the Previous Meeting   QAEC.2019.13

2.1   The Committee confirmed the minutes of 9 October 2019 as an accurate record.

3.   Review of Committee Actions   QAEC.2019.14

3.1   The Committee noted the status of the points of the action log.

4.   Matters arising from the Minutes

4.1   Implementation plans for Turnitin for PGR students (QAEC 4.1 refers)

4.1.1   All new doctoral students (PhD, MPhil, EngD and MD[Res]) who started their research programme on or after 24 September 2019 will be required to submit their Early Stage Assessment (ESA) to Turnitin. New doctoral students will also be required to submit their Thesis through Turnitin.

Existing students who are due to submit their Thesis from the academic year 2021-22 onwards will be required to submit their Thesis through Turnitin. This requirement will take effect as soon as students have enrolled for the academic session in October 2021.

4.1.2   It was noted that the Sabbatical Officers could see the benefits to students of implementing Turnitin. However, is was reported that there are still a number of operational challenges that need to be addressed by Departments.

5.   Academic Regulations and Policy Definitions   QAEC.2019.15

5.1   Following the approval of the single set of Academic Regulations, all academic policies are currently being reviewed by the Quality Assurance Team. In order to inform further review, QAEC agreed to the following proposed definitions for 'Regulation', 'Policy' and 'Procedure':
   * *Regulation* – An agreed rule set by the College which must be followed
   * *Policy* – A statement of principles established by common consensus that must be followed, unless sound pedagogical, professional or practical reasons prevent this
   * *Procedure* – A binding set of tasks that must be completed for a specific purpose.

In addition, the terms 'must', should/normally' and 'may' were clarified and agreed.

5.2   Policies relating to student status and to examination and assessment have been prioritised and will be considered through the Regulations and Policy Review Group prior to any further consultation and the submission to QAEC for approval under its delegated powers from Senate.

6.   External Examiners   QAEC.2019.16

6.1   The Committee received the Summary of Undergraduate External Examiner Reports for Academic Year 2018-19.

6.2 A new online portal was implemented for External Examiner annual reports as of 2018-19. The new portal will allow for more in-depth analysis of data arising from the reports than in previous years. Following the first round of reporting, External Examiners have fed back some recommendations on improving the user interface, including:

1. Having the ability to view all questions in the report before starting to input answers.
2. Improving the ease of moving between sections in the report.
3. Being able to download a copy of the answers at the point of submission.

The Quality Assurance team will take forward these recommendations for the next round of reporting in summer 2020.

6.3 External Examiner induction sessions have been well received. Two induction sessions have been organised for 2020 and will take place on 22 January and 24 February 2020. Based on feedback from our new External Examiners for 2018-19, the QA team have amended the morning session to include more guidance on areas such as External Examiner reporting, and a list of activities recommended for the departmental induction.

6.4 The report presented the following key areas for development and improvement:

Programme information
- Ensuring External Examiners receive all relevant material on appointment and for each new academic year

Assessment setting
- Ensuring papers are provided in good order and in a timely manner
- Model answers/marking schemes provided to externals (and markers)
- Feedback to Externals Examiners with regards to assessment setting comments
- Consider the intensity during and between assessments for students
- Review the use of mastery exams and MCQ papers, and their contribution to degree outcomes
- Strengthen literature reviews to make these more challenging and hypothesis driven

Marking, moderation and feedback
- Second marking/moderation procedures
- Use of recordings in presentations/viva/practical examination
- Ensure annotation of feedback on all scripts and other assessed work.
- Review marks awarded for projects and their contribution to degree outcomes

Year abroad/distant study
- Marks awarded and contribution to degree outcomes
- Providing relevant information to External Examiners to complete their review

Board of Examiners
- Consideration of students with mitigating circumstances
- Monitor the median marks and number of first class degrees awarded, to avoid grade inflation

An External Examiner action plan will be produced following the submission of PGT reports. Themes can then be linked across levels.

6.5   13 external examiner reports have not yet been submitted (8%). It was confirmed that externals are not paid until a report is submitted and those unresponsive can be removed through College procedures via QAEC.

6.6   It was noted that some appointments are still being made too late and that timely appointments are essential to ensure an external receives a thorough induction. In addition, externals need to be provided with enough time to moderate assessments. Timings are not prescribed by the College but Departments should ensure an appropriate schedule for external moderation based on the type and quantity of assessments being moderated.

7.   Fair Admissions   QAEC.2019.17

7.1   The Committee received the College's draft response to the UUK call for evidence to support the UUK review of fair admissions. This was prepared using material provided by Registry (Academic Registrar and Deputy Head of Admissions) and having sought views from the Faculty Education Strategy Managers and Admissions Tutors, and the Director of Student Recruitment and Outreach. Views will also be sought from the Vice Deans Education, Vice Provost Education and the Associate Provost (Academic Partnerships). Having incorporated any further views, the final version will be discussed with the Provost and approval sought prior to submission to UUK.

8.   Study Abroad Placements Task and Finish Group   QAEC.2019.18

8.1   The Committee approved the terms of reference for the new Study Abroad Placements Task and Finish Group.

The Group reports to QAEC which refers items to Faculty Education Committees (FECs) and/or Departments as required. The Group will advise QAEC on the enhancement of procedures relating to the quality assurance of study abroad, drawing on external guidance and good practice.

The Group will aim to complete its work by April 2020 for changes to be approved for 2020/21. It will meet as needed during that period to achieve its aims; it is expected a maximum of five meetings will be required.

8.2   Membership will be finalised in due course. The Academic Registrar agreed to act as Chair of the Group. It was agreed that representatives from the Imperial College Business School will be included as full members of the Group.

9.   Student Casework: Appeals   QAEC.2019.19

9.1   The Committee received an analysis of appeals data for taught programmes (all undergraduate and postgraduate taught including MRes) received during 2018/2019 to the census date (31 October 2019). Within the report there is reflection on the effectiveness of the Academic Appeals procedure itself, its implementation and recommendations for further refinement.

In the process of considering appeals, regardless of the outcome, the panel may decide to make recommendations. These could be specifically about the case at hand, but may also relate to the wider College policy and procedures. The casework team review these on a regular basis to feed into review of regulations, policies and procedures. This year the main concern raised by panels is the lack of clear and consistent application of criteria for consideration at borderline, for classification and progression purposes.

10.   Postgraduate Research Quality Committee   QAEC.2019.20

10.1   The Committee considered the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee report from the meeting held on 20 November 2019.

10.2   *PRQC Composition*
           The Committee approved the updated PRQC composition to include one representative from the Centre for Academic English.

10.3   *Persistent Identifiers for Research Data*
           The Committee noted a proposal to implement persistent identifiers for research data:
- Incorporating a recommendation into PhD thesis guidelines encouraging researchers to adopt best practice in data curation, taking the form of creating a registered master DOI data record for their PhD thesis in a suitable repository at the outset of a PhD research cycle. The core metadata associated with this DOI would initially include the PhD student's name+ORCID, department and (working) title of the future thesis.
- Incorporating a recommendation for the deposition of research datasets and collections, where appropriate, as a regular activity during the PhD research, with the registered DOIs obtained from each deposition to be suitably associated in a hierarchical manner with the master DOI data record.
- Incorporating a recommendation citing the DOIs of appropriate datasets and collections in the thesis bibliography where appropriate and to include the master DOI data record.
- Incorporating a recommendation assigning a DOI to the final Spiral thesis publication record, with associated metadata to include the DOI of the thesis master data record and to cite both DOIs in journal publications and other resulting research outputs as appropriate.

The Committee agreed in principle, adopting the recommendations but that these would be subject to further exploration of the operational aspects and resource requirements.

10.4   Departments should be consulted to ensure that any subject specific differences are acknowledged and variations in resource are considered. Supervisors are a key stakeholder and will need support to buy in to the process of supporting their students to adopt best practice in data curation.

10.5   The Committee agreed that a further paper should be produced that sets out how the recommendations could be operationalised. A guidance document should also be produced that could be uploaded to an appropriate College webpage.

Action: Secretary (via Research Data Manager)

10.6   *PRES Working Group*
QAEC endorsed PRQC's recommendation that a working group of PRQC is established to address the recommendations set out in the Imperial College Union PRES 2019 and Response and the Graduate School PRES 2019 Response.

11.   Fitness to Practise   QAEC.2019.21

11.1   The Committee noted the new OIA Good Practice Framework: Fitness to Practise, October 2019. The College Fitness to Practise policy is being updated in the light of this, and the updated GMC guidance.

12.   Admissions Statistics   QAEC.2019.22 -
                                                                                                     QAEC.2019.25

12.1   The Committee received admissions statistics for undergraduate, postgraduate taught, and postgraduate research. For PGR, the College is still open/recruiting to the 2019/20 academic year and will do so up to the 2nd October 2020.

13.   Faculty Education Committees Reports

The Committee received a report on the Faculty Education Committee meeting for the Faculty of Engineering held on 25 September 2019.

14.   Learning & Teaching Committee Report

The Committee received a brief verbal report on the Learning & Teaching Committee held on 7 November 2019.

15.   Senate Report

The Committee received a brief verbal report on the Senate held on 9 October 2019.

16.   Chair's Action

None reported.

17.   Dates for Meeting 2019/20

17.1   The dates for meetings for the remainder of the academic year were reported as:
   - 15 January 2020 (reporting to Senate on 11 March)
   - 26 February 2020 (also reporting to Senate on 11 March)
   - 22 April 2020 (reporting to Senate on 6 May)
   - 3 June 2020 (reporting to Senate on 24 June)

18.   Reserved Area of Business

18.1   There was no reserved business.