Imperial College
London

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QUALITY ASSURANCE & ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the QAEC meeting held on
Thursday 5th June 2014

Present:
Professor Debra Humphris, Vice Provost (Education) - Chair
Dr Simon Archer, College Tutor
Professor Peter Cheung, Vice Dean (Education), Faculty of Engineering
Professor Sue Gibson, Director of the Graduate School
Professor Nigel Gooderham, Senior College Consul
Mr Chris Harris, Quality Assurance & Enhancement Manager, Faculty of Medicine
Ms Nat Kempston, ICU Deputy President (Education)
Ms Diane Morgan, Associate Dean of Programmes, Business School
Mr Dean Pateman, Academic Registrar
Professor Alan Spivey, Director of Education Faculty, of Natural Sciences
Mr Andreas Thomik, Graduate School Union President
Ms Sophie White, Senior Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance & Enhancement)

In attendance:
Ms Kirsty Ellinor, Quality Assurance Administrator
Mr Adrian Hawksworth, Assistant Registrar (Placements) – for item 7
Mr Richard Monk, Assistant Registrar (Senate & Review)
Mr Daniel Smith, Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance & Enhancement) – Secretary
Mr Anthony Wilkinson, Management Trainee

Apologies:
Dr Paul Lickiss, Department of Chemistry
Dr David McPhail, Deputy Director of the Graduate School
Professor Sue Smith, Deputy Director of Education, Faculty of Medicine
Professor Denis Wright, Director of Student Support

1. Welcome and Apologies

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

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting **QAEC.2013.64**

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 1st April were confirmed with two amendments:

2.1 Minute 9.2: *FoNs reported that they agreed with the principle of competency standards* and they would normally endeavour to make all reasonable adjustments to their programmes ~~and as a result competency standards may be a negative step~~. FoNs also

reported that they felt that the statements should be held on the Disability Advisory Service (DAS) website and not their own. FoNs confirmed that they had completed a generic statement for their UG programmes but had not done so for their PG programmes.

2.2 Minute 9.3: Medicine expressed concerns about raising expectations by providing competency standards documents as they could help students through a programme but this might mean that they had provided a student with a qualification for which they would not be able to practice as a career due to the GMC registration requirements. *The Committee noted that Medicine already have competency standards which are published on-line.*

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes

Further to minute 6.3 and 6.4, Mr Dean Pateman confirmed that the projects addressing English language entry requirements and the wider project regarding the College's overall entry criteria and approach to equivalents were in progress.

4. Regulations regarding the Appointment of External Examiners **QAEC.2013.65**

The Committee considered a proposal to revise the regulations regarding the appointment of external examiners. The amended regulations would create a clearer distinction between former staff, former students and persons who have previously held an honorary or visiting appointment. Persons falling under one of these definitions would now be required to wait for a period of at least five years before they could be appointed as an external examiner for any level of award.

4.1 The Committee agreed to recommend the amended regulations for approval by Senate.

5. Periodic Review & Programme Monitoring Process **QAEC.2013.66**

The Committee considered a proposal to revise the College's current periodic review and programme monitoring processes.

5.1 Concerns were expressed that the recommendation to combine undergraduate and Master's level periodic review processes into a single review of taught provision might place an increased demand on the time of College Consuls and student representatives.

5.2 The Committee noted that departments were required to complete a significant amount of paperwork in preparation for the review and that there were a number of alternative models which could be emulated to reduce this workload.

5.3 Overall, the Committee considered the recommendation that the undergraduate and Master's level postgraduate periodic review processes should be combined into a single review of taught provision to be reasonable. It was noted that review visits may need to increase

in length from 1 to 2 days.

5.4 The Committee considered the recommendation that MRes programmes should normally be considered during the periodic review of taught provision reasonable. It was noted that in the case of integrated Master's and research degree (1 + 3) programmes it may be more appropriate to include the Master's level programme in the review of research provision. It was agreed that departments with 1 + 3 programmes would therefore be given the option to decide which they would prefer.

5.5 The Committee considered the recommendation that periodic reviews of taught provision will normally be schedule either in the year prior to, or the year after, an accreditation visit to be reasonable. It was noted that departments would be able to state their preference and this would be taken into account when planning the College's overall review schedule.

5.6 The Committee considered the recommendation that periodic reviews of taught provision should normally take place on a 5 year cycle and periodic reviews of research provision should normally take place on a 6 year cycle to be reasonable. It was agreed that a department's periodic reviews of research and taught provision would not be scheduled in the same academic year. It was also agreed that there should be an element of flexibility in the timing to ensure that the review schedule was compatible with the recommendation above regarding accreditation visits.

5.7 The Committee considered the recommendation that flexibility in the scheduling of periodic reviews during the academic year should be retained to be reasonable.

5.8 The Committee considered the recommendation that QAEC should seek to define the types of professional, statutory or regulatory bodies that the College recognises to be reasonable.

5.9 The Committee considered the recommendation that annual monitoring at a department level should be introduced for Master's level programmes to be reasonable. It was noted this would align the Master's process with that for undergraduate programmes.

5.10 The Committee noted that annual monitoring at Master's level had been trialled unsuccessfully in the past. It was noted that the previous trial had been at a programme level, not a department level. The Committee suggested that the distinction between the current proposal and the previous trial be clearly articulated.

5.11 The Committee recommended that the relevant paperwork for periodic reviews and annual monitoring should be reviewed and developed in order to ensure that the process was as effective and efficient as possible. The Committee noted that it was important that departments

were only required to provide information which served a function within the review process.

5.12 The Committee recommended that the process be developed and trialled during the academic year 2014-15 with a view to implementation from 2015-16. The Committee requested that updates regarding new procedures and paperwork be received by QAEC in due course.

Action: Richard Monk

6. Procedures for the Approval of New Programmes **QAEC.213.67**

The Committee considered a proposal to merge the existing procedures for the approval of undergraduate and Master's level programmes into a single procedure.

6.1 The Committee noted that undergraduate programme proposals would now be required to submit four external reviews (2 from academia and 2 from industry/health service) before consideration by the relevant quality committee. This aligns the undergraduate process with the Master's level process.

6.2 The Committee recommended that no new programmes should be considered without a minimum of four external (2 from academia and 2 from industry/health service) reviews.

6.3 The Committee recommended that Master's Level proposals for a programme in a new discipline or subject not currently taught at the College and/or which is distinct in format or structure from existing programmes at the College should require strategic approval from QAEC before they can be considered at the relevant quality committee. It was noted that this would align the Master's Level process with the existing undergraduate process.

6.4 Subject to the recommendations above, the Committee agreed to recommend the procedure for approval by Senate with effect from 2014-5.

7. Student Placement Policy & Good Practice **QAEC.2013.68**

The Committee considered revisions to the College's current placement learning policy and good practice guidelines following the publication of Chapter B10 of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, *Managing Higher Education with Others*.

7.1 The Committee thanked members of the Collaborative Working Party for their hard work. The Working Party was formally disbanded.

7.2 The Committee agreed to recommend the revised policy and good practice for approval by Senate with effect from 2014-5.

8. Regulations for MBBS Programmes **QAEC.2013.69**

The Committee considered revisions to the regulations for the

MBBS/BSc, MBBS (Graduate Entry) and MBBS (Oxbridge Advanced Entry).

8.1 The Committee recommended that the wording of the regulations regarding the number of years in which a student is permitted to fail an assessment before being required to withdraw should be amended to make the intended meaning more explicit. The changes were to:

a) Reduce the number of re-sit opportunities so that candidates only have one attempt to re-sit failed examinations in any year.
b) More clearly define the 'Finals Phase' as years 5 and 6 of the programme of study.
c) Introduce a regulation preventing students who fail one or more exam in two academic years from being re-entered for subsequent failed examinations. Examinations and re-sit attempts in year 4 are exempt from this requirement.

8.2 Subject to the recommendation above, the Committee agreed to recommend the regulations for approval by Senate with effect from entry in 2014-5.

9. Second Marking in the Imperial College Business School **QAEC.2013.70**

The Committee considered a proposal from the Business School to pilot the use of sample check marking in place of double marking for examination scripts for one academic year (2014-5).

9.1 The Committee heard that, in place of double marking (either blind or non-blind) as required in the Regulations for the Examination of Taught Master's Degrees (see 14.1 and 14.2), the Business School wished to pilot the use of sample check marking, a form of second marking on examination scripts. [Check marking is where a second marker determines whether the mark awarded by the first marker is appropriate and confirms it is appropriate.] The Business School wished to propose the following second/check marking options were available in additional to their usual double marking practice:

1. The Course Leader (as "College Examiner") first marks all examination scripts and another member of academic staff check marks a sample of the scripts.

2. The Course Leader (as "College Examiner") first marks all the examination scripts and, an appropriately trained and supported, Graduate Teaching Assistant (PhD student) check marks a sample of scripts.

In both cases, the External Examiner(s) would moderate scripts in the usual way.

9.2 It was noted that the proposal was to pilot sample check marking with a view to considering whether the current regulations might be expanded to permit sample check marking. The Committee were reassured that

this was a pilot of a new approach to assessment in the Business School.

9.3 The Committee heard that Course Leaders would have the liberty to decide which marking methods would be used and it was further explained that it would be made very clear to students and the external examiners which method was to be used per examination. It was also confirmed that staff and GTAs involved in the marking would be appropriately trained and supported (covering such issues as power and duress). It was also confirmed that a clear process for confirming individual marks would be followed when there was a disagreement between the first and second marker.

9.4 The Committee heard that the Business School would produce a form for completion by all markers which would include a requirement for a commentary on the process. (This would detail whether marks were challenged and details on how resolution between the first and seconds makers was achieved.)

9.5 The Committee heard that the driver for the proposal was the Business School's aim to release marks and feedback to students within 6 weeks of the examination, a target which was not currently being met by the Business School due to the large number of students on their programmes. It was noted that other business Schools current employed the above methods as started and that the QAA had recently acknowledged a move to sample second marking across the sector:

"*One factor that may guide the choice of approach to second marking is the volume of student work to be marked. In recent years there has been a signification shift away from the double marking of student work towards the use of sampling*" – **QAA, "Understanding Assessment: Its role in safeguarding academic standards and quality in higher education – A guide for early career staff".**

9.6 The Committee wished to ensure that all Business School examiners would be supportive of the trial and it was agreed that the Business School seek the advice of their External Examiners before implementing the pilot.

Post Meeting Note
The Business School confirmed that the pilot was supported by their External Examiners.

9.7 The Committee discussed an appropriate sample size and agreed that all borderline scripts should be included in the sample.

Post Meeting Note
Following the meeting it was agreed that the sample would be 10% (or a minimum of 10) passing scripts with scripts from the top, middle and bottom of the range. The range would also be representative of the questions selected by students. All scripts at the grade borderline (-/+ 2.5%) would be second marked as would all fail scripts (50% and below)

and all distinctions (70% and above). The sample would be selected by the Business School's Examination Office. The sample checked by the second marker would therefore be the same as the sample sent to the External Examiner for moderation purposes.

9.8 In order to judge the success, or otherwise, of the pilot, the Business School agreed to provide the following information to QAEC for their penultimate 2014-5 meeting so that there would be time for Senate to make a decision on the future of the pilot for the 2015-6 academic session:

- Collection of feedback from External Examiners on the pilot
- Benchmark statistics (using data from the 2013-4 academic year) which could be used to reflect on the pilot's impact including the following performance indicators:
    - The number of occasions when the marks of the first examiner are changed/challenged by the second maker
    - The length of time taken to undertake marking
    - The length of time students wait to receive marks and feedback
    - The number of student queries/appeals submitted

The Business School would also carry out an audit of all scripts to ensure that there are no arithmetic errors in calculating the final mark as there was a danger that such errors could go undetected if a script was not in the sample.

9.9 The Committee recommended, for Senate approval, a suspension of the regulations 14.1 and 14.2 to the Regulations for the Examination of Taught Master's Degrees for all Business School Master's level programmes for one academic year (2014-5) to allow a pilot of sample second marking/check marking to be carried out in place of double marking.

10. Academic Standards Framework **QAEC.2013.71**

As set out in the Education and Student Strategy, The College has committed to "*4.5: Ensure the efficient and streamlined governance of education and the student experience and review our Quality Framework in order to simply and improve processes.* " As part of this the Committee considered the development and implementation of an institutional Academic Standards Framework to ensure consistency in the management of academic standards and compliance with the relevant national and European regulatory requirements.

10.1 The Committee debated the background drivers for the changes including the outcome of the HEFCE KIS audit, changes in the QAA Quality Code and preparation work for the implementation of the student information system. All of these had informed the development of the proposed institutional Academic Standards Framework.

10.2 The Committee noted that the College's next Higher Education Review (HER) by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) would take place in the academic year 2016-17 and that the College's Self-Evaluation Document would need to be submitted in the academic year 2015-16. Therefore the timing of the development and implementation of the framework must be informed by this.

10.3 The Committee noted that the framework included provision for clinical programmes which are not generally awarded credit but that these programmes would still need to ensure their learning outcomes were placed at the relevant level of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ).

10.4 Concerns were expressed that the minimum number of credits required at level 7 for an integrated Master's degree was different from the number required for a stand-alone Master's degree. It was clarified that the number of credits required at level 7 for an integrated Master's degree could be increased to match a stand-alone Master's degree however the number of credits required at level 7 for a stand-alone Master's degree could not be lowered below the national threshold standard of 75 ECTS/150 CATS.

10.5 There were also concerns that proposed framework aligned levels of study with years of study and that this might be difficult to implement in integrated Master's degree programmes where levels 6 and 7 are spread out between year three and year four. This was linked to concerns that due to the higher pass mark for modules at level 7 there would need to be clear identification to the students of the level of the module. This might mislead students into registering for "easier" modules at level 6 as they had a lower pass mark.

10.6 Concerns were expressed that not all integrated Master's degree programmes currently award 90 ECTS for the final year and that it may prove difficult for additional credits to be added to the curriculum. However, the Committee noted the importance of the framework in assuring minimum national thresholds are met, maintaining the expectations of accrediting bodies. It would provide departments with an opportunity to review the current structure of their programmes. It was important for the framework to clearly articulate what is required as a national minimum standard ("threshold standard") and where Imperial's expectations exceeded these minimums.

10.7 The Committee agreed that, working with departments and faculties, in 2014-5 work would be undertaken to develop options for implementation, ensuring the support and staff development was included to find capacity. This developmental phase would enable the framework to reflect the diversity of requirements across the College.

Action: Dean Pateman

10.8 The Committee recommended the framework be discussed at Faculty Teaching Committees or equivalent and feedback be provided to QAEC.

Action: All

11. Research Programme Handbook **QAEC.2013.72**

The Committee considered the guidelines for items to be included in Postgraduate Research programme handbooks.

11.1 The Committee recommended that the Doctoral propositions be included in the handbook and that the Guidelines be published to the website and provided to departments.

Post Meeting Note

The document was made available on the Quality Assurance & Enhancement webpages and departments were notified.

12. 'Our Principles' **QAEC.2013.73**

The Committee discussed revisions to 'Our Principles' for the academic year 2014/15.

12.1 The suggestion to change the name of the document from "Our Principles" to the Student Charter was rejected.

12.2 The Committee agreed that the term 'programme' be used consistently throughout the principles instead of the term 'course' and that the updated principles should be signed by the President & Rector and the Imperial College Union President in time for the new academic year. It was noted that the document would now go for Senate approval.

12.2 The Committee noted that 'Our Principles' are not widely recognised and that the College should be clear about the purpose of these principles and the way they are embedded in programme information.

13. QAA Consultation: The UK Frameworks for Higher Education (Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education) **QAEC.2013.74**

The Committee discussed the College's response to the QAA consultation on the UK Framework for Higher Education, part of Part A*: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards* of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

13.1 The Committee approved the draft response and agreed to submit this to the QAA.

Post Meeting Note

The College's response was submitted to the QAA on 11th June 2014.

14. Terms of Reference 2014-15 **QAEC.2013.75**

The Committee discussed the Terms of Reference for the academic year 2014-15.

14.1 The Committee approved the draft Terms of Reference and agreed to submit these to Senate for approval with effect from 2014-5.

15. Chair's Action

The Committee noted that no action had been taken.

16. Annual Report on the Distribution of Honours Degree Classifications **QAEC.2013.76**

The Committee noted the annual report on the Distribution of Honours Degree Classifications. It was noted that the report had now been received by Senate.

17. Annual Report from the Continuing Professional Development Committee **QAEC.2013.77**

The Committed noted the annual report from the Continuing Professional Development Committee.

18. Student Experience (Surveys) Audit **QAEC.2013.78**

The Committee noted the internal Student Experience (Surveys) audit findings.

18.1 Professor Humphris gave a verbal update on the work of the Student Surveys and Feedback Working Party. The Committee noted that there would be no significant changes to surveys in 2014-5. The Registry's Surveys Team would run the termly UG & PG SOLE lecturer/module surveys, the Student Bursary Survey, and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES). They would also run the Student Experience Survey on behalf of the ICU. The Student Barometer and the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) would not be run in 2014-5. The Surveys Working Party would undertake a more comprehensive review of surveys, to include analytic capability, feedback mechanisms and responsive and flexible enabling technology in time for the 2015-6 academic year.

19. QAA Subject Benchmark Statements.

The Committee noted that the QAA were currently consulting on the subject benchmark statements for "Earth Sciences, Environmental Sciences and Environmental Studies" and "Architectural Technology". Appropriate departments had been contacted by the QA Team and encouraged to make a response.

20. Any other Business

No other business was discussed.

21. Dates of meetings 2013-14

Tuesday 1 July 2014, 10:00-13:00, Ballroom, 58 Prince's Gate

21.1 Dates of meetings 2014-15

Tuesday 7 October 2014, 9:30-11:30, Boardroom, Faculty Building
Tuesday 11 November 2014, 10:00-12:00, Boardroom, Faculty Building
Thursday 22 January 2015, 10:00-12:00, Boardroom, Faculty Building
Tuesday 3 March 2015, 10:00-12:00, Boardroom, Faculty Building
Tuesday 28 April 2015, 10:00-12:00, Boardroom, Faculty Building
Tuesday 2 June 2015, 10:00-12:00, Boardroom, Faculty Building

Tuesday 14 July 2015, 10:00-12:00, Boardroom, Faculty Building

22. Reserved Area of Business

There were no items of reserved business.