

Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC)

Confirmed Minutes of the meeting held on
Thursday 22nd January 2015

Present:

Professor Debra Humphris, Vice Provost (Education) - Chair
Professor Peter Cheung, Vice Dean (Education), Faculty of Engineering
Professor Sue Gibson, Director of the Graduate School
Mr Pascal Loose, Imperial College Union Deputy President (Education)
Dr David McPhail, Deputy Director of the Graduate School
Professor Sue Smith, Chair of the Medical Studies Committee, Faculty of Medicine
Professor Alan Spivey, Director of Education, Faculty of Natural Sciences
Ms Sophie White, Senior Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance & Enhancement) - secretary
Professor Denis Wright, Director of Student Support

Apologies:

Ms Nida Mahmud, Graduate Students' Union President
Ms Diane Morgan, Associate Dean of Programmes, Business School
Mr Dean Pateman, Academic Registrar
Professor Richard Thompson, Senior College Consul

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 Committee approved the unconfirmed minutes from the Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee (QAEC) held on Tuesday 11 November 2014 and noted Committee Actions.

QAEC.2014.40

QAEC.2014.40a

3. Matters arising from the Minutes

- 3.1** Further to Minute 6 regarding the Short Courses Quality Committee (SCQC), the Committee noted the change in membership and that SCQC had been approved by Senate on 10 December 2015.
- 3.2** Further to Minute 8 regarding World Class Research Supervision Survey, it was noted that the survey would close at 5pm on 23rd January, and that the participation rate currently stood at around 30%.
- 3.3** Further to Minute 13.1 regarding NSS Action Plans 2014-5, Professor Debra Humphris reported that she had presented a paper on 3 year trends in survey data to Council on 21st November 2014. The paper had covered NSS, PTES and PRES. Council had agreed that the College's goal should be to be in the top quartile for all disciplines in NSS within two years.
- 3.4** Further to Action Log: April 14 – 9.5 Competency Standards, Professor Humphris requested an update from the Academic Registrar on progress to

address the Faculty's issues with competency standards guidance with the Disability Advisor Service at the next meeting. Professor Humphris also sought assurance that all programmes would have competency standard documents in place for no later than June 2015. Professor Alan Spivey confirmed that Faculty of Natural Sciences had standards in place, Professors Cheung and Smith agreed to check the situations in the Faculty of Engineering and the Faculty of Medicine respectively.

Action: Mr Dean Pateman, Professor Peter Cheung and Professor Sue Smith

4. Periodic Review Reports

4.1 Update following Periodic Review of Master's Programmes in the Department of Life Sciences (2012-3) QAEC.2014.41

The Committee considered an update the on progress made in respect of admissions to the MSc in Taxonomy and Biodiversity and collaborative student inclusion following consideration the Department's periodic review for 2012-3 in January 2014.

4.1 The Committee were satisfied the Department had addressed the concerns with admissions to the programme.

4.2 The Committee requested further information the effectiveness and the measures taken improve cohort building and inclusion for students based at the National History Museum (NHM). Additionally, the Committee requested information on the progress to improve the relationship between Imperial and NHM for the management of the programme.

Action: Dr Kleoniki Gounaris

5. Sharing Good Practice QAEC.2014.42

The Committee considered a paper on how further develop mechanisms to share good practice highlighted by periodic reviews and other mechanisms across the College.

5.1 The Committee noted the various forums for discussing and promoting good practice across the College (such as committees, Education Day, DUGS forums, etc.). Various examples were also cited where good practice has been disseminated through these channels (e.g. the training of student reps in the use of Panopto to support lecturers).

5.2 The Committee identified that there was potential to improve communication and co-ordination of good practice initiatives between the College and the Students' Union.

5.3 The Committee also identified that, whilst much as done at undergraduate level, there was potential to improve the dissemination of good practice at postgraduate level.

5.2 It was agreed that a paper should be produced for the next meeting which brought together details of all current activities. The paper would be circulated to all Faculties and the ICU to add their local activities. QAEC

would then consider where there were gaps and where and how improvements could be made.

Action: Ms Sophie White / Faculty & Student Reps

6. Appointment of External Examiners for the Centre for Co-Curricular Studies (2014-5) QAEC.2014.43

The Committee approved the appointment of an External Examiner for the Japanese courses delivered via the Centre for Co-Curricular Studies (2014-5).

6.1 It was noted that there were there were two outstanding reports for 2014-5 and it was agreed that these could be approved by Chair's Action.

6.2 It was noted reports for 2015-6 onwards would be considered by the new Short Course Quality Committee (SCQC).

6.3 The Committee asked what kind of induction external examiners had if they did not attend the induction day.

Post Meeting Note

All external examiners are reminded of the link to the [External Examiners' website](#) which includes all of the documents given to examiners attending the induction day.

7. Consultation on the Future of Quality Assessment Arrangements QAEC.2014.44

The Committee discussed formulating a College response to HEFCE's review of Quality Assessment Arrangements.

<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/news/newsarchive/2015/news99778.html>

7.1 The Faculty representatives were asked to circulate the discussion document to their departments and feedback any comments to Sophie White.

Action: Faculty Reps

7.2 It was noted that a draft response would be produced which would be considered by Senate on 25th February 2015, a day before the deadline for submission of a response to HEFCE.

8. QAA Consultations:

It was noted that the following consultations have a deadline of 23rd March 2016.

8.1 Qualifications Awarded by Two or More Degree Awarding Bodies QAEC.2014.45

The Committee considered a draft response to the QAA's consultation on the new document.

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/newsroom/consultations/consultation-on-four-qualification-characteristic-statements>

8.1.1 There were no changes suggested. The Faculty representatives were also asked to circulate the draft response to their departments and feedback any comments to Ms Sophie White.

Action: Faculty Reps

8.2 Master's Degree Characteristics and Doctoral Degree Characteristics QAEC.2014.46

The Committee considered a draft response to the QAA's consultation on updated and revised versions of the Masters and Doctoral Degree qualification statements.

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/newsroom/consultations/consultation-on-four-qualification-characteristic-statements>

8.2.1 There were no changes suggested. The Faculty representatives were also asked to circulate the draft response to their departments and feedback any comments to Ms Sophie White

Action: Faculty Reps

9. Surveys

9.1 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) 2014 Action Plans QAEC.2014.47

The Committee considered a summary of departmental action plans in response to the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) as discussed by the Master's Quality Committees.

9.1.1 It was noted that the missing departmental responses were being chased and would be considered by the Master's Quality Committees in March 2015.

9.2 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) 2014 ICU Response QAEC.2014.48

The Committee considered the ICU's response to PTES 2014.

<https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/news/better-experience-taught-postgraduates>

9.2.1 Mr Pascal Loose highlighted some of the main areas where improvement as needed as:

- Providing timetables in advance / early warning of timetable changes
- Sharing of good practice across the College
- Making marking schemes clear
- Providing better academic feedback
- Student workload and the volume of assessment
- Resources and services

9.2.2 The Committee agreed that the Faculties needed to encourage their departments to take a holistic view of assessment so that deadlines for assignments and examinations could be spread more evenly across the year.

9.2.1 It was noted that the response would be considered again at the QAEC June meeting to judge what progress had been made.

9.3 NSS 2014 – ICU Response QAEC.2014.49

The Committee considered the ICU's response to NSS 2014.

<https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/news/nss-response-2014>

9.3.1 Mr Pascal Loose explained that undergraduate had raised similar concerns in NSS to those of Master's students in PTES.

9.3.2 It was agreed that departments would find it beneficial if they could submit their departmental action plans later in the year after they had had the opportunity to discuss their results with their students and agree priorities in partnership with their students. Professor Humphris agreed to take this forward.

Action: Professor Debra Humphris

9.3.3 It was noted that the response would be considered again at the QAEC June meeting to judge what progress had been made.

10. Short Courses

10.1 Regulations

QAEC.2014.50

The Committee considered draft regulations for short courses, including summer schools.

10.1.1 The regulations were recommended for Senate approval, subject to a few minor arrangements.

10.2 Terms and Conditions

QAEC.2014.50a*

It was noted that standard terms and conditions for short courses, including summer schools, were being established and these would be considered at the next meeting.

Action: Mr Dean Pateman

11. Sitting Examinations Overseas for Undergraduate and Master's Level Students

QAEC.2014.51

The Committee considered revised guidance for students sitting examinations overseas. It was noted that the guidance did not cover exchange students which could sit their College examinations at their home institution under exam conditions if this had been agreed with the host department.

11.1 It was noted that the revised guidance was a rationalisation of three existing policies.

11.2 The guidelines were recommended for Senate approval, subject to a few minor arrangements.

12. Academic Standards Framework

Professor Humphris provided an update on the introduction of Academic Standards Framework for the College.

12.1 It was noted that Professor Humphris and Mr Dean Pateman, Academic Registrar, would be submitting a paper to the February Senate asking for Senate to endorse the establishment of a Task Force who would:

- 1) Develop and implement an Academic Standards Framework

- 2) Be responsible for the preparation of the College's QAA Higher Education Review currently scheduled for 2016-7

13. Chair's Action

It was noted Chair's Action was taken to approve Dr Shahrar Ali (Birkbeck) as external examiner for the Science & Humanism course within the Horizons programme in 2014-15.

14. Complaints and Appeals Review

Professor Humphris reported that Mr Pateman would be establishing a review of the College's complaints and appeals procedures to explore how we can both enhance the process and ensure greater transparency.

15. Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Updates

15.1 Publication of UK frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies

It was noted that the QAA had published an updated and revised version of the UK frameworks for higher education qualifications. These are the principal national reference points for academic standards in higher education and are formal components of Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code)

The document brings together the two frameworks:

- *The framework for higher education qualifications of degree-awarding bodies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)*
- *The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland (FHEQIS)*

into a single document, [*The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies*](#).

The frameworks for higher education qualifications of UK degree-awarding bodies provide important reference points for higher education providers, assisting them in setting and maintaining academic standards. They are central to the Expectation in *Chapter A1: The National Level* of the Quality Code that degree-awarding bodies use external UK and European reference points to secure threshold academic standards across the higher education sector.

The framework document will become a reference point for the purpose of reviews carried out by QAA from **August 2015**.

15.2 Higher Education Review: Themes for 2015-6 announced

QAEC.2014.52

It was noted that the QAA had announced their themes for the HER as: Employability and Digital Literacy.

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859>

15.2.1 It was noted, that if the themes were still in place by 2016-7, with the

agreement of the ICU, the College would opt for “employability”.

15.2.2 It was also noted that the QAA have published “Emerging Practice on Employability Findings from QAA Reviews 2010-14”

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/newsroom/emerging-practice-on-employability>

15.2.2 It was noted that this document provides an overview of emerging effective practice in relation to the engagement that takes place between higher education providers and employers, businesses and industry. The report is based upon an analysis of published reports arising from QAA reviews that have taken place since September 2010. It covers over 200 reports, supplemented by an analysis of a sample of providers' self-evaluation documents submitted in support of their QAA review.

15.3. Student Engagement Partnership

It was noted that a Student Engagement Partnership (TSEP) has been set up to support, develop and promote student engagement activity in the higher education sector in England. The unit is a central resource for practitioners and institutions, and coordinates the sharing of knowledge relating to student engagement at a national level. TSEP is housed and managed by the National Union of Students, with funding from HEFCE, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, GuildHE and the Association of Colleges.

See: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/news/newsarchive/2014/news96466.html>

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

17. Dates of meetings 2014-15

3 March 2015, 10:00, Boardroom, Faculty Building – papers by 16 Feb 2015

28 April 2015, 10:00, Boardroom, Faculty Building – papers by 13 Apr 2015

2 June 2015, 10:00, Boardroom, Faculty Building – papers by 18 May 2015

14 July 2015, 10:00, Boardroom, Faculty Building – papers by 29 Jun 2015

17.1 It was noted that an extra, possibly early evening, meeting would be arranged before April to focus on student experience and student raised concerns.

18. RESERVED AREA OF BUSINESS

There were no items of reserved business.