Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC)
Minutes from the meeting held on
Wednesday 26 April 2023

Present
David Ashton, Academic Registrar – Chair
Dr Clemens Brechtelsbauer, Chair of Programmes Committee
Dr Lorraine Craig, Faculty of Engineering representative
Prof Richard Green, Business School representative
Laura Lane, Head of Strategy and Operations, Graduate School
Prof Jonathan Mestel, Senior College Consul
Prof Jason Riley, Faculty of Engineering representative
Claire Stapley, CLCC/CHERS representative
Dr Mike Tennant, Faculty of Natural Sciences representative
Karen Tweddle, Business School representative
Dr Jeffrey Vernon, Faculty of Medicine representative
Judith Webster, Head of Academic Services
Jason Zheng, ICU Deputy President (Education)
Scott Tucker, Deputy Director (Academic Quality and Standards) – Secretary

Apologies
Shangyi Liu, ICU PGT Representation Chair
Martin Lupton, Faculty of Medicine representative
Rebecca Middleton, Faculty of Natural Sciences representative
Chengning Yao, ICU PGR Representation Chair

1.   Welcome, apologies and announcements

1.1   The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting. Apologies for absence were noted.

2.   Minutes of the previous meeting and terms of reference

2.1   The Committee confirmed the minutes of 15 March 2023 as an accurate record.   QAEC.2022.46

3.   Matters arising from the minutes

3.1   No matters arising.

4.   Update on QAEC actions

4.1   The Committee noted the updated action list.   QAEC.2022.47

5.   College Postgraduate Taught External Examiner Report Summary

5.1   The Committee considered the College PGT External Examiner Report Summary 2021-22   QAEC.2022.48

5.2   The Committee noted the following issues raised in the report:
- Instances of late external examiner appointments
- Poor communication of programme schedule information and Board of Examiners arrangements
- Technical difficulties experienced by externals in accessing relevant platforms and assessments for sampling
- Instances where externals did not receive Department responses to feedback when examination setting was taking place
- A high assessment load on students and pockets where plagiarism was more prevalent than others
- Instances where a narrow band of results existed and challenges interpreting how some marks were derived

5.3   The Committee noted the following commendations raised in the report:
- Balanced programme content in relation to the coverage within the curriculum and the stated learning outcomes
- That curriculum review had produced improved programmes
- That assessment strategies were fit for purpose and encouraged the continued use of a range of assessment methods

5.4   The Committee noted the following confidence statements, which were overwhelmingly positive:
- 100% agreed that "The degree awarding body was maintaining the threshold academic standards set for its awards in accordance with the FHEQ and relevant Subject Benchmarks Statements."
- 99% agreed that "The assessment process measured student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended learning outcomes of the programme and was conducted in line with the College's policies and regulations."
- 99% agreed that "The academic standards and the achievements of students were comparable with those in other degree awarding bodies of which you have experience."

5.5   It was agreed that the College should continue to strive to ensure that externals were appointed in good time. The Vice Provost (Education and Student Experience) recommended pre-meeting that the external examiner appointment form should be reviewed. This would be undertaken with the review of the external examiner report template, which was an existing QAEC action.

Action: Secretary

5.6 In response to issues raised with examination setting, it was reported that the Faculty of Medicine allocates an Assessment Lead, who stipulates what was expected from module teams in drafting, marking, moderating, and consulting with the externals. It was also noted that externals are invited to induction days where their roles are clarified.

5.7 In response to issues of plagiarism, the Committee discussed the existing training provision. The College offers plagiarism training for all students. The Graduate School delivers compulsory training for PGT students, although there was insufficient capacity to monitor completion across College and a systems solution would be required. The Business School reported that student marks are withheld until students complete the compulsory training in the Spring Term. It was also reported that the pass rate for the plagiarism course at 75% might be too low.

5.8 In response to challenges interpreting how some marks were arrived at, the ICU Deputy President (Education) reported anecdotal evidence that the same challenges were experienced by some students. Some members of the Committee felt that the 0-100 scale was too granular and that categorical marking with broader bands was more appropriate for certain assessments.

5.9 Overall, it was felt that the College UG external examiner report summary considered at the previous meeting contained more positives than the PGT report. It was agreed that many of the issues raised should be dealt with at department or Faculty level through annual monitoring or other appropriate process.

6. Procedure for Appointment of Examiners for Research Degrees

6.1 The Committee considered the updated Procedure for Appointment of Examiners for Research Degrees (MPhil, PhD, MD(Res), EngD). The updated procedure had been recommended by PRQC (via Chair's Action) with the following updates:
  QAEC.2022.49
  - References to 'MyImperial'
  - Further guidance on examiner nomination approval and the consideration of conflicts of interest

6.2 The following feedback was received by members, and the Vice Provost (Education and Students Experience) pre-meeting:
  - Point 4 - That the role of the internal examiner was framed as custodian of the College regulations only, and as such the criteria set out in Point 4 was currently misaligned (e.g. examining at another university would not help act as custodian of the College regulations). Point 4 to be reframed to make it clear that the internal examiner's role goes beyond this, as set out in Point 3 ('the examiners should be experts in the field of the thesis, so that the content of the thesis is covered by a combination of the expertise of the examiners').
  - Further clarity was required over probation arrangements for lecturers and senior lecturers as the document currently alludes to differences that might not exist in practice.

- Remove the sentence from Point 5 'if the internal examiner does not have experience of examining at the College, it would normally be expected that the external examiner would have this experience' as this was not deemed appropriate.
- Make clear that the appointment criteria in Point 7 and Point 15 relate to internals and externals, respectively.
- Point 13 states that 'all cases where a department wishes to appoint more than two examiners for a particular candidate shall be referred by the Registry to the Graduate School Director or Deputy Director(s) for approval' – provide clarity as to whether there are any exceptions.

6.3   The Committee agreed that the Procedure for Appointment of Examiners for Research Degrees (MPhil, PhD, MD(Res), EngD) was updated and recirculated to the Committee for final approval.

Action: Secretary

7.   Sub-Committees

7.1   Regulations and Policy Review Committee   QAEC.2022.50

7.1.1   The Committee considered reports from the RPRC meetings held on 22 February 2023 and 29 March 2023

(i) The Committee approved the following programme regulation exemption request:

MBBS programme
To permit students to provisionally progress from year 5 to year 6 with outstanding assessment components that can be re-sat within 8 weeks of commencement of year 6.

When the Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study were developed, the College agreed that students must pass all modules to continue to the next academic year of study. It was noted that the 'trailing' of credit was being revisited at RPRC as part of a wider discussion on progression outcomes.

(ii) The Committee received updates on the following items for information:
- Reassessment opportunities and practice
- Academic Calendar development
- Programme regulation exemption requests for MBBS, Cumbria School of Medicine.
- Reassessment opportunities and practice
- Examination instructions to students & Invigilator guidance

7.2   Programmes Committee   QAEC.2022.51

7.2.1   The Committee considered a report from the Programmes Committee meeting held on 21 March 2023.

(i) The Committee approved all major modifications presented and the following curriculum review proposals:

PC.2022.38 Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering
- MSc Concrete Structures (H2A2, H2A224, H2A236)
- MSc Earthquake Engineering (H2A3, H2A324, H2A336)
- MSc General Structural Engineering (H2A1, H2A124, H2A136)
- MSc Structural Steel Design (H2U5, H2U524, H2U536)

PC.2022.39 Department of Earth Science and Engineering
- MSc Metals an Energy Finance (J9U8)

PC.2022.40 Department of Surgery and Cancer
- MSc Digital Health Leadership (A3DHM)
- PG Diploma Digital Health Leadership (A3DHD)
- PG Certificate Digital Health Leadership (A3DHC)

PC.2022.41 Imperial College Business School
- MSc Climate Change, Management and Finance (N304)

7.2.2   Report from the Programmes Committee meeting held (by correspondence) on 28 March 2023   QAEC.2022.52

(i) The Committee approved all major modifications presented.

(ii) The Chair of Programmes Committee thanked members and the PC Secretary for all their work as the College progressed through curriculum review.

(iii) It was noted that work was being undertaken by Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions to provide further support to Departments during new programme development. It was agreed that business decisions and academic decisions would remain independent and that duplication in documentation would be avoided.

8.   Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) 2023

8.1   The Committee noted the survey window and options for PRES 2023.   QAEC.2022.53

8.1.1   The following survey window was confirmed:
- Opening Date: 24 April 2023
- Closing Date: 15 May 2023

It was noted that the College's PRES 2023 opening date was earlier than in previous years as AdvanceHE had moved the latest date by which an institution could launch forward, to allow for a timelier distribution of results. Results would now be disseminated by the end of July.

8.1.2   It was confirmed that, in line with PRES 2021, the College would ask the approved institutional questions relating to student welfare:
1. I am comfortable about discussing my wellbeing issues with my supervisor
2. My research group is an inclusive and supportive community
3. I am happy with my work-life balance
4. I feel motivated to do my research project
5. I feel confident I can receive relevant support from the College, or my department

8.1.3   It was noted that the survey provides valuable data that is used widely, including for PGR periodic review, and the College action plan is used by the Graduate School and ICU.

8.1.4   It was confirmed that the QA Team would coordinate the completion of Department PRES action plans. Further discussion would take place around drafting the College level PRES summary.

Action: Judith Webster, Laura Lane

9.   Chair's Business

9.1   List of Chair's actions taken since the previous meeting   QAEC.2022.54

9.1.1   The Committee ratified special cases and suspensions to regulations, approved by the Chair.

9.2   The Committee received a verbal update from Chair on relevant developments

9.2.1   Review of Casework procedures

Following the review of the College's student disciplinary procedures, it was noted that the Committee would oversee the review of casework procedures, as directed by the Provost.

10.   Any Other Business

10.1   No other business reported.

11.   Dates of QAEC Meetings 2022-23

11.1   To note: Dates of remaining QAEC meetings to be held in 2022-23:
- 7 June 2023 (10:05-12:00) (reporting to Senate on 28 June 2023)