

## Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC)

Minutes from the meeting held on  
Wednesday 20 January 2021

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### Present

David Ashton, Academic Registrar – Chair  
Dr Clemens Brechtelsbauer, Chair of Programmes Committee  
Dr Lorraine Craig, Faculty of Engineering representative  
Michaela Flegrova, ICU Deputy President (Education)  
Professor Richard Green, Business School representative  
Laura Lane, Head of Strategy and Operations, Graduate School  
Martin Lupton, Faculty of Medicine representative  
Rebecca Middleton, Faculty of Natural Sciences representative  
Professor Peter Openshaw, Senior Consul  
Claire Stapley, CLCC/CHERS representative  
Zixiau Wang, GSU President  
Judith Webster, Director of Academic Quality and Standards  
Scott Tucker, Deputy Director (Academic Quality and Standards) – Secretary

### In Attendance

Leila Guerra, Vice Dean (Education), Business School  
Professor Omar Matar, Vice Dean (Education), Faculty of Engineering  
Professor Emma McCoy, Vice Provost (Education and Student Experience)  
Professor Richard Thompson, Vice Dean (Education), Faculty of Natural Sciences

### 1. Welcome, apologies and announcements

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting, noting that all members of the Committee were present.

### 2. Minutes of the previous meeting

QAEC.2020.39

- 2.1 The Committee confirmed the minutes of 18 November 2020 as an accurate record but recommended that further information is provided under Item 7 (Student Surveys) for student satisfaction against lecturer-based questions for Summer SOLE 2020.

### 3. Matters arising from the minutes

#### 3.1 *Programme and Module Modifications (6.2 refers)*

To ensure a proportionate approach to managing in-session temporary modifications as a result of Covid-19, the Committee agreed to continue using the same approval method as in 2019-20. It was agreed that in-session temporary minor and major modifications that

Departments wish to be made as a result of Covid-19 must be confirmed to the Quality Assurance Team by 1 March 2021.

*Post meeting note*

*The deadline for communicating approved modifications was extended to 31 March 2021 to allow Departments further time to consider in-session modifications. The deadline and supporting guidance will be communicated to Departments by the QA Team.*

**Action: Secretary**

**3.2** *Using Report and Support to identify cases of poor supervision (9.1.1 refers)*

QAEC.2020.40

At the last meeting of QAEC, members agreed that further consultation was needed on the development of the 'report and support' tool as a means for students to report cases of poor supervision. This view was supported by Central Secretariat. As a result, work to develop this tool was on hold and the College would await the outcome of PRES 2021 to see what the survey results revealed about supervision. The Committee reiterated that the College placed high importance on monitoring and evaluating supervision.

**3.3** *SOLE Data Requirements (Item 7.3 refers)*

At the last meeting of QAEC, members agreed that further exploration should be carried out to ascertain whether there was a technical solution to use Banner data for the departmental data return for Spring and Summer SOLE 2021. It was highlighted that Banner could report on many of the required SOLE fields but, whilst SOLE remained both a module and lecturer evaluation survey, Banner did not capture the required staff data for each module. The QA Team was in discussion with ICT to establish the feasibility of using Banner data for Spring and Summer SOLE 2021.

**3.4** *Autumn SOLE (UG and PG)*

The Secretary provided an update on Autumn SOLE 2020. The following points were noted:

- Autumn SOLE opened on 3 December 2020 (the School of Public Health did not participate in this year's PG SOLE)
- By student request and due to low participation rates, QAEC agreed to extend the survey completion deadline for Autumn SOLE until 11 January 2021 (UG) and 12 January 2021 (PG)
- Departmental survey comments were currently being reviewed by HoDs/DUGs/DPSs, before results were to be distributed to Departments on 26 January 2021
- Final response rates: UG overall 36% (-2% on 2019), PG overall 40% (+8% on 2019)
- Highest response rates (UG): Earth Science (69%), Chemical Engineering (65%), Life Sciences (40%)
- Highest response rates (PG): Chemical Engineering (84%), EEE (64%), Civil Engineering / SEF (57%)

- 4. Review of Committee actions** QAEC.2020.41
- 4.1** The Committee received the action list, noting that progress against each action had been reviewed and updated since the previous meeting.
- 5. Creation of Academic Centres and Programme ‘Ownership’** QAEC.2020.42
- 5.1** The Committee received a proposal to facilitate the creation of academic centres.
- 5.1.1** The College registered students against an academic department and modules were coded against departments. Academic departments were also used within the admissions system to collate applications, with some exceptions. In the Faculty of Engineering, a number of Global Challenge Institutes existed, but were not considered ‘departments’ by the College. As a result, student and programmes were allocated a department for quality assurance, administrative and systems purposes. The Faculty of Engineering reported that this structure was restrictive and could be confusing for students and staff working in departments when operating activities concerned with the Global Challenge Institutes.
- 5.1.2** It was proposed that Faculties could request Global Challenge Institutes to be recognised as academic centres (which for the purposes of the student records and admissions systems would be created as an academic department), subject to meeting certain requirements. This would allow institutes to:
- Be the registration ‘home’ of students
  - Have a unique module subject code
  - Appear as a separate entity on department level reporting
- 5.1.3** The Committee recognised that there were significant implications to the proposal covering areas of governance, finance and resources. It was agreed that a full consultation was required to ensure that Faculty and School specific issues across College could be considered.
- 5.1.4** Further comments were noted as follows:
- CDTs, which could sit across multiple departments (but only ‘owned’ by a single department), should also be considered in the wider consultation
  - Differences between ‘centres’ and ‘institutes’ (the latter often having a different identity to the department), must be recognised
  - Under existing College policy, PGR students were assigned to the department of their primary supervisor
  - Making changes in the College’s systems (including timeframes and cohorts) would be subject to further discussion with Student Administration teams (Curriculum Data, Student Records and External Returns). Making such changes had significant Registry resource implications
  - In the Faculty of Medicine, there would be significant resource implications should an institute become an academic centre in its own right.

- 5.1.5** The Committee thanked Dr Phil Power, Head of Education and Student Experience Strategy (Faculty of Engineering), for drafting the paper, which put forward important points for further College consideration. It was reported that the Faculty of Engineering had in place effective mitigation in place to address the current issues but welcomed a resolution.

The Committee agreed that, due to the significant resourcing implications, a full consultation was required to ensure that Faculty and School specific issues across College could be considered, before approval was considered by Provost's Board, and that there would be further discussions on this between the Chair and the Interim Vice Provost (Education and Student Experience)

**Action: Chair, Secretary**

**6. Postgraduate Research Experience Survey** QAEC.2020.43

**6.1** The Committee agreed to the proposed survey opening and closing dates as follows:

- Opening date: Thursday 22 April 2021
- Closing date: Monday 17 May 2021

These dates fell in line with previous years and were agreed based on the following rationale:

- A concentrated survey window allowed for focused advertising and communications
- Most survey responses happened towards the survey deadline
- The later window would capture more students who were further along in their research programme
- A similarly shortened survey window was used for PRES and PTES in previous years.

**6.2** The Committee noted that Advance HE consulted with institutions on how best to capture student feedback in response to changes made as a result of the pandemic. Following sector feedback, a number of changes had been made to the survey including the addition of a new optional Covid-19 section.

**6.3** The Postgraduate Research Quality Committee (PRQC) would consider the inclusion of the optional Covid-19 related questions as well as any specific College questions. The outcome of PRQC discussions would be presented to QAEC via the PRQC Report.

**7. External Examiners** QAEC.2020.44

**7.1** The Committee considered the Undergraduate External Examiner Report 2019-20. It was noted that postgraduate taught provision would be reported on later in the academic year, due to the timing of Board of Examiners for these programmes.

**7.2** The report was based on 92 external examiner reports which had been received. The academic year to which the report related saw the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The

Committee noted that most externals, where they made specific reference to the College's response to the pandemic, were very supportive of the measures that had been put in place, including timed-remote assessments.

**7.3** The Committee noted the following:

- 100% of externals considered that the core/compulsory modules in the programmes delivered the stated learning outcomes and that the programme design was aligned with relevant subject benchmark statements
- 99% agreed that "The degree awarding body is maintaining the threshold academic standards set for its awards in accordance with the FHEQ and relevant Subject Benchmarks Statements."
- 96% agreed that "The assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended learning outcomes of the programme and is conducted in line with the College's policies and regulations."
- 98% agreed that "The academic standards and the achievements of students are comparable with those in other degree awarding bodies of which you have experience."

**7.4** It was planned to undertake a more detailed analysis of the external examiner comments on assessment and look at these alongside the Imperial College Union's recommendations following the 2020 National Student Survey, which included a recommendation to develop and implement a policy on marking transparency in departments.

**Action: Director of Academic Quality and Standards, Secretary**

**8. Graduate Teaching Assistant Framework**

QAEC.2020.45

**8.1** The Committee approved minor changes to the College's GTA Framework and GTA Roles and Responsibilities document which had been reviewed, in light of changes to the status of EU students, as a result of Brexit, by the Head of International Student Support and HR Compliance.

**9. Regulating Quality and Standards Consultation**

**9.1** The Committee received an update on the OfS consultation on regulating quality and standards. The OfS deadline had been extended from 12th to 25th January 2021. The Director of Academic Quality and Standards was coordinating a College response, liaising with colleagues as appropriate. It was noted that Strategic Planning had made a significant contribution to the College's draft response.

**10. Revised Higher Education Credit Framework Consultation**

QAEC.2020.46

**10.1** The Committee noted the QAA Consultation questions relating to a Revised Higher Education Credit Framework for England. It was noted that the consultation closed on 8 February 2021.

- 11 Requests for Additional Consideration (Mitigating Circumstances)** QAEC.2020.47
- 11.1** The Committee noted the publication of a new section of the OIA Good Practice Framework – Requests for additional consideration (Mitigating Circumstances)
- The Regulations and Policy Review Committee (RPRC) would be reviewing the published section to benchmark the College’s current procedures against the considered best practice. It was noted that, on preliminary review, the College’s Mitigating Circumstances procedure was broadly in line with the guidance provided though there were some differences. RPRC would consider these differences and make recommendations to a subsequent QAEC actions/ changes that the College might consider taking.
- 12. College Covid-19 Update** QAEC.2020.48
- 12.1** The Committee received an update on the College’s Covid-19 response, noting the following key sections of the report:
- Outbreak Planning Scenarios and Managing Teaching Spaces teaching had been affected.
  - Supporting Self-Isolating Students
  - Impact of National Lockdown and End of Term Arrangements
  - Student Support Over the Christmas Vacation
  - Start of Spring Term Arrangements
  - Assessment
  - Admissions
  - Student Experience
  - Financial Support
  - International Student Support
  - Timetabling
  - Covid-19 Dashboards
  - Postgraduate Application Fee Survey
  - Student Discipline
- 12.2** In addition, the Committee noted that in light of the recent government announcements set out in the Minister of State for Universities’ letter sent on the 31 December 2020, and the Prime Minister’s statement regarding the lockdown, the Provost approved a request for an exemption to be made for the delivery of in-person lab-based teaching of some Bioengineering programmes.
- 13. Programmes Committee** QAEC.2020.49
- 13.1** The Committee received the full report on the Programmes Committee meeting held on 3 November 2020. The report provided further information to the summary that was approved at the last meeting.

**14. Any other business**

**14.1 Erasmus**

The Committee noted that an update on Erasmus, Swiss-European Mobility Programme and the Turing Scheme would be provided at the next meeting.

**14. Dates of Meetings 2020-21**

The Committee noted the dates of QAEC meetings to be held in 2020-21 (all 10:10-12:00):

- Wednesday 24 February 2021
- Wednesday 28 April 2021
- Wednesday 26 May 2021