Imperial College London

Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC)
Confirmed Minutes from the meeting held on
Tuesday 16th January 2018

Present

David Ashton, Academic Registrar – Chair
Nicholas Burstow, ICU Deputy President (Education)
Dr Lorraine Craig, Faculty of Engineering representative
Dr Anita Hall, Faculty of Natural Sciences representative
Professor Peter Lindstedt, Senior College Consul
Luke McCrone, GSU President
Dr Edgar Meyer, Chair of Programmes Committee
Claire Stapley, School of Professional Development representative
Scott Tucker, Assistant Registrar (Monitoring and Review)
Karen Tweddle, Business School representative
Kirstie Ward, Assistant Registrar (Academic Standards)
Judith Webster, Head of Academic Services
Lucy Heming, Senior Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance and Enhancement) - Secretary

Apologies
Mr Martin Lupton, Faculty of Medicine Representative
Professor Anthony Magee, Deputy Director of the Graduate School
Veronica Russell, Business School representative

1. Welcome, Apologies and Announcements

1.1 The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and apologies, as listed above, were noted. The Chair welcomed the new Secretary to the Committee, Lucy Heming, who had recently taken on the role of Senior Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance and Enhancement). The Chair also welcomed the new Assistant Registrar (Academic Standards), Kirstie Ward, who was observing the meeting.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting   QAEC.2017.40

2.1 The Committee approved the unconfirmed minutes from the Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee (QAEC) held on Tuesday 7th November 2017 subject to two minor amendments:
Minute 10.2 to be amended to refer to the broader Erasmus+ programme rather than the specific Erasmus Mundus strand.

Minute 11.1.1 to be amended to note the new programme MSc Business Analytics was a part-time online version of the existing onsite full-time programme. **ACTION: Secretary**

2.2 The Committee noted the Committee Actions.

3. **Matters arising from the Minutes** QAEC.2017.40a

3.1 The Committee noted that the actions set out in the action log were either ongoing or items on the agenda.

4. **Undergraduate Annual Monitoring 2016-17** QAEC.2017.41

4.1 *Introduction*

4.1.1 The Committee considered the Faculty annual monitoring reports for undergraduate provision in order to identify themes, good practice and College-level recommendations.

4.1.2 It was noted that this was the first year of operation of the new process. One key change was that those faculties which produced only one undergraduate report, had not been required to do a separate undergraduate summary. A review of how this had worked in practice would be undertaken and Committee members were encouraged to provide feedback on the process.

4.2 *Engineering*

4.2.1 A summary of key themes in the report from the Faculty of Engineering was received. The key issue raised was space and it was noted that the existing problems could be exacerbated as changes were introduced to pedagogic delivery methods. It was confirmed that the Faculty was already engaged in discussion with the space project team about making better use of existing space.

4.2.2 Engineering was exploring the possibility of extending the use of cross-departmental modules, drawing on existing schemes such as 'flexible Fridays' but increasing flexibility particularly for years three and four of undergraduate programmes. It was noted that timetabling and space could constrain the extent to which cross-departmental options could be offered.
The Faculty made good use of graduate (GTA) and undergraduate (UTA) teaching assistants. The use of fourth year undergraduates was welcomed by other students and kept the UTAs more engaged in their studies. The Faculty was looking to address issues around the payment of UTAs and was trialling different methods for training them.

4.2.3 Students had responded positively to a move by departments to use more positive language around teaching and promoting the positive aspects of the

teaching and learning experience. It was agreed that information on the training of UTAs would be shared with other faculties.

ACTION: Faculty of Engineering representative

4.3   *Medicine*

4.3.1   A summary of key themes in the report from the Faculty of Medicine was received. Space was the primary issue raised. The Faculty was looking to improve response rates to SOLE, as it was proving difficult to respond appropriately given the limited amount of data received due to the small numbers participating.

4.3.2   A key focus for the Faculty going forwards was on engaging with the curriculum review processes and exploring changes to learning and teaching methods.

4.3.3   A minor correction to the report was recommended to clarify that the SOLE working group referred to in the report was led by the College, not students or the Imperial College Union.

4.4   *Natural Sciences*

4.4.1   A summary of key themes in the report from the Faculty of Natural Sciences was received. The main issues raised were: space; building up the student community across UG and PGT provision; extending opportunities for the sharing of good practice; improving relations between students and senior staff; and improving the clarity and visibility of information to students on where and how to access support.

4.5   *Business School*

4.5.1   A summary of key themes in the report from the Business School was received. Space was also raised as an issue as it was noted that, while the School had the capacity to teach additional students, it did not have the space to examine them. The School had been trialling different options for space, including using the Science Museum but there were concerns over cost and the set-up of the rooms. The School had also been working with an external provider and the College to trial use of an online examination tool, which would be piloted later this year.

4.5.2   New incentives had been introduced to boost response rates for SOLE. This involved rewarding groups of students achieving 70% or more participation rates with additional money for their social funds. This was specifically designed to boost response rates on larger programmes and initial results were promising.

4.5.3   Concerns had been raised over poor attendance on BPES. Strategies to address student engagement were more successful with online studies, where it could be more systematically tracked and individual interventions

could be used. Although BPES took place in free slots, it was thought that clashes still occurred for students with project and lab work commitments and as sessions were available via Panopto, it may be that students were choosing to catch up online rather than attending the classes.

4.5.4 It was noted that improvements had been made to the process by which transfers to Joint honours programmes were administered.

4.5.5 The School was looking at issues around the bunching of assessment deadlines and the knock on impact on feedback deadlines.

4.6 *School of Professional Development*

4.6.1 The main issue raised in the report from the School of Professional Development was space as this was the main source of negative feedback from students in SOLE who were otherwise very positive about the provision. The issue of space included managing time-tabling and ensuring space was fit for purpose. The Horizons provision was particularly affected as it was not included in the initial round of space allocation and was reliant on other areas providing space once their own requests had been addressed.

4.7 *Discussion*

4.7.1 The Committee noted that across the reports, plans to address a number of issues identified were already in train but had not yet resolved. For example, the use of Queen's Tower Rooms as examination space was being piloted but feedback was not yet available to confirm whether this had been a success and could be repeated in the summer. It was noted that all colleagues needed to engage with the space sharing project and that this would require a shift in approach to the use of departmental space and the possibility of operating multiple exams in the same site. Members noted that the issue was not just the allocation of space but developing a baseline for what should be included as standard in all teaching spaces, facilitating access for students (both in terms of addressing specific physical access requirements and minimising difficulties with electronic access to physical spaces) and ensuring room readiness, which was not just about having appropriate resources in place but ensuring that the resources worked.

4.7.2 The Committee noted the trend in some cases for falling attendance rates among students and a greater use of online resources instead. Curriculum Review would be an important process for looking at how to make onsite teaching sessions as valuable as possible to keep students engaged. Curriculum Review should also facilitate consideration of the full range of provision on offer within and across departments and faculties and how best to provide meaningful and accessible opportunities for students to engage in content-specific and transferable learning.

4.7.3 It was suggested that a check was made to ensure that the statistics on utilisation of space did not include Wednesday afternoons, as there was a commitment not to teach then, and this might skew the data.

4.7.4 A number of reports had raised issues about the data used for monitoring purposes. It was anticipated that the roll out of the new student records system would address some of these queries. In the meantime, the Assistant Registrar (Monitoring and Review) would be meeting with those raising concerns to talk through current and future plans for data usage.

4.7.5 The next step would be for a report to be prepared for Senate summarising the key themes, taking into account the Committee's comments.

ACTION: Assistant Registrar (Monitoring and Review)

5. **Outcomes from Complaints and Appeals Task and Finish Group** QAEC.2017.42

5.1 The Committee considered the draft procedures for Student Complaints, Academic Appeals, Mitigating Circumstances and Academic Misconduct. These were the output from the Complaints and Appeals Task and Finish Group which met in 2016/17, chaired by Professor John Seddon and with representatives from all Faculties and the Students' Union. It noted that there had been Faculty representation on this group and a lot of work had been undertaken to produce this set of draft procedures.

5.2 The changes to these procedures recognised the changing external environment in which the College operated, with students being considered as consumers The Group worked hard to align these procedures with the Office of the Independent Adjudicators Good Practice Framework and had reviewed procedures from comparable institutions. The OIA had visited the College in December 2017 and had endorsed the intention to make the procedures more clear and accessible. It had recommended embedding elements of the new procedures earlier if possible, where it was to students' advantage. The Committee's discussion was focussed on the overarching principles of the procedures and not on the relationship between these new procedures and current departmental practices.

5.3 The Complaints and Appeals processes had been streamlined down to three stages. The first stage was informal, with students raising an issue with the relevant party where appropriate; for appeals, this might involve a conversation seeking further feedback on the mark or requesting an administrative check of the mark. Stage two was a formal investigation phase; where possible, this would be based on documentation rather than reliant on interviews. Stage three introduced a review process; this followed the guidance in the Good Practice Framework. On completion of the three stages, students would be issued with a Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter. Students whose cases were found to have no grounds and therefore were not

considered eligible for consideration under these processes could be issued with a CoP earlier on in the process. It was noted the wording around administrative mark checks needed to be checked for consistency in the appeals procedure.

ACTION: Head of Academic Services

5.4 The primary changes to the Mitigating Circumstances (MC) policy were to facilitate the consideration of all cases by the same people so as to ensure parity of treatment. This would be carried out through the use of Faculty or Departmental Boards and would mean that claims which previously would have been considered out of time and routed through the appeals process now would be referred back to the MC process. The intention was to run these Boards regularly for quick turnaround times on the decisions and to raise awareness among students of the importance of raising their claims at the time of the incident, so as to reduce the number of late claims. This would also require building an open culture so that students felt supported in raising difficult issues, such as mental health difficulties, as soon as possible in the process.

5.5 It was noted that there might be some debate about whether to consider mitigating circumstances claims at departmental or faculty level. However, it was emphasised that if the boards were held at departmental level, it would be good practice to have some level of faculty oversight to ensure parity in decision-making.

5.6 The procedure for handling academic misconduct cases was largely unchanged but further clarification had been provided on the nature of academic misconduct, the timelines involved and the range of appropriate penalties which could be used. As an example, a case of self-plagiarism would no longer automatically be considered major misconduct. The procedures retained the principle of contextualising cases according to the specific circumstances of a particular case. Staff would be reminded that it was good practice to raise awareness around good academic practice at every assessment point. The Committee reaffirmed that academic judgement would be used when making decisions on academic misconduct. It was noted that a minor amendment was needed in point 46, to clarify that students could be supported at hearings by representatives from Imperial College Union.

ACTION: Head of Academic Services

5.7 It was noted that a couple of additional changes were being proposed to the new Student Discipline Procedure, following its recent approval by Senate.

5.8 The Committee noted the importance of embedding these procedures alongside other related processes and support services, such as Fitness to Practice and support for students with ongoing medical conditions.

5.9   The re-introduction of an annual report on themes and trends arising from these procedures was welcomed by the Committee and it was anticipated this could be a valuable training resource for departments.

5.10   Clear communications about the changes to the process would be provided and the central Quality team would triage cases which came through the appeals process to ensure students were referred to the correct process and to the support services available. There had been some recent changes in staffing in the Quality team to ensure it was equipped to take on the requirements of these new procedures. The Quality team would carry out training for key staff, such as Panel members, to ensure that all the new procedures were rolled out smoothly and consistently.

5.11   The next step was for the Quality team to produce flow charts to accompany the new procedures and then to circulate them to Faculty Education Committees (FECs), the Imperial College Union and Consuls, noting the representation on the group chaired by Professor John Seddon as well as the detailed work undertaken. It was expected that an additional meeting of the Committee would be arranged for March 2018 to consider the feedback on the procedures prior to final approval, with full implementation in academic year 2018-19. Further work would take place with the Graduate School to ensure the procedures would cover postgraduate research students. In addition, the Quality team would work on developing administrative protocols to assist in the running of the new procedures. A review would be held after the first year of operation to confirm how the procedures were working.

ACTION: Head of Academic Services

6.   Periodic Review   QAEC.2017.43

6.1   The Committee considered and approved the proposal to extend the suspension of periodic review for taught programmes for 2018-19. This was due to the ongoing work on Curriculum Review which will extend into the 2018-19 academic year and will cover a number of the themes within the scope of periodic review. It was important that the student voice was still an important part of the College's quality processes while periodic review was suspended. It was reiterated that this was a key aspect of the annual monitoring process and of staff-student liaison committees.

6.2   Periodic Reviews and Precept Reviews for postgraduate research provision would continue throughout this period.

6.3   The Committee noted that further consideration as to the role of periodic review in 2019/20 and beyond would be welcomed. Changes in the external context, such as the introduction of the subject level Teaching Excellence

Framework (TEF) and changes to the Quality Code, would need to be considered. The date of its resumption would also depend on progress with Curriculum Review.

7.   Programmes Committee (PC)   QAEC.2017.44

7.1   The Committee considered the latest report from the Programmes Committee from the meeting held on 19th December 2017.

7.1.1   The following new programmes were approved:
- MRes Advanced Molecular Synthesis (Department of Chemistry), with effect from October 2018

7.1.2   Modifications to the following programmes were approved:
- MSc Paediatrics and Child Health (Department of Medicine), with effect from October 2018
- MSc Genomic Medicine (National Heart and Lung Institution), with effect from October 2018
- MSc Human Molecular Genetics (Department of Medicine), with effect from September 2018
- MSc Climate Change, Management and Finance (Business School), with effect from September 2018
- MSc Finance Suite (Business School), with effect from September 2018
- MSci Physics with a Year in Europe, with effect from October 2018
- MSc Mathematics with a Year in Europe, with effect from October 2018

7.1.3   The following programmes were withdrawn with immediate effect
- MRes Stochastic Analysis and Mathematical Finance
- MEng Chemical Engineering

7.1.4   The following programmes were suspended with immediate effect
- MSci Geology and Geophysics (suspended for 3 years)
- MSc Sustainable Retirement (suspended for 1 year)

7.2   It was noted that the full Programmes Committee minutes/papers can be found at: ..\..\..\..\..\..\10.Committees\PC.

7.3   It was recommended that all programmes with reference to a 'year in Europe' in their title were amended to include a more generic reference to a year studying abroad.

7.4   A number of requests for Chair's Action had been made for in-year modifications. To ensure compliance with consumer protection law under the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), where these proposals had received objections from students or where students had not been

consulted, they had been refused. Further work was needed to reduce the number of requests for in-year modifications and to develop guidance on the timing and framing of consultations with students on module and programme changes.

   ACTION: Senior Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance and Enhancement)

8. Faculty Education Committees (FEC)

8.1 The Committee considered the following reports from the Faculty Education Committees:

- Natural Sciences Education Committee (NSEC) – 29th November 2017 — QAEC.2017.45
- School for Professional Development Education Committee (SPDEC) – 6th December 2017 — QAEC.2017.46

8.2 It was noted that that the FEC minutes/papers can be found at:
..\..\..\..\..\..\10.Committees\FEC.

9. Learning and Teaching Committee Report

9.1 The Committee received a verbal report on the Learning and Teaching Committee meeting held on 19th December 2017.

9.2 The Committee had considered a proposal from the Graduate School to establish a Masters' student experience project and received updates on the implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy and the pilot of subject level TEF in the Faculty of Engineering and other contributors of provision to Engineering provision.

9.3 The Committee had received a presentation on the plans for the Office for Students (OfS) and the introduction of Data Futures, which will require termly reporting on students and what they are studying, assessment results and differential achievement patterns. This would necessitate a major change to College processes for storing and reporting data. While the introduction of the new student record system would help, it was noted that the transition phase could be difficult.

10. Chair's Action

10.1 The Committee noted actions taken by the Chair since the last meeting, which related to proposals for in year course changes.

11. Any Other Business

11.1 There was no other business.

12.   **Dates for Meetings 2017-18**

12.1   Tuesday 17th April 2018, 10:00 – 12:00, Ballroom, 58 Prince's Gate
           Tuesday 22nd May 2018, 10:00 – 12:00, Ballroom, 58 Prince's Gate

12.2   An additional meeting would be arranged for March 2018.
        ACTION: Senior Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance and Enhancement)

13.   **Reserved Area of Business**

13.1   There was no reserved business.