Imperial College London

Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC)
Confirmed Minutes from the meeting held on
Tuesday 22 May 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
Dr Edgar Meyer, Chair of Programmes Committee
Claire Stapley, CLCC/CHERS representative
Karen Tweddle, Business School representative
Judith Webster, Head of Academic Services
Lucy Heming, Senior Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance and Enhancement) - Secretary

In attendance
Dr Richard Bale, GTA Programme Leader (for item 4)
Scott Tucker, Assistant Registrar (Monitoring and Review)

Apologies
Martin Lupton, Faculty of Medicine Representative
Professor Anthony Magee, Deputy Director of the Graduate School
Luke McCrone, GSU President
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 Dr Richard Bale, who was attending to speak to item 4.

2.   Minutes of the Previous Meetings   QAEC.2017.66a

2.1   The Committee approved the unconfirmed minutes from the Quality Assurance &
        Enhancement Committee (QAEC) meeting held on 17 April 2018 subject to the following
        amendment:

        Minute 6.6 refers: this should be amended to include a note that the onus for continuing
        to monitor feedback turnaround times should be on faculties and departments.
                                                                    ACTION: Secretary

3. **Matters arising from the Minutes** QAEC.2017.66b

3.1 The action log was noted. A number of items were on the agenda for this meeting. Of particular note was the need to follow up on the development of the Criminal Convictions Policy and the need to ensure actions arising from periodic reviews were transferred on to relevant parties where there were changes in staffing.

4. **Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA): Programme and Framework Review** QAEC.2017.67

4.1 Following a three month review of the College's GTA provision and practice elsewhere in the sector, the training programme for GTAs was being redeveloped. The programme comprised two core courses reflecting existing core material as well as the provision of a number of options which would allow students to choose training on scenarios they would face within the context of their local environment. Accreditation by AdvanceHE (formerly the Higher Education Academy) was being sought; subject to accreditation, students would be able to apply for associate membership.

4.2 The GTA Framework was being amended slightly following the review, with the main adjustments to the role and responsibility information. Two sections were still under review due to ongoing discussions around Tier 4 requirements. It was suggested that in order to approve the Framework in full, the level of detail in these sections was reduced and separate detailed information was made available online; this would enable the information to be updated as necessary without needing to make changes to the Framework.

4.3 It was proposed that the text around learning environments was amended to reflect the different sets of requirements for GTAs supporting fieldwork, particularly for those holding a Tier 4 visa. The representative from the Faculty of Engineering agreed to send through some revised text. **ACTION: Engineering Faculty Representative**

4.4 Departments were encouraged to hold their own inductions alongside the GTA programme as this would provide more contextualised content. There were good examples of this happening already. Additional ideas to induct GTAs better into the practicalities of their role included appointing 'peer GTAs' to help teach the programme and talk about their practical experiences. It was recommended the document was amended to reference the expectation there would be an additional departmental induction.

4.5 It was recommended the list of duties was amended to reflect better the range of activities outlined elsewhere in the document.

4.6 The Framework and Roles and Responsibilities documents were approved subject to the minor changes outlined above. **ACTION: Graduate School**

5   **Statement of Policies and Procedures for assuring Quality and Standards 2018/19**

5.1   The Committee considered the Statement which is a summary of the College's quality framework and is published annually on the College website. It also formed part of the annual quality report provided to Council as part of the College's statutory reporting, known as the Annual Provider Review.

5.2   The statement had been updated to reference how the College meets the revised expectations, core and common practices for standards and quality in the revised Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Quality Code for UK Higher Education. This resulted in the inclusion of some additional material, for example on Admissions, which is covered in the Code but was not in the Statement. The section on Collaborative Provision had been amended to reflect a proposal for a different mechanism for reviewing proposals to renew collaborative partnerships (this is covered in section 13 of the minutes).

5.3   As the Quality Code is still under development, a further review of the Statement would take place when the next section of the Code is published. It is anticipated this will take place in Autumn 2018. Members of the College's Quality Team were involved in the sector-wide discussions with the QAA about the underlying advice and guidance to support the new Code.

5.4   Committee members proposed that information be included on the new Director of Student Shapers, who would be supporting work on student engagement. In addition, the Deputy President (Education) agreed to send through some further proposed amendments to the section on student engagement.

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ACTION: Deputy President (Education)

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5.5   Periodic Reviews for Taught Provision were still suspended while Curriculum Review was underway. When this was relaunched, it was recommended that additional guidance and briefings for Chairs and Panel members were provided.   **ACTION: Quality Team**

5.6   The Committee confirmed their endorsement of the Statement subject to the minor changes noted above and acknowledged the Statement would be reviewed again when the Quality Code was updated.   **ACTION: Quality Team**

6.   **2018/19 Academic Regulations**   QAEC.2017.69

6.1   The Committee considered two draft revised sets of undergraduate academic regulations for 2018/19:

       i.   Regulations for the award of undergraduate taught degrees (Bachelor of Science (BSc), Bachelor of Engineering (BEng), Master in Science (MSci) and Master of Engineering (MEng)) in the Faculties of Natural Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine; bringing together the following existing regulations:

- BSc and MSci (Natural Sciences) (students registered in and after October 2008)
- BEng and MEng & BSc and MSci (Faculty of Engineering)

- BSc (Faculty of Medicine) (students registering in and after October 2013)

    ii.   Regulations for the award of the Degrees of MBBS/BSc, Intercalated BSc, MBBS (Graduate Entry), MBBS (Graduate Medicine), MBBS (Oxbridge Advanced Entry), MBBS (Advanced Entry); bringing together the following existing regulations:

- MBBS/BSc (students registered in and before 1 October 2013)
- MBBS/BSc (students registering in and from October 2014)
- MBBS (Graduate Entry) (students registered in and before 1 October 2013)
- MBBS (Graduate Entry) (students registered in and after 1 October 2014)
- MBBS (Graduate Medicine) (students registered in and before 1 October 2015)
- MBBS (Oxbridge Advanced Entry) (students registered in and before 1 October 2013)
- MBBS (Oxbridge Advanced Entry) (students registered on or after 1 October 2014)
- MBBS (Advanced Entry) (students registered on or after 1 October 2017)
- Intercalated BSc

6.2   It was reiterated that although a new single set of regulations would be in place for 2019/20, the existing regulations would run out over a number of years so the College needed to ensure they were fit for purpose.

6.3   An initial review of the existing regulations had identified significant similarities between them as well as some gaps, with a lack of clarity in some places which had created difficulties in responding to complaints and appeals. There was an opportunity for increasing alignment, reducing duplication and filling in the gaps from 2018/19. The draft regulations reflected the first steps towards achieving those aims.

6.4   Discussions were ongoing with representatives from the Faculty of Medicine and there were only four outstanding areas for agreement within the proposed new Medicine regulations. Subject to final clarification, the regulations as presented for the Faculty of Medicine were considered to be nearly at the point of approval. Once ready, these would be submitted to the Chair for Chair's Action.   **ACTION: Secretary**

6.5   There had not been sufficient time for members to consider the draft regulations primarily covering provision in the Faculties of Engineering and Natural Sciences. It was proposed the Quality team would hold discussions with those Faculties and with Imperial College Union outside of the meeting to progress this set of regulations. As with the Medicine-specific regulations, these would be presented to the Chair of QAEC for approval via Chair's Action.   **ACTION: Quality Team**

6.6   Discussions on key aspects of the 2019/20 single set of regulations were ongoing. One of those areas of difference was on year weightings. It was suggested that some thought should be given to the current year weightings in the Faculty of Medicine, as this was an area which had been raised through student casework.

6.7   The regulations may be further revised to take account of agreements for changes in the 2019/20 regulations, which could be applied to current students. Any regulatory changes

needed to be carefully considered to ensure existing students would not be disadvantaged.

7.   Academic Calendar   QAEC.2017.70

7.1   The Committee had considered the proposal to introduce an Academic Calendar at its meeting in March 2018. Members were invited to provide comments for changes ahead of the proposed trial of the calendar in 2018/19.

7.2   It was queried whether there were any plans to amend the date of award for postgraduate taught programmes as there appeared to be a difference between the date stated in the regulations (1 November) and the date in the Academic Calendar (end of November). It was clarified that the administration around confirming marks and awards meant that the final ratification sometimes did not occur until after 1 November but awards granted after this date would be backdated. It was not intended to change the official award date.

7.3   It was suggested the deadline for postgraduate taught students to make module choices was too early and would not allow them to make an informed decision based on exposure to core content and the learning and teaching environment. If they were to choose at the start of the programme and be given a later opportunity to amend their choices, there would be an increased administrative burden. It was agreed that the Calendar would be updated to reflect that for postgraduate taught programmes, module choices would be made on a term-by-term basis, as a way to alleviate the issues raised. It was reiterated that module choices could be made earlier than the deadline.

7.4   Further discussion would be needed on the proposed Exam periods. It was intended that assessment schedules could be better managed with set Exam periods but it was recognised there was considerable differing practice across the College at present.

7.5   The Calendar would need to be reviewed to check how it could apply to distance learning and online provision. It was noted this check was needed across a range of regulations and policies.

7.6   The Committee supported the proposal to trial the Academic Calendar in 2018/19. The Calendar would be revised based on the feedback received and circulated to QAEC members for further comment prior to circulation to the wider College community.
                                                                                ACTION: Academic Registrar, Secretary

8   Annual Monitoring

8.1   Postgraduate Taught Annual Monitoring 2016-17   QAEC.2017.54

8.1.1   The Committee received the Faculty summary annual monitoring reports for postgraduate taught provision. The process and format was the same as for the undergraduate monitoring which had taken place earlier this year. Where necessary, a

single centre or section report was provided; it was agreed that separate reports would still be produced for the Centre for Languages, Culture and Communication and the Centre for Higher Education Research and Scholarship.

8.1.2   The key common issues raised were: space, which as with undergraduate monitoring, would be picked up through the College Space Sharing Project; and data, in relation to data quality, inconsistencies between departmental and College data, access to raw data and ways in which data are broken down. It was anticipated the work underway to introduce the new Student Record System (Banner) would help address a number of the data issues.

8.1.3   Another issue discussed was the deadlines for modifications to programmes. The current deadline was considered by some areas to be problematic in terms of making changes to postgraduate provision in particular. It was reiterated that the deadlines had been set and agreed to mitigate the risk to the College in managing student expectations and contractual rights in relation to programme offerings, as overseen by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA). Compliance with the CMA was a condition of registration with the Office for Students (OfS).

8.1.4   A summary report identifying College level themes, instances of good practice and areas for enhancement would be produced following the meeting. In future, a draft summary report would be produced in advance of the QAEC meeting to help frame the Committee discussion.   **Action: Quality Team**

8.2   Annual Monitoring Process

8.2.1   Following the last round of annual monitoring and feedback from departments, a number of minor revisions were proposed to the annual monitoring guidance and report template for 2018-19 (reporting on 2017-18) to ensure procedures remain robust and proportionate, and align with the relevant expectations and practices set out in the revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

8.2.2   The Committee endorsed the following changes:
   i.   Consolidating the accompanying guidance notes into the report template
   ii.   Removing the requirement for commentary on External Examiner reports as this commentary occurs in response to individual reports and key actions can still be captured in the annual monitoring action plan
   iii.   Collating additional information on Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) where relevant
   iv.   Reducing the amount of additional documentation required, to avoid duplication
   v.   Rephrasing questions for clarity
   vi.   Providing additional free-text space for observations not captured elsewhere
   vii.   Separating out good practice and commendable achievements

8.2.3   The Committee did not support the proposal to separate out the section on student feedback into distinct types of feedback (e.g. NSS, PTES, SOLE, SSCs); members fed back

that they would prefer this to be one section as student feedback from a range of sources was considered holistically. In addition, it was suggested the data set was removed from this section of the report and appended to the report instead.   **ACTION: Quality Team**

9   **External Examiners Report (UG and PGT) 2016/17**

9.1   The Committee received a top-level analysis report of the External Examiners reports for undergraduate and postgraduate taught provision from 2016/17. The intention of the report was to identify trends and themes arising from the review of the reports that indicated any areas of wider concern, or identified areas of best practice that could be shared with the wider College community.

9.2   All External Examiner reports received had been reviewed by the individual programme teams and departments, contributing to the annual monitoring and standard enhancement review of the programmes. The department level analysis of the external examiners reports could be found in the department annual monitoring reports.

9.3   The analysis of the External Examiner reports supports that in 2016/17:

       i.   The College provision was of a high standard.
       ii.   Student achievements were comparable to previous cohorts and that of the sector as a whole.
       iii.   The standards set for the awards in relation to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, national subject benchmarks and any additional Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body requirements (where relevant) were met.

Therefore confidence can be placed on the outcomes for students in academic year 2016/17, subject to the outcome of other quality assurance mechanisms.

9.4   It was noted that a small number of reports (8%) had not been submitted. As the reports provide a clear external indication of the scrutiny of the assessment processes and provided a judgement on the appropriateness of the College's academic standards, further efforts would be made to improve the submission rate and to clarify the procedure on following up on outstanding reports. It was suggested the wording of this section of the report could be amended to make clearer that although a report may not have been submitted, there could be other evidence to show that scrutiny had been carried out.   **ACTION: Quality Team**

9.5   The Committee endorsed the recommendations set out in the report and requested that further clarification was provided on how they would be taken forward:
       i.   Clear articulation of marking and moderation processes and greater internal monitoring of adherence to those processes
       ii.   Agreement of a set of principles regarding scaling activity, which would be circulated to students and External Examiners, and clear recording of scaling use
       iii.   Maintenance of a common set of reference documents for External Examiners on an easily accessible platform

      iv.   Feedback policies and practices are reviewed to ensure students receive consistent and useful assessment feedback as well as the feedback being timely

ACTION: Quality Team

10   Audit of Wednesday afternoon timetabling for PGT students

10.1   Following on from the commitment made in 2016/17 to avoid timetabling teaching activities on Wednesday afternoons for PGT students, the President of the Graduate School Union and the Deputy President (Education) of Imperial College Union had carried out a further audit. The audit showed that there were still a number of sessions scheduled for Wednesday afternoons. Although it was not possible to compare the data from 2017/18 directly with that from 2016/17 due to the different data collection systems used, this showed that further work was still needed to fulfil the commitment.

10.2   The Faculty representatives welcomed the report and thanked the Unions for producing it. It was suggested that in future, this work could be carried out by the Central Time-tabling team.

10.3   The Committee agreed the report should be considered in Faculties to explore the reasons for teaching on Wednesday afternoons and what action can be taken to address this. Updates would be made to the Committee in Autumn 2018.

ACTION: Faculty representatives, Secretary

11   Surveys

11.1   **Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) Summary Report**

11.1.1   The Committee considered the summary report on the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) which had taken place in 2017 and noted the PRES had been considered in detail at PRQC.

11.1.2   Departments had been asked to evaluate the results and comments through exception reporting, focussing on results which were +/- 5% from the College average and/or +/- 5% from departmental scores in PRES 2015. Departments identified timed actions and highlighted areas of good practice. To close the feedback loop, reports and action plans were discussed at Staff-Student Committees and/or signed off by departmental research student representatives.

11.1.3   Faculty research committees considered departmental reports/action plans and produced faculty reports and action plans, pulling together the themes from the results, highlighting good practice, setting out faculty priorities and making recommendations for the College. PRQC considered and approved the faculty level reports and action plans and confirmed the College level recommendations.

11.1.4   The Graduate School was working on developing documentation on what constituted effective feedback in response to Recommendation 5.1 (providing feedback to students).

It was reiterated through Recommendation 5.2 on Space that the College Space Sharing Programme offered routes through which significant growth in space requests are managed and Departments and Faculties with concerns about space should refer this to the Programme. The Library had responded to Recommendation 5.3 on Library Resources.

11.2   SOLE

11.2.1   The Committee noted the outcomes for the Spring SOLE surveys for undergraduate and postgraduate taught students in the Faculties of Engineering, Natural Sciences and Medicine and the Autumn and Spring SOLE surveys for Horizons/BPES modules.

11.2.2   Detailed analysis of the results was taking place at departmental level and actions were being put in place to address issues raised.

11.3   Survey Calendar 2018/19

11.3.1   The Committee noted the survey calendar for 2018/19. The College operated the Postgraduate Taught Excellence Survey (PTES) and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) biennially; this might need to be reconsidered at a future stage by the Survey Working Group and given the ongoing discussion by the Office for Students about the possibility of introducing a formal mandatory survey for postgraduate taught students.

12.   Admissions

12.1   Special Cases Policy for Admission to Postgraduate Programmes   QAEC.2017.78

12.1.1   The Committee approved the changes to the Special Cases Policy for Admission to Postgraduate Programmes, noting an amendment to the English Language exemption under the Special Qualifying Exam (SQE) admission route.

12.2   Entry Requirements   QAEC.2017.79a,b&c

12.2.1   The Committee considered the published entry requirements for 2020/21 and changes to the Registry guidance on unpublished entry requirements for 2019/20.

12.2.2   The Committee agreed the departmental minimum undergraduate requirements for entry in 2010/21.

12.2.3   It was suggested that in future, the departmental requirements for entry be considered at Faculty Education Committees first, prior to coming to QAEC for formal approval.
                                                        ACTION: Deputy Head of Admissions

13. **Collaborative Provision Sub-Group** QAEC.2017.80

13.1.1 The Committee agreed with the proposal to set up a new Collaborative Provision Sub-Group, which would report to QAEC.

13.1.2 The original proposal was for the Sub-Group to focus on ongoing arrangements and renewal of agreements, as there was an existing process for approving new academic collaborations. However, the Committee suggested that further consideration be given to ensuring there was a clear College strategy to guide what sort of collaborative activity was taken forward and with which partners.

13.1.3 Subject to consideration of the suggestion to widen the scope of the Sub-Group or to otherwise clarify the strategic approach to collaborative provision, a more detailed proposal for the Sub-Group would be developed and shared with members for approval.

ACTION: Quality Team

14. **Programmes Committee (PC)** QAEC.2017.81

14.1 The Committee considered the latest report from the Programmes Committee from the meeting held on 1 May 2018.

14.1.1 The following new programmes were approved:
- MSci and BSc Earth and Planetary Science, Department of Earth Science and Engineering, effective 2019/20

14.1.2 A modification to the following programme was approved:
- Medicine MBBS, Lee Kong Chian (LKC), effective 2018/19

14.1.3 An in-year major modification to the following programme was approved with immediate effect:
- MRes Clinical Research, Department of Medicine, effective April 2018

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

14.3 The Programmes Committee had discussed the setup of the Curriculum Review Reference Panels, designed to support departments in discussing programme changes before they were formally submitted via the Committee structure. A briefing session for panel members would be held on 15 June 2018.

15.   Postgraduate Research Quality Committee (PRQC)

15.1   Report from PRQC

15.1.1   The Committee considered the latest report from the Postgraduate Research Quality   QAEC.2017.82
Committee from the meeting held on 11 May 2018.

15.1.2   The Committee agreed to recommend to Senate the outcome of the Periodic Review for
the Department of Mathematics.   **ACTION: Secretary**

15.1.3   PRQC had considered in detail the review of pastoral care structures in departments and
agreed that research students should have access to a departmental support network led
by the Senior Tutor (PGR), the precise nature of which would be decided locally. The
Committee supported this recommendation and reiterated the need for there to be
flexibility in approach to how the network would function in departments.

15.1.4   A concern was raised about the impact on the workload of staff within the department
given the additional responsibilities placed on the Senior Tutor (PGR). Consideration was
needed on how best to support staff in carrying out these responsibilities.

15.1.5   The Committee endorsed all of the recommendations arising from the review of pastoral
care structures in departments:
   i.   The adoption of the principles for departmental pastoral care of research students
   ii.   An amendment to the title of Precept 9 – cohort building, to take effect for 2018/19
   iii.   The addition of a new Precept – pastoral care network
   iv.   A change to the title of Senior Tutor (PG) to Senior Tutor (PGT)
   v.   A change to the title of Postgraduate Tutor to Senior Tutor (PGR)
   vi.   Changes to the Roles and Responsibilities document for Senior Tutor (PGR)
   vii.   The creation of a working group to support the implementation of the recommendations
          of the pastoral care review as well as other aspects of the research student lifecycle

15.1.6   The Academic Registrar would take forward the development of the new working group
to explore how the proposed principles set out in the pastoral care structures paper can
be effectively implemented over the student lifecycle.   **ACTION: Academic Registrar**

15.1.7   The Committee endorsed the changes to the *Regulations for the award of MPhil and the
PhD (for students registering in and after January 2011)* and recommended they were
sent to Senate for approval:
   i.   Reference to the Mutual Expectations for the Research Degree Student Supervisor
          Partnership (4.1)
   ii.   Partner Research Institutions and Split PhDs (4.7)
   iii.   Student choice regarding Creative Commons licence (7.2d)
                                                                              ACTION: Secretary

15.1.8   The Committee endorsed the recommendation from PRQC to extend the Early Stage
Assessment for PGR Chemistry students to September 2018 due to the upcoming
departmental move to White City.

15.2 **A report on the review of the RCUK PhD funding process**   QAEC.2017.83

15.2.1 The Committee noted the review report, which had been considered previously at the Vice Provost's Advisory Group for Research (VPAGR), the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) and PRQC.

15.2.2 It was confirmed that although the review had started with a focus on the administration around the RCUK PhD funding process, the scope of the recommendations and the work being taken forward by PRQC covered all research students. This work would be supported by the formation of a new working group.

15.3 **A report on special cases relating to the late submission of theses**   QAEC.2017.84

15.3.1 This report had been considered by PRQC and no concerns were raised.

16. **Faculty Education Committees (FEC)**

16.1 The Committee considered the report from the CLCC/CHERS Faculty Education Committee, held on 18 April 2018.   QAEC.2017.85

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

17. **Learning and Teaching Committee Report**

17.1 The Committee received a verbal report on the Learning and Teaching Committee meeting held on 16 May 2018. Key items discussed were: the Digital learning strategy; the College submission for OfS registration; the subject-level TEF pilot and technical consultation; and the Curriculum Review Reference Panels.

18. **Chair's Action**

18.1 No actions had been taken by the Chair since the last meeting.

19. **Any Other Business**

19.1 It was noted that minor updates had been made to the 'Our Principles' student charter statement and the 'Roles and Responsibilities' documents but that given the limited change, it was not necessary to bring those documents for formal re-approval by the Committee.

19.2 The Committee thanked the Deputy President (Education) from Imperial College Union and the President of the Graduate School Union for their contribution to the Committee over the past year.

20.   Dates for Meetings

20.1   Remaining meeting dates for 2017-18

20.1.1   Thursday 14th June 2018, joint meeting with VPAGE

20.2   Confirmed meeting dates for 2018-19

20.2.1   Wednesday 3 October 2018, 10.00-12.00
Wednesday 7 November 2018, 10.00-12.00
Wednesday 19 December 2018, 10.00-12.00
Wednesday 30 January 2019, 10.00-12.00
Wednesday 13 March 2019, 10.00-12.00
Wednesday 10 April 2019, 10.00-12.00
Wednesday 5 June 2019, 10.00-12.00

21.   Reserved Area of Business

21.1   There was no reserved business.