

Master's Quality Committee Medicine, Life Sciences and School of Professional Development

3 June 2014

Confirmed Minutes

Present

Professor Sue Gibson (Chair)
Dr Christine Franey (School of Public Health)
Professor Kate Hardy (Department of Surgery and Cancer)
Ms Natalie Kempston (ICU Deputy President, Education)
Dr Martyn Kingsbury (School of Professional Development)
Professor Simon Taylor-Robinson (Department of Medicine)

In Attendance

Ms Sally Baker (Senior Assistant Registrar, Senate and Academic Review)
Mr Richard Monk (Assistant Registrar, Senate and Academic Review – Secretary)
Mr Chris Neill (Education Manager, Department of Medicine) – Observer

1. Welcome

Professor Sue Gibson welcomed members to the meeting and apologies, as listed below, were noted. Mr Chris Neill, recently appointed as Education Manager in the Department of Medicine, was welcomed as an observer to the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence

Dr Niki Gounaris (Department of Life Sciences)
Professor Debra Humphris – Vice Provost [Education]
Dr Mick Jones (College Tutor)
Professor Myra McClure (College Consul (non-clinical) Faculty of Medicine)
Dr David McPhail (Graduate School Deputy Director & Deputy Chair)
Professor Andrew Parry (College Consul, Faculty of Natural Sciences)
Mr Dean Pateman (Academic Registrar)
Dr Duncan Rogers (NHLI)
Ms Marta Sawicka (Academic and Welfare Officer – Life Sciences)
Mr Andreas Thomik (GSU President)
Professor Denis Wright (Director of Student Support)
Ms Nuha Yassin (Academic and Welfare Officer – Medicine)

3. Minutes of the last meeting

3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2014 were approved.

MLSPD/MQC/2013/49

4. Matters arising

- 4.1 The Committee received and noted an action list detailing matters arising from the previous meeting and containing updates on progress in completing the required action.

MLSPD/MQC/2013/50

4.1.1 **Minute 6.5 – Foundation Programme for applicants from Allied Health professions**

It was noted that this action was ongoing and that the representative of the Department of Surgery and Cancer would be seeking to discuss the possibility of a Foundation Programme with the Manager of the Graduate School in the near future.

4.1.2 **Minute 11.3 – Programme Organisation arrangements**

The Committee was informed that the need for robust programme organisation arrangements, including the possible identification of Deputy Programme Organisers, had been raised as an item for discussion at a meeting of Programme Organisers on 8 April 2014.

- 4.1.3 The Committee agreed that the remaining matters arising were either ongoing or that appropriate action had been taken since the last meeting.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

5. New Programme Proposals

5.1 MRes in Tropical Forest Ecology (Department of Life Sciences)

- 5.1.1 The Committee considered a proposal from the Department of Life Sciences to introduce a new MRes in Tropical Forest Ecology with effect from October 2015. The programme would be offered on a full-time basis over one calendar year and on a part-time basis over two calendar years.

MLSPD/MQC/2013/51

The Committee welcomed Dr Robert Ewers (proposed Programme Director) who had been invited to present the proposal.

- 5.1.2 Dr Ewers explained that the objective of the proposed MRes Tropical Forest Ecology programme was to provide students with high-level research training in the latest developments in tropical forest ecology, covering the physical and biological aspects of the forest ecosystem with an emphasis on understanding the linkages between those two components. The programme would prepare students for careers in academic, governmental or non-governmental organisations engaged in research into tropical forest ecology, biodiversity and conservation. The programme would be based at the Silwood Park Campus and would be hosted within the Grand Challenges initiative, which was cross-Departmental. The programme was expected to attract students with a broad range of scientific degrees (e.g. Biology, Ecology, Physics, Engineering, Geography) and applicants would normally be expected to have an upper second class degree or above.

- 5.1.3 The Committee was informed that Tropical Forest Ecology, as a subject area, was well known internationally. At present there were a number of undergraduate programmes in this area but very little provision at Master's level. The proposed programme was considered to be unique in focussing specifically on tropical forest ecology, with other courses offered nationally focussing more on forest management and conservation. Given the specific focus of the programme and the wide range of potential applicants, the Department was confident of meeting the intended target of approximately 15 students in the first year.

- 5.1.4 The Committee noted that the programme would be charging a premium fee, in part to fund the cost of the compulsory field course in a tropical forest environment. In light of the Department's stated intention to recruit self-funding students initially, the Committee was

interested to learn whether the premium fee might deter potential applicants. Dr Ewers informed the Committee that it was common practice across the sector for additional fees and the cost of airfares to be included in the overall fee for programmes that included compulsory field courses, which therefore resulted in those programmes charging a premium fee. The Department therefore felt that students from cognate disciplines who were familiar with the additional costs associated with overseas fieldwork would not be deterred from applying for the programme.

- 5.1.5 The Committee enquired about the associated cost for students who wished to undertake their research project in a tropical forest environment. The Committee was interested to learn whether students would be expected to obtain funding if they intended to conduct their research project overseas. Dr Ewers informed the Committee that the Department provided a budget to enable students to undertake their research in a tropical forest environment. Project supervisors would be advised that there was a budget available. The Committee was reassured by the explanation provided.
- 5.1.6 The Committee noted from the proposal documentation that the compulsory taught field course which would take place in a tropical forest environment would not be accessible to students with physical disabilities, in particular where the disability severely limited mobility. The research station in Malaysia was not accessible by wheelchair and there were currently no options to enable students with mobility issues access to the field/forest sites. Dr Ewers informed the Committee that the nature of the tropical forest environment and its location meant that it would be inaccessible to students with limited mobility, even where reasonable adjustments were made. This would be explicitly stated in the Competence Standards for the programme to ensure that prospective applicants were aware of the compulsory field course element and the issue of accessibility for prospective students with reduced mobility.
- 5.1.7 The Committee noted from the proposal documentation that a Deputy Programme Director had not been identified. Whilst acknowledging that it was not a requirement to appoint a Deputy Programme Director the Committee was interested to learn about the resilience of the programme and succession planning in the event of unforeseen difficulties occurring, or key academic staff leaving the College. Dr Ewers informed the Committee that, in terms of succession planning, there was currently a number of staff in the tropical forest ecology research area that could deputise for the Programme Director in the event of an unforeseen absence. It was anticipated that delivery of the programme would be supported through BlackBoard, which would be accessible to all staff teaching the programme, thus ensuring that an unexpected absence would not unduly affect the delivery of the programme. Whilst the Committee was reassured by the additional information provided it determined that the identification of a Deputy Programme Director would enhance the programme management arrangements and succession planning.
- 5.1.8 After detailed discussion with Dr Ewers, the Committee was reassured on a number of issues which had been raised for discussion. One matter remained to be addressed as follows:
- (i). The Committee advised the Programme Team to give further consideration to the identification of a Deputy Programme Director [see paragraph 5.1.7 above].

ACTION: Programme Team

- 5.1.9 The Committee was supportive of the initiative and was satisfied that the Programme Team had thoroughly addressed the comments made by the external reviewer's in its response. Subject to receipt of a satisfactory response to the matter outlined in 5.1.8(i) above the Committee agreed to recommend that the proposed MRes in Tropical Forest Ecology be approved by Senate, to commence in October 2015.

Post-meeting note: following the meeting a response was received to address the matter outlined in 5.1.8(i) above. Two members of academic staff had been identified to act as Deputy Programme Directors.

6. Major Programme Modifications

6.1 MSc Ecology, Evolution and Conservation

- 6.1.1 The Committee considered a request from the Department of Life Sciences to change the examination format of the MSc in Ecology, Evolution and Conservation, with effect from October 2014.

MLSPD/MQC/2013/52

The Committee welcomed Dr David Orme (Course Director) who had been invited to present the proposal.

- 6.1.2 The Committee noted that the Department had proposed to change the format of the examinations for the programme from hand-written to computer-written examinations. It was further noted that the computer-written examinations would utilise the same mechanism that had been used successfully on the MSc Conservation Science programme which had introduced computer-written examinations in 2010.
- 6.1.3 The Committee further noted that the Department had consulted with current students of the programme who were in favour of the proposal. The current external examiners were also unanimously supportive of the proposed change. The Committee was reassured by the detailed rationale provided and by the proposed contingency plans in the event of technology failure. The Committee was further reassured that students with specific learning needs would be adequately supported and that the Department was aware of the need to make reasonable adjustments, where necessary, such as through access to assistive technology, to enable those students to undertake computer based examinations.
- 6.1.4 The Committee agreed to recommend that the proposed modification to the programme be approved by the Senate, with effect from October 2014.

6.2 MSc Reproductive and Developmental Biology

- 6.2.1 The Committee considered a proposal from the Department of Surgery and Cancer for the establishment of a Postgraduate Certificate in Reproductive and Developmental Biology, to run alongside the existing MSc programme in Reproductive and Developmental Biology. The new PG Certificate programme would be introduced with effect from October 2014.

MLSPD/MQC/2013/53

The Committee welcomed Dr Mark Sullivan (Programme Director) who had been invited to present the proposal.

- 6.2.2 The Committee noted that the MSc in Reproductive and Developmental Biology was a well-established programme that attracted high quality students. The Committee further noted the rationale for the introduction of the PG Certificate programme which was to meet demand as expressed in a number of queries received by the Department from prospective students who wished to extend their knowledge of Reproduction and Development but not undertake the full MSc programme. The proposal was supported by the current external examiners.
- 6.2.3 The Committee learned that, to complete the PG Certificate, students would undertake the same taught modules as students enrolled on the MSc programme, consisting of eight core modules. The PG Certificate would have a reduced assessment load in comparison to the taught component of the MSc programme, with students completing six out of eight assessment elements. The PG Certificate would be examined by a combination of assessment methods including written examinations, coursework essays and an oral presentation. The PG Certificate would be available on a full-time basis over 6 months and would be taught on the Hammersmith Campus.

- 6.2.4 The Committee enquired about the progression arrangements for students enrolling on the PG Certificate programme who then wished to continue to the MSc programme. The Programme Director informed the Committee that it was anticipated that students who take the PG Certificate may wish to progress to the MSc in a subsequent year. The programme had, however, been structured to enable students to progress directly to the MSc programme during the same academic year, though this would be considered on a case-by-case basis and dependant on the availability of sufficient projects. Students wishing to progress to the MSc would need to take the additional assessment elements in the Spring Term. The Committee was satisfied that appropriate progression routes would be available to PG Certificate students.
- 6.2.5 The Committee enquired about the future arrangements for students who had been awarded a PG Certificate who subsequently wished to return to complete the full MSc programme. It was agreed that the rules for progression from PG Certificate to MSc should be clarified in discussion with the Registry.

ACTION: Senior Assistant Registrar (Senate & Academic Review)

- 6.2.6 The Committee approved the proposed PG Certificate in Reproductive and Developmental Biology in principle, subject to confirmation of approval from the Faculty of Medicine Postgraduate Strategy Committee at its meeting of 11 June 2014. Once this approval was confirmed the Committee would recommend that the proposed programme be approved by the Senate, with effect from October 2014.

Post meeting note: confirmation of approval by the Faculty of Medicine Postgraduate Strategy Committee was received on 12 June 2014. The PG Certificate in Reproductive and Developmental Biology was therefore submitted to the Senate for approval at its meeting of 18 June 2014.

7. Routine Programme Reviews 2012-13

7.1 PG Cert / PG Dip / MEd University Learning and Teaching (School of Professional Development)

- 7.2.1 The Committee considered the review of the programme in respect of the 2012-13 part-time cohort. The review also incorporated the part-time PG Certificate and PG Diploma programmes.

MLSPD/MQC/2013/54

- 7.2.2 The Committee noted the reviewer's comments that this was a unique programme within the College portfolio, providing an opportunity for Imperial College staff to study learning and teaching, which in turn would enable them to apply their newly acquired skills to develop and improve their own programmes. The reviewer further commented that the whole programme was innovative and that students were provided with excellent constructive feedback which allowed them to improve their performance and enhance their learning. The Committee further noted that the reviewer had not identified any specific weaknesses in the programme and considered its strengths to be to encourage self-directed learning, stimulate students to explore new areas, expand their horizons and learn new approaches to teaching.
- 7.2.3 The Committee noted that the reviewer had highlighted a number of instances of good practice, including: experimentation with 'Flipped Classroom' teaching methods which engaged students in the subject matter before they entered the classroom; the use of online formative assessments (pre-, during, and post-module); and the robust, systematic and timely approach to surveying student views, reporting the findings and taking appropriate action in response to student feedback.
- 7.2.4 The Committee noted that the external examiner's report had been considered to be very complimentary of the programme and the teaching and had praised the Department on its support of the students, with excellent and informative feedback and clear marking criteria.

- 7.2.5 It was agreed that the Programme Organiser's response had addressed all of the matters raised by the reviewer. The programme had been rated as 'Good' by the reviewer and this grading was endorsed by the Committee. It was confirmed that the programme would be reviewed again in three years' time and that no follow-up action was required in the meantime.

8. Programme Suspensions and Withdrawals

8.1 MSc Cardiorespiratory Nursing

- 8.1.1 It was noted that consideration of a request from the NHLI to suspend entry to the programme in 2014-15 had been deferred to the July 2014 meeting.

No paper MLSPD/MQC/2013/55

8.2 PG Cert Cardiac Nursing and PG Cert Respiratory Nursing

- 8.2.1 It was noted that consideration of a request from the NHLI to withdraw the awards with effect from 2014-15 had been deferred to the July 2014 meeting.

No papers MLSPD/MQC/2013/56 & 57

8.3 PG Cert / PG Dip / MSc in Infection

- 8.3.1 The Committee considered a request from the Department of Medicine to withdraw the PG Cert / PG Dip / MSc in Infection with effect from October 2014.

MLSPD/MQC/2013/58

- 8.3.2 The Committee noted that the programme had been suspended in 2013-14 due to a low number of applications but had been re-opened for entry in 2014-15. Unfortunately the programme had not received sufficient applications for it to be viably delivered in 2014-15 and the Department had therefore requested that it be permanently withdrawn.

- 8.3.3 The Committee noted that the current students were due to complete the programme in September 2014 and received assurances from the Department that individual arrangements in respect of those students who would not have completed by September 2014 were being agreed with the Academic Registrar.

- 8.3.4 On the basis of 8.3.3 above, the Committee agreed to recommend that the withdrawal of the PG Cert / PG Dip / MSc in Infection be approved by the Senate with effect from October 2014.

8.4 PG Cert / PG Dip / MSc in Infection Management for Pharmacists

- 8.4.1 The Committee considered a request from the Department of Medicine to withdraw the PG Cert / PG Dip / MSc in Infection Management for Pharmacists with effect from October 2014.

MLSPD/MQC/2013/59

- 8.4.2 The Committee noted that the programme had been suspended in 2013-14 due to a low number of applications, and had not been re-opened for entry in 2014-15. The Department had therefore requested that it be permanently withdrawn.

- 8.4.3 The Committee received assurances from the Department that the current students would be supported until the completion of the programme in September 2015. The Committee noted that individual arrangements in respect of any student who had not completed by September 2015 would be agreed with the Academic Registrar.

- 8.4.4 On the basis of 8.4.3 above, the Committee agreed to recommend that the withdrawal of the PG Cert / PG Dip / MSc in Infection Management for Pharmacists be approved by the Senate with effect from October 2014.

9. Reports from External Examiners 2012-13

- 9.1 The Committee received the external examiner reports to be considered for taught courses for 2012-13.

MLSPD/MQC/2013/60 and 60(i)

- 9.2 The Committee reviewed the comments from External Examiners, together with the responses to the comments from departments. In discussion, the Committee noted issues which were raised as needing attention and took particular note of areas of good practice which were highlighted in the reports. The discussion is reported in Appendix 1 [not published with the minutes].

10. Joint Management Committee Annual Reports or Minutes

Members were reminded that the Joint Management Committee Annual Reports or Minutes from collaborative postgraduate programmes listed in the College's register of collaborative provision should be reported to the Master's Quality Committee as follows:

10.1 MSc in Conservation Science [Partner Organisations: Royal Botanic Gardens Kew; Institute of Zoology of the Zoological Society of London; and the Durrell Wildlife Trust]

- 10.1.1 Members noted that this was a collaborative joint Master's degree programme with Imperial as the awarding body and that responsibility for academic standards and the quality of education provided to students rests with Imperial.

- 10.1.2 The Committee received the minutes of the Joint Management Committee held on 1 April 2014.

MLSPD/MQC/2013/61

- 10.1.3 The Committee noted from the minutes that there had been changes in senior personnel at each of the partner organisations, including the Course Director at the Durrell Wildlife Trust, a new Director of Science at Kew and a new Director at the Institute of Zoology. The Committee further noted from the minutes that the Department was seeking a replacement for the existing member of staff responsible for statistics teaching whose contract was due to conclude. In light of the volume of change at the partner organisations and the gap in statistics provision identified at the JMC meeting, the Committee agreed that the Department should provide an update on the impact of the changes at the partner organisations and the provision of statistics teaching in 2014-15 at the next meeting.

ACTION: Director of Postgraduate Studies (Department of Life Sciences)

11. Reports from Departmental Representatives

- 11.1 Further to the discussion of Programme Organisation arrangements at the 18 March 2014 meeting, Departmental representatives were invited to outline their existing arrangements. The Committee learned that the Departments of Medicine and Surgery and Cancer were taking the matter forward and would be seeking to encourage programmes to identify Deputy Programme Organisers. It was noted that it was a matter for individual Departments to determine their own programme management arrangements.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION AND/OR DISSEMINATION

12. Action taken on behalf of the Committee

12.1 The Committee noted action taken by the Chair to approve the suspension of the PG Cert / PG Dip / MSc in Philanthropy for the 2014-15 academic year. Suspension of the programme was subsequently approved by the Senate at the meeting of 14 May 2014.

12.1.1 Committee members were informed that, at the same meeting, the Senate had agreed that programmes that were suspended before they had run would need to seek re-approval from the Master's Quality Committee and the Senate before they could be delivered.

13. Dispensation from Anonymity at Final Boards of Examiners

13.1 The Committee noted that programmes wishing to request dispensation from anonymity at final boards of examiners in 2014-15 must submit a request to the Committee Secretary by 27 June 2014.

14. English Language Entry Requirements

14.1 The Committee noted that Senate had approved changes to the College's minimum and higher level English language entry requirements with effect from entry in 2015-16, as follows:

Minimum entry level:

Undergraduate entry and Postgraduate entry	IELTS 6.5 - Minimum 6.0 in each element
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Higher entry level:

Undergraduate entry and Postgraduate entry	IELTS 7.0 - Minimum 6.5 in each element
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14.2 It was noted that Departments wishing to set the higher level for any programme(s) had been asked to submit a request, by e-mail, to the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) by 16th June 2014.

Post meeting note: the above deadline was subsequently extended to **22 September 2014**.

15. New Programme Proposals and Modifications to Existing Programmes

15.1 The Committee noted revisions to the template forms for submission of new programme proposals, which included the introduction of a module template, and revisions to the template form for programme modifications. Members were informed that the revised forms and associated guidance could be accessed via the links below.

New programme proposals:

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/qualityassurance/approvalandreview/postgraduateresearchprogrammeapprovalandreviewprocesses/submitanewmastersprogramme>

Programme modifications:

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/coursemodifications/pgmodifications>

16. HEFCE Guidance to Institutions on Providing Information for Prospective Postgraduate Taught Students

16.1 The Committee noted that HEFCE has published guidance to institutions on what type of information should be provided to potential postgraduate taught students. The guidance was available at: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2014/cl102014/>.

16.2 The Committee further noted that Spring 2015 would see the launch of an online decision-making tool for prospective PGT students. Provisionally titled 'PGT Choices', and sponsored by the UK funding bodies, the tool would provide information pathways for UK, EU and international students, whether they were going straight on to PGT study or returning after a period away from education. It would highlight the sorts of questions students may wish to ask, and point them to where they may find the answers. HEFCE will be inviting higher education providers to link to PGT Choices when it goes live.

17. Reports from key College Committees

17.1 **Senate:** Members were reminded that the latest Executive Summaries from the Senate were available [here](#).

17.2 **Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee:** Members were reminded that the latest Executive Summaries from the QAEC were available [here](#).

18. Postgraduate Professional Development Committee

18.1 The Committee received and noted the unconfirmed minutes of the Postgraduate Professional Development Committee meeting held on 23 April 2014.

MLSPD/MQC/2013/62

19. Any Other Business

19.1 **College Policy on Hepatitis B vaccinations for Master's Students** – the Department of Medicine representative alerted the Committee to concerns expressed by the Department with regard to the Occupational Health Service's policy on hepatitis B vaccinations for Master's students. The Committee was informed that students on Master's programmes were not routinely being offered hepatitis B vaccinations, despite working in laboratories that handled blood. The Department had been advised that the current College policy was to vaccinate all individuals directly handling blood where the period of exposure was longer than 8 weeks. According to the policy the College does not offer vaccination for short-term exposure. Should an exposure occur the College would instigate post-exposure prophylactic vaccination on an accelerated scale.

19.1.1 In discussion, Committee members shared the concerns expressed by the Department of Medicine and felt strongly that students on relevant programmes should receive hepatitis B vaccinations as a prerequisite for their laboratory project. The Committee also expressed the view that the existing policy may, potentially, place the College at risk of litigation if students were not being vaccinated. The Committee agreed that the matter should be raised at College level and that the Senior Assistant Registrar (Senate & Academic Review) would identify the appropriate person at College level to refer the Committee's concerns to. An update on the matter would be provided at the next meeting.

ACTION: Senior Assistant Registrar (Senate & Academic Review)

20. Dates of meetings in 2013 – 2014

Dates of meetings in 2013 – 2014 were noted as follows:

Meeting Date	Deadline for submission of papers
Tuesday 15 th July 2014 – 2pm – 5pm	<i>Tuesday 1st July 2014</i>
All meetings will take place in the Ballroom at 58 Prince's Gate , South Kensington Campus	

Dates of meetings in 2014 – 2015 were noted as follows:

Meeting Date	Deadline for submission of papers
Tuesday 18 th November 2014 – 2pm – 5pm	<i>Tuesday 4th November 2014</i>
Tuesday 27 th January 2015 – 2pm – 5pm	<i>Tuesday 13th January 2015</i>
Tuesday 17 th March 2015 – 2pm – 5pm	<i>Tuesday 3rd March 2015</i>
Tuesday 9 th June 2015 – 10am – 1pm	<i>Tuesday 26th May 2015</i>
Tuesday 14 th July 2015 – 2pm – 5pm	<i>Tuesday 30th June 2015</i>
All meetings will take place in the Ballroom at 58 Prince's Gate , South Kensington Campus	

Committee members were advised that the 9 June 2015 meeting would be the last meeting of the year at which any proposals requiring Senate approval for the 2015-16 year could be considered.

21. Reserved Business (not circulated to student members)

21.1 Special Cases Reports

21.1.1 The Committee received a report on special cases considered by the special cases panel for Master's Level students.

Special Cases for Admissions – MLSPD/MQC/2013/63