

## Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC)

Minutes from the meeting held on

Wednesday 6 April 2022

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### Present

David Ashton, Academic Registrar – Chair

Dr Clemens Brechtelsbauer, Chair of Programmes Committee

Dr Lorraine Craig, Faculty of Engineering representative

Prof Richard Green, Business School representative

Laura Lane, Head of Strategy and Operations, Graduate School

Daniel Lo, ICU Deputy President (Education)

Prof Jason Riley, Vice Dean (Education), Faculty of Engineering

Prof Richard Thompson, Vice Dean (Education), Faculty of Natural Sciences

Karen Tweddle, Business School representative

Dr Jeffrey Vernon, Faculty of Medicine representative

Judith Webster, Head of Academic Services

Scott Tucker, Deputy Director (Academic Quality and Standards) – Secretary

### In Attendance

Leila Guerra, Vice Dean (Education), Business School

Prof Emma McCoy, Vice Provost (Education and Student Experience)

### Apologies

Martin Lupton, Faculty of Medicine representative

Rebecca Middleton, Faculty of Natural Sciences representative

Prof Andrew Parry, College Consul representative

Claire Stapley, CLCC/CHERS representative

### 1. Welcome, apologies and announcements

1.1 The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting, noting apologies for absence.

### 2. Minutes of the previous meeting

2.1 The Committee confirmed the minutes of 2 March 2022 as an accurate record.

QAEC.2021.57

### 3. Matters arising from the minutes

3.1 There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

- 4. Update on QAEC actions** QAEC.2021.58
- 4.1** The Committee received an update on outstanding QAEC actions, as noted in the action list.
- 5. Report from the Regulations and Policy Review Committee (RPRC)**
- 5.1** The Committee considered a report from RPRC from the meeting held on 24 March 2022. QAEC.2021.59
- 5.1.1 i. Religious Observance Policy**  
See QAEC Item 6.
- ii. Unsatisfactory Engagement Policy and Procedure**  
See QAEC Item 7.
- iii. Attendance and Engagement Policy**  
The Committee noted that, following agreement at RPRC, case studies would be sought from departments to inform an updated policy.
- iv. Update to College Examiner, Assessment Examiner and Assessor roles and responsibilities**  
The Committee agreed the following RPRC recommendations:
- That it was necessary to continue to stipulate those who were responsible for ensuring that the marking and moderation of a particular module followed College expectations, prior to consideration by the Board of Examiners
  - That the current roles were streamlined to provide one document that aligns with both sets of regulations outlining the expectation of the College of a marker, what their role within the institution may be and any limitations.
- v. Degree Characteristics – Postgraduate taught programmes**  
The Committee noted that further discussion would take place at RPRC to recognise the structures of PGT programmes within the College and to identify patterns in programme structure.
- vi. Maximum credit in PGT programmes**  
The Committee recommended to Senate the following RPRC recommendation:
- That the Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study were updated for academic year 2022/2023 to state that the normal credit value of a postgraduate taught programme would be 90 ECTS, with the conditional approval for up to 92.5 ECTS where the structures of the modules available to students means that they may complete more than the expected number of credits.
- Action: Secretary**
- 5.1.2** The Committee noted that RPRC deferred the following items:
- Referred Items from Programmes Committee
  - Consideration of borderline students within mitigating circumstances
  - Programme Withdrawals

## **6. Religious Observance Policy and Procedure**

**6.1** The Committee received further updates to the Religious Observance Policy and Procedure QAEC.2021.60

**6.1.1** The Committee noted that RPRC agreed that the content of the current policies and procedures on religious observance should be updated and combined (Policy and Procedure on Religious Observance and Assessment for 2021 and Examinations and Religious Obligations). The updated policy and procedure was limited to the current information that was provided to staff and students. It was noted that the College should consider its stance and any related policies of the impact of religious observance on learning and teaching activities, beyond time limited assessments.

**6.1.2** The structure of the updated policy and procedure provided an introduction, the process to follow to request an adjustment on the basis of a specific religious observance that forbids work, and guidance about fasting. The Committee felt that the document needed to be clear as to its purpose, as it covered both broad policy principles as well as very practical guidance.

**6.1.3** The Committee recommended the Policy and Procedure to Senate, subject to the following:

- Further revisions to address comments sent via email from the Faculty of Medicine representative
- Final review from the Director of Student Services of the relevant dates for non-work days as part of religious observance.

**Action: Secretary**

## **7 Unsatisfactory Engagement Policy and Procedure**

**7.1** The Committee considered proposed updates to the Unsatisfactory Engagement Policy and Procedure. It was noted that updates were required to provide a clear process and procedure for all taught and research students where there were concerns about their progress and engagement, outside of the formal decision-making points for progression and award (Board of Examiners for Taught programme students, ESA, LSR or Progress Review for Research students). The current procedure only applied to those students governed by the General Regulations, as it was an appendix to these, and did not apply to the majority of undergraduate, and increasing number of postgraduate, students. It was also noted that with the changes to other procedures such as Mitigating Circumstances and the relevant academic appeals procedures, further clarity in the management of academic failure would be beneficial. QAEC.2021.61

**7.2** The Committee approved the proposed changes subject to the following revisions:

- That further clarity was required as to who drafts the formal correspondence to the student and what conditions were added (3.2 onwards)
- That further consideration was required as to whether the supervisor was most appropriately placed to initiate procedures (4.1)
- That the turnaround time for which the Academic Registrar and Vice Provost (Education) would decide whether there were grounds for an Appeal Hearing should be changed to 10 days, and that 'or nominee' should be added to
- ensure the College has sufficient cover
- That typos were corrected – 'intuition' (5.2) and change 'the student' to 'you' (7.1)
- That comments sent via email from the Faculty of Medicine representative were considered.

**7.3** The Committee considered whether a student who seeks to appeal a withdrawal decision should be permitted to continue with the programme during the period of appeal.

The following factors were considered as set out in the paper:

1. A student who successfully appeals, if not permitted to remain on programme, may then be too far to be able to continue in that year causing unnecessary delay to their studies.
2. If they were withdrawn, and successfully appeal, they may have issues with visa or other external agency issues, impacting further on their studies.
3. A student who was withdrawn under the procedure has been under formal consideration for a minimum of 6 weeks and would have been failing to satisfactorily engage for a period prior to the formal procedure being implemented (this period would be longer for a research student). Would it then be feasible for them to re-commence their studies during an appeal?
4. If a student was studying under a Tier 4 visa and has not been meeting attendance requirements, there may be legal implications of the College failing to notify UKVI at the point of withdrawal.
5. Other procedures of the College that require a student removes themselves from study (for example academic failure) do not permit a student to continue whilst appealing due to academic and financial implications for the student.
6. As it would be expected that the majority of any appeals would be upheld on the grounds of new mitigation, as the College should ensure its procedures were followed and its decision-making fair, any mitigation that has impacted on the student for the period of informal and formal procedures was likely to be significant and may be continuing to prevent their full engagement.

The Committee agreed that the student should be permitted to continue with the programme during the period of appeal to ensure that they were not disadvantaged and do not experience any visa issues.

**7.4** The Committee recommended the Policy and procedure to Senate, subject to the updates put forward by members. Should the proposed changes be accepted, amendments would need to be made to the relevant Academic Regulations to clarify the appropriate processes.

**Action: Secretary**

## **8. External Examiners**

### **8.1 Undergraduate External Examiner Report**

QAEC.2021.62

**8.1.1** The Committee considered the College UG External Examiner report summary 2021-22 (reporting on 2020-21).

**8.1.2** The academic year to which the report related saw the second year of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was reassuring to note that the majority of externals, where they made specific reference to the College's response to the pandemic, continued to be supportive of the measures that had been put in place to ensure the academic standards of the college were maintained. In particular, examiners reported on innovative approaches to the lab work and project work which was able to continue.

**8.1.3** The Committee noted the following themes which were recognized through external examiner comments:

- Programme and Module information
- Assessment
- Exam Boards

**8.1.4** The Committee noted the following response to the overall confidence 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."
- 99% agreed that "The academic standards and the achievements of students are comparable with those in other degree awarding bodies of which you have experience."
- For the one or two examiners who did not fully agree that their programmes met the above statements, they did find that these were mostly/usually met.

**8.1.5** It was confirmed that where there was a College level issue raised by an external examiner, this would be addressed by senior management and a response given to the external. In addition, all externals receive a direct response to any issues raised in their report, an institutional level response and the College summary report for the given level of study.

**8.1.6** It was agreed that the external examiner report template should be reviewed in light of the new OfS conditions of registration relating to quality and standards (see Item 9). A revised template would be presented at QAEC in September 2022.

**Action: Secretary**

## **9. Office for Students (OfS) Consultations**

**9.1** The Committee noted the College's responses to the OfS consultations on student outcomes and the future of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) (noted at Senate on 23 March 2022). QAEC.2021.63

**9.1.1** The Committee noted the College's consultation responses to the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), regulation of student outcomes (condition B3), and the construction of indicators, which were submitted to the OfS on 17 March. Responses were prepared by the Strategic Planning Division, which sought views from the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Experience), the Vice-Deans (Education), members of QAEC and the ICU President and Deputy President (Education).

**9.2** The Committee noted a paper setting out the four general ongoing conditions of registration required from the OfS in respect of Quality and Standards (B1, B2, B4 and B5). Members were aware that the OfS recently consulted on these conditions, to which the College provided a response, and that B3 was currently being reviewed (see 9.1.1). It was noted that the new conditions that related to providers applying for registration were not referred to as they were not relevant to the College. QAEC.2021.64

**9.2.1** It was reported that the OfS would use its general risk-based approach to monitoring. Where this suggests any compliance concerns the OfS may adopt one or more of the following approaches in any order:

- a) Engage with a provider to ensure it was aware of the issues.
- b) Gather further information it considers relevant to the scope of the potential concerns, from a provider or from elsewhere on a voluntary basis, to facilitate an assessment of whether there was, or has been, a breach of one or more conditions.
- c) Use its investigatory powers where that is considered appropriate for any reason.

The OfS may conduct investigations itself, or ask the Designated Quality Body, another appropriate body or individual to gather further relevant information. An investigation would normally involve a visit to the provider and interviews with relevant staff and students. The OfS would then reach a view about previous and ongoing compliance with the condition and where it considers that there has been a breach, would send a letter to set out the reasons for its provisional decisions and set out the evidence it has used to reach that view. The provider would then have a chance to make additional representations before a final decision was reached.

**9.2.2** Where there has been breach of B4 (relating to assessment and awards), the OfS would likely need access to students assessed work, including for students no longer registered on a programme. A provider was expected to retain appropriate records of students' assessed work for such regulatory purposes for a period of five years after the end date of a course. The absence of such records may lead the OfS to make negative inferences about a provider's compliance.

**9.2.3** It was noted that where there had been a breach of any condition, the OfS had set out a number of ways in which they may take this into account including:

- a) The provider's eligibility to participate in the TEF
- b) The provider's existing TEF rating
- c) Regulation of degree awarding powers
- d) Regulation of university title
- e) The criteria for the allocation of public funding

The Head of Academic Services presented a table, which included all the definitions provided by the OfS for the terms used in the Conditions of Registration, which condition(s) each term refers to, and examples of what the OfS might consider when interpreting the corresponding condition.

**9.2.4** Committee members discussed the role of annual monitoring in relation to the B conditions. The following points were noted, which would feed into the review of annual monitoring (QAEC Action List 09):

- The College has many 'organic' sources for monitoring, such as programme meetings and staff-student committees
- In some areas, light-touch module level review took place. The Faculty of Medicine was going to trial module review by interview/dialogue with Module Leads. The Business School holds an annual programme review meeting for each programme where each Module Lead was asked to report on their module. These have worked well with good attendance and some good discussion. The Faculty of Natural Sciences requires a short module form to be completed annually.
- The new Departmental Review process should be considered to ensure Departments were not duplicating effort in a review year
- Annual monitoring should be reframed to ensure it benefits Departments and Faculties as well as allows the College to meet external requirements.

**9.2.5** The Committee discussed curriculum review in relation to the conditions of registration. It was noted that the College had made significant gains in rationalising assessment and moving to more authentic practices. Further work would continue in the area including the Anatomy of Assessment project. This project aimed to facilitate change in assessment culture by creating an interactive resource of discipline-based examples of good assessment practice from across the College with detailed information about design, implementation marking and student insight. Through this the College would reveal the structure of different assessment types making it easier for staff to consider changing their assessment practice and giving guidance for students as to how to prepare for different formats. The College was also looking to undertake some joint work with UCL and the University of Manchester on assessment.

## **10. Sub-Committees**

### **10.1 Programmes Committee**

**10.1.1** The Committee considered the Summary Report from the Programmes Committee meeting held on 22 March 2022.

QAEC.2021.65

The following redesigned programme as part of Curriculum Review were approved, for October 2022 delivery:

#### Faculty of Engineering

##### Department of Chemical Engineering

- MSc Advanced Chemical Engineering
- MSc Advanced Chemical Engineering
- MSc Advanced Chemical Engineering with Biotechnology
- MSc Advanced Chemical Engineering with Materials Engineering
- MSc Advanced Chemical Engineering with Process Systems Engineering

##### Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering

- MSc Engineering Fluid Mechanics for the Offshore, Coastal and Built Environments

##### Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering

- MSc Analogue and Digital Integrated Circuit Design
- MSc Applied Machine Learning
- MSc Communications and Signal Processing
- MSc Control and Optimisation
- MSc Future Power Networks

##### Energy Futures Lab (EFL) / Department of Mechanical Engineering

- MSc Sustainable Energy Futures

#### Faculty of Natural Sciences

##### Department of Life Sciences



- MSc Applied Biosciences and Biotechnology
- MRes Biosystematics
- MRes Computational Methods in Ecology and Evolution and MSc Computational Methods in Ecology and Evolution
- MSc Ecological Applications
- MRes Ecology, Evolution and Conservation
- MSc Ecology, Evolution and Conservation
- MRes Ecosystem and Environmental Change
- MRes Molecular and Cellular Biosciences
- MRes Structural Biology
- MRes Systems and Synthetic Biology
- MSc Taxonomy, Biodiversity and Evolution
- MSc Research Methods in Ecology

**10.1.2** The Chair of Programmes Committee praised the quality of curriculum review documentation that had been produced by the Faculty of Engineering and for Dr Lorraine Craig's work in this area.

**10.1.3** The Chair of Programmes Committee raised concerns that a large number of PGT programmes that have undergone curriculum review have proposed programme specific regulations, which have been referred to RPRC. It was felt that the significant work previously undertaken by the College to agree a 'single set' of academic regulations was being undone.

**10.1.4** It was noted that work would be undertaken by the Quality Assurance Team to revise the programme approval forms to make them more streamlined.

**10.2** The Committee considered the Summary Report from the Programmes Committee meeting held on 29 March 2022 QAEC.2021.66

**10.2.1** The following redesigned programme as part of Curriculum Review were approved, for October 2022 delivery:

Faculty of Engineering

Department of Bioengineering

- MSc Biomedical Engineering
- MSc Human and Biological Robotics
- MSc Engineering for Biomedicine
- MRes Neurotechnology
- MRes Medical Device and Design and Entrepreneurship
- MRes Bioengineering
- MRes Bioengineering (2YPT) (NEW)
- MRes Cancer Technology
- BSc Medical Sciences with Biomedical Engineering

Faculty of Medicine

National Heart and Lung Institute

- MSc Genomic Medicine

School of Public Health

- MSc Epidemiology
- MSc Health Data Analytics and Machine Learning
- Master of Public Health
- Global Master of Public Health (Online)

Department of Surgery and Cancer

- MSc Surgical Innovation

Faculty of Natural Sciences

Department of Mathematics

- MSc Mathematics and Finance

Imperial College Business School

- MSc Strategic Marketing

**10.2.2** It was announced that Men-Yeut Wong, Secretary to Programmes Committee, was leaving the College. The Chair of QAEC and Chair of Programmes Committee thanked Men-Yeut for outstanding work supporting the Committee, particularly through UG and PGT curriculum review.

## **11. Senate**

**11.1** The Committee received a verbal update on the Senate meeting held on 23 March 2022, including the following:

- Learning and Teaching Strategy refresh
- Impact of War in Ukraine
- Academic Promotions
- Strike Action
- Technical Developments in the Teaching and Learning Product Board

## **12. Education Committee**

**12.1** The Committee noted summaries from previous meetings, accessible on the Education Committee webpage:

<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/leadership-and-strategy/provost/vice-provost-education/education-committee/>

**13. Chair's Action**

**13.1** The Committee ratified the College becoming a signatory to the new cross-sector Universities UK (UUK) Fair Admissions Code of Practice March 2022, which was agreed by Chair's Action. QAEC.2021.67

**14. Any Other Business**

**14.1 Module Evaluation Questionnaire (MEQ)**

**14.1.1** The Committee agreed that the MEQ required further development to ensure that results can be distributed efficiently and effectively. Whilst further exploration would be carried out to assess a realistic timeline to develop a PowerBI dashboard, it was agreed that an interim solution for data distribution was needed with accompanying guidance to departments.

**Action: Secretary**

**15. Dates of Meetings 2021-22**

**15.1** The Committee noted the dates for future QAEC meetings to be held in 2021-22 (all 10:10-12:00) as follows:

- Wednesday 1 June 2022 (for 29 June Senate)