

Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC)

Minutes from the meeting held on

Thursday 25 February 2021

Present

Professor Emma McCoy – Interim Vice Provost (Education and Student Experience) - Chair

David Ashton – Academic Registrar

Dr Malcolm Edwards – Director of Strategic Planning

Michaela Flegrova – ICU Deputy President (Education)

Leila Guerra – Vice Dean (Education), Imperial College Business School

Professor Martyn Kingsbury – Director of Educational Development

Mr Martin Lupton – Vice Dean (Education), Faculty of Medicine

Professor Omar Matar – Vice Dean (Education), Faculty of Engineering

Hailey Smith - Interim Head of Strategic Projects, Education Office

Professor Alan Spivey – Assistant Provost (Learning & Teaching)

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

Judith Webster – Director of Academic Quality and Standards

Professor Yun Xu – Director of the Graduate School

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

In attendance

Professor Neil Alford - Associate Provost (Academic Planning) [Item 7]

Craig Walker - Strategic Lead for Education Infrastructure [Item 7]

1. Welcome and Apologies

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed attendees, noting that all members were present. The Chair also welcomed Professor Neil Alford (Associate Provost, Academic Planning) and Craig Walker (Strategic Lead for Education Infrastructure).

2. Minutes

LTC.2020.07

- 2.1 The Committee confirmed the minutes from the previous meeting held on Monday 30 November 2020 as an accurate record.

3. Matters Arising

- 3.1 *Differential Outcomes Data (Item 5.9 refers)*

At the last meeting, the Committee recommended that 'with the review of how annual monitoring is conducted, departments could consider specific data at particular times of the year which would then be discussed at themed meetings during the year, rather than reviewing data retrospectively at the end of the academic year'. It was confirmed that this action is being taken forward by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC) in its capacity to oversee reviews of undergraduate and postgraduate taught provision in Departments.

4. Support for the Transition to College

- 4.1** The Committee received an update on the College's 'Deferral Support Package', which was provided to 130 offer holders across the departments of Physics, Mechanical Engineering and Computing, for October 2021 entry (deferred from 2020 entry).
- 4.2** The package aims to provide academic, developmental and social support over the 2020-21 academic year in order to ease the transition from school to the College and foster a sense of community and belonging. The Committee noted that the package is flexible and optional.
- 4.3** It was noted that academic content included access to zero credit 'courses' and self-directed activities. Developmental and social content had been put in place as follows:
- Mentorship programme run by Outreach
 - Imperial Award
 - Associate Membership of the ICU
 - Sessions from Careers / Library
 - Departmental induction ahead of 2021-22
 - Exclusive Opportunities - DB Internship
 - Monthly Newsletter

Additional content will be added throughout the year with around one 'course' likely to be added per month.

- 4.4** The College is considering further provision to support the transition to University, with factors such as increased cohort sizes, disrupted education and widening participation to be addressed.
- 4.5** It was confirmed that 30-35% of offer holders on deferral are actively engaged with one or more courses. A higher percentage are actively engaged with a mentor. Approximately 70% of offer holders are registered for the deferral package.

It was not yet clear why some students were not engaging with the package, but that anecdotal data from mentors might offer some insight. Further analysis will be undertaken, and an update provided at a future Committee meeting.

Action: Interim Head of Strategic Projects

- 4.6** The Vice Dean (Education), Business School, asked whether a new speaker series, 'The Business of Being Human', could be added to the deferral support package. It was noted that the opening event of the series included a multiple Paralympic gold medalist, Kadeena Cox, sharing her life story of resilience and determination. The Committee agreed that this would be a welcome addition and that Julia McShane (Director of Global Student Experience) should be contacted in order to formalise arrangements.

Action: Interim Head of Strategic Projects

4.7 The Committee welcomed the deferral package and supported further development of the offer. It was agreed that there was potential for the provision to be available for future offer holders as 'Year 0' activities.

5. PGT Curriculum Review

5.1 The Committee received an update on PGT Curriculum Review.

5.2 It was confirmed that the following departments would undergo curriculum review for changes to be implemented in 2021-22:

- Aeronautics
- Materials
- Civil Engineering (2 clusters)

In addition, the following department are actively engaged in the curriculum review process:

- Chemistry
- ESE
- Civil Engineering (remaining clusters)
- Design Engineering

5.3 The Interim Head of Strategic Projects reported that departments had been focussed on a number of areas of programme design including:

- Formation of learning outcomes
- Consolidation of programmes and streams
- Balance of assessment

It was noted that there had been thorough consultation with students and alumni throughout the process.

5.4 It was reported that further support on embedding inclusivity and diversity in the curriculum might be required. The Chair reported that the Royal Academy of Engineering had undertaken significant work in the areas of diversity and inclusion and would be a useful source for Engineering departments to engage with. Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies across disciplines can be an informative contact for best practice guidelines and case studies.

5.5. A PGT curriculum review calendar will be considered at a future Committee meeting once department plans have been finalised.

Action: Interim Head of Strategic Projects

6. College Access and Participation Plan

6.1 The Committee received an update from the Director of Strategic Planning on Access and Participation Plan (APP) monitoring.

6.2 It was noted that a report on College progress against OfS process targets would be signed off by the Chair of Council in due course. The report covered the final year of the old regime on which the College was judged against.

6.3 Under the new OfS regime, it was reported that the College has met or exceeded all three WP admissions targets. Further analysis will be undertaken to establish whether the WP admissions data is consistent across College Faculties. The College has met the required WP to non-WP ratio which had a target academic year of completion of 2024-25.

6.4 The Committee welcomed the positive update and agreed that it was extremely important for the College to monitor WP students, from admission through to completion, to ensure they receive the support required to succeed in and benefit from higher education.

7. Education Infrastructure Developments

7.1 The Associate Provost (Academic Planning) provided an update on how the College was responding to new teaching paradigms and social interactions. The update focussed on the work being undertaken at the South Kensington Campus, but it was noted that significant work had taken place at other College campuses including White City and Charing Cross. It was reported that there had been valuable input from students on redevelopment initiatives during the pandemic.

7.2 The Committee noted the following:

- Remote working and multimode teaching (e.g. lab in a box) had been successful
- Technology advances could help the College and aid interdepartmental collaboration
- The College needs to review the provision for inefficient cellular offices

7.3 The Strategic Lead for Education Infrastructure provided an update on the flexible use of educational space and the developments in Chemistry Level 4 shared student space.

7.4 It was noted that there was a possibility of developing an outdoor terrace overlooking the Queen's Lawn. It was confirmed that developments in Level 4 Chemistry would be accessible to all students. The Committee welcomed the developments and agreed that innovative shared spaces are essential.

8. National Student Survey

8.1 The Committee received an update on the College response to the NSS, including an updated NSS action plan. The Committee noted the following:

- Overall student satisfaction was 81% in 2020, a 0.6% decrease on 2019
- The 2020 response rate was 75%
- The NSS 2021 is open until 30 April 2021

8.2 The Committee were reminded of the 'root and branch' review following a request by the Universities Minister to address concerns about how the survey may be creating burden and impacting on standards, while ensuring the NSS remains an important indicator of student opinion.

8.3 The Committee briefly discussed how the College currently responds to student feedback. It was highlighted that areas for improvement and best practice is shared at QAEC through annual monitoring as well as annual reports on surveys such as SOLE. The College's governance review will be an opportunity for further consideration of how student feedback is addressed.

9. Learning and Teaching Strategy Programme Plan and Risk Log LTC.2020.08

9.1 The Committee noted activity progressing as normal with no major changes to report.

10. Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework LTC.2020.09

10.1 The Committee received a summary of the report from the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) independent review. It was noted that Dame Shirley Pearce's [independent review of TEF](#) had been published, which was followed by a [Government response](#).

The Committee noted a summary on the following key areas of the review:

10.1.1 Purpose: The report recommends that the primary objective of the TEF should be to identify excellence and enhance the educational experience and outcomes that students receive. The Government agree with this purpose of "enhancement of quality" but see a secondary purpose of informing student choice.

10.1.2 Principles: The Government agree with the report's recommendation for three overarching principles. The TEF should be:

- i. transparent (clear to all and widely understood)
- ii. relevant (to the purpose and to all provision)
- iii. robust (both statistically and operationally).

10.1.3 Assessment process: Having considered the TEF provider and subject level assessment process the review concluded that there are three categories of improvement:

- i. Process – including controlling for factors such as region on employment outcomes and giving providers the opportunity to provide institutional evidence alongside national metrics.
- ii. Statistical analysis – improve management and communication of statistical uncertainty, small numbers, and relative vs. absolute comparisons.
- iii. Subject level exercise – the report recommends that TEF should not progress to ratings at subject level, instead the provider-level assessment should incorporate a subject level exercise. The Government agree with no subject level assessments and expect the TEF to be a periodic exercise (every 4 or 5 years).

- 10.1.4** TEF Framework: The recommendation is for the framework to be made up of four aspects of assessment (within two dimensions of excellence).
- i. Educational Experience
 - a. Teaching and Learning Environment
 - b. Student Satisfaction
 - ii. Educational Outcomes
 - c. Educational Gains
 - d. Graduate Outcomes
- 10.1.5** Grade inflation: The report states that TEF is not considered to be an appropriate framework through which to address grade inflation: “In the proposed framework, we have retained all of the existing metrics except the data on grade inflation, as we are concerned that this does not meet the principle of relevance.”
- 10.1.6** Rating system: The Government agree with the report’s recommendation for a four-tiered rating system and will work with the OfS to confirm the names. The report recommended:
- i. Meets UK Quality Requirements
 - ii. Commended
 - iii. Highly Commended
 - iv. Outstanding
- 10.1.7** Name of framework: The review has recommended that the name be changed from the TEF to Educational Excellence Framework (EdEF) to reflect the wider remit of the exercise, but this has been rejected by the Government.

11. College’s Academic Response to Covid-19

LTC.2020.10

- 11.1** Following previous updates to Senate in June, October and December 2020, the paper set out the continuing response made by College to Covid-19 in respect of the need to assure the academic quality and standards of the College’s provision whilst supporting students. The Committee noted the following key sections of the report:

- Impact of National Lockdown and Spring Term Arrangements
- Student Attendance on Campus
- Approach to Fair Assessment
- Admissions
- Student Experience
- Support for PGR Students
- Financial Support
- International Student Support
- Timetabling
- Review of Student Support Over the Christmas Vacation
- Collaboration

12. Education Evaluation

- 12.1** The Committee received a verbal update from the Director of Strategic Planning. The Committee noted the changes in OfS targets, which have transitioned from WP student access to WP success outcomes.

13. Educational Research

- 13.1** The Committee received a verbal update from the Director of CHERS, who reported a significant increase in educational research as a result of Covid-19.
- 13.2** The Committee noted some encouraging preliminary research that suggested that some students apply to study at the College due to the perception that the College: is engaged in educational reform and innovation; is a diverse higher education institution; and actively explores the development of flexible teaching space.
- 13.3** There were anecdotal reports that, due to studying remotely as a result of Covid-19, current year one students had less social interaction with peers and therefore concerns around acquiring shared accommodation in year two. It was noted that ESOG Student Experience would address this issue.

14. Ed Tech Guild

The Committee received a verbal update from the Assistant Provost (Learning & Teaching), noting that there were now four sub-groups of the Guild covering the following specialist areas: Evaluation and Monitoring; Training and Development; Digital Assessment; and Digital Tools.

15. I-Explore Module Innovation Group

- 15.1** The Committee received a verbal update from the Assistant Provost (Learning & Teaching), noting that there is a need for the College to consider re-assessment and mitigating circumstances in the context of these modules.

16. Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee

- 16.1** The Committee received a verbal update from the Academic Registrar on the following items:
- Lecturer and module evaluation review for 2020-21 implementation
 - New programme approval - MRes in Business
 - 2 years, full-time with effect from September 2021, 180 ECTS
 - Student Online Evaluation (SOLE) Results – Autumn 2020

17. Any Other Business

- 17.1** There was no other business reported

18. Meeting dates for 2020/21

18.1 The Committee noted the following meeting date:

- 29 April 2021 (15:00-17:00)
- 27 May 2021 (15:00-17:00)