

Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC)
Confirmed Minutes from the meeting held on
Tuesday 23 January 2018

Present

Professor Simone Buitendijk – Vice Provost (Education) – Chair
Mr David Ashton – Academic Registrar
Mr Nick Burstow – ICU Deputy President (Education)
Ms Emma Caseley – Head of Strategic Projects, Education Office
Professor Sue Gibson – Director of the Graduate School
Professor Des Johnston – Vice Dean (Education), Faculty of Medicine
Professor Martyn Kingsbury – Director of Educational Development (left after item 7.1)
Professor Omar Matar – Vice Dean (Education), Faculty of Engineering
Professor Emma McCoy – Vice Dean (Education), Faculty of Natural Sciences
Dr Edgar Meyer – Business School representative
Professor Alan Spivey – Assistant Provost (Learning & Teaching)
Ms Judith Webster – Head of Academic Services
Ms Lucy Heming – Senior Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance and Enhancement) -
Secretary

In attendance

Ms Chris Banks – Assistant Provost (Space)
Mr John Crook – Head of Timetabling

Apologies

Dr Malcolm Edwards – Director of Strategic Planning
Mr Martin Lupton – QAEC representative

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and apologies, as listed above, were noted. The Chair welcomed Lucy Heming, Senior Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance and Enhancement) to her first meeting as Secretary to the Committee.

2. Minutes – Paper LTC.2017.27

The Committee confirmed the minutes from the meeting held on Tuesday 19 December 2017; subject to a minor amendment to the time of the meeting scheduled for 22 March 2018.

- 2.1 Outstanding Committee actions were noted as follows: Minute 2.2 – it was confirmed that the collation and circulation of guidance and good practice relating to Personal Tutors had been completed.

3. Matters Arising

There were no Matters Arising not covered by the Agenda.

4. Space Project – Paper LTC.2017.28

- 4.1 The Committee received a presentation on the space project from the Assistant Provost (Space)

and the Head of Timetabling.

- 4.2 The Chair introduced the topic and noted the high priority across the College to address issues with space availability and usage. The Chair reminded colleagues that it was important not just to address the operational objectives but to shift the nature of the discourse around space and the culture within the College towards shared and sharing space.
- 4.3 It was noted that all the undergraduate annual monitoring reports considered at the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee in January 2018 had raised space as a key issue. Some of the annual monitoring reports noted the perception that space could be a barrier to curriculum redevelopment and a factor in increasing non-attendance by students, who chose to engage with online resources instead.
- 4.4 The question of space had arisen as the College sought to grow its student numbers. The first step to manage this growth was to look at how to accommodate increased usage within existing space before looking at developing new space. This required a strategic approach to the use of space, which was focussed on ensuring space was accessible and fit for purpose and that the reliance on external space was reduced by being more efficient with the use of internal space. To this end, the team were developing policies, guidance and tools on accessibility, strategic usage, room bookings and room support.
- 4.5 The space project commenced in February 2015. Among the highlights achieved so far were:
- 95% students received a personalised academic timetable to the device of their choice in 2016-17;
 - development of a searchable teaching space inventory system;
 - investment in better data and systems;
 - agreement on a College level policy space framework;
 - started shifting the culture, which was resistant to central interventions on space.
- 4.6 There were still a number of challenges facing the project. These included:
- tackling ongoing cultural resistance to sharing of space;
 - realising value from better sharing of space;
 - effectiveness and resilience of space sharing services.
- 4.7 The project included a work stream devoted to charging for space. Initially this was focussed on developing an understanding of current practice; the next step would be to determine an appropriate charging model but this would be dependent on decisions still to be made about how space will be used in future. Issues around perceived ownership rights, inequalities in the funding available for refurbishing space and concern over consequences arising from space being removed from local control and access still needed to be addressed.
- 4.8 There were a number of strategic influences which impacted on space within the College. These were all interconnected and efforts had been made to ensure a joined up approach by bringing together representatives of the different influences on to the central Space Board. In addition to the use of formal board structure, extensive consultation had taken place with space users (students and staff) to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the issues around space.
- 4.9 The data gathered had assigned primary and secondary purposes to different spaces and was able to show the extent to which existing spaces were underutilised at different points during the year. The data showed that it was possible to grow student numbers by making better use of existing space through sharing rather than building new space. Using data in this way could help not just in

room allocation but in better understanding how people used space. Furthermore, better understanding room usage could help the College in identify clear windows for when space could be used for commercial purposes without affecting internal needs.

- 4.10 A specific strand of the project was looking at examination space usage, with a view to undertaking a new approach to examination room allocation in summer 2018 and going forwards. The project was aiming to reduce the number of exams held in unsuitable College space (e.g. in raked lecture theatres), in external venues or where the same exam had to be held in multiple rooms. Using existing data, an exercise had been undertaken to create an alternative examination rooming plan to address these issues by sharing space. Those working on this had embraced the outcomes and were positive about the prospect of using this proactively in preparing for the summer exam season. However, support was needed from Faculties and Departments to help free up those staff members needed to engage in further re-rooming exercises and to reduce resistance to allocating exam spaces outside of departmental areas.
- 4.11 The Committee welcomed the positive response from timetabling staff to the work undertaken on the examination space strand of the project and supported the intention to proceed with this approach to rooming examinations in summer 2018. It was recommended that the planned upcoming communication to Heads of Department, Directors of Undergraduate Studies and other key parties was also copied to Vice-Deans of Education so that they could provide support. It was anticipated that while this year would require a significant involvement from timetabling staff, much of the work could be rolled over in future years, reducing the resource needed to support this in future.
- 4.12 The Committee raised concerns about the consequences of re-rooming, for those activities which are displaced. In particular, it was noted that while raked lecture theatres were unsuitable for certain types of assessment, they could also be unsuitable for types of teaching activities. The key was to find a way of making sure the space allocated reflected the requirements of the activity. This was complicated by the current lack of minimum requirements for space, which led to inconsistencies in the appropriateness of space for different types of activity. The project team was looking to identify baseline requirements for optimal space and to build a business case which would demonstrate that all space needed to meet this requirement so as to free up funding to address spaces which were not optimal.

It was recommended that an update on progress with the space project be provided to the Committee in Autumn 2018.

ACTION: Secretary to include on agenda for Autumn term 2018

5. NSS Final Action Plan – Paper LTC.2017.29

- 5.1 The Head of Strategic Projects (Education Office) and ICU Deputy President (Education) provided an update against the action plan responding to the results from the National Student Survey (NSS).
- 5.2 The Imperial College Union had been working closely with the Education Office on finalising the actions and liaising with key parties, for example with the Head of Student Services in relation to the actions around mental health training.
- 5.3 The Committee thanked the Union for their practical and comprehensive response to the NSS results and their leadership on the development of the action plan. The ICU Deputy President

(Education) welcomed the support of the Committee for the ethos underpinning the action plan.

5.4 It was agreed that the finalised action plan should be taken to the Provost Board.

ACTION: Head of Strategic Projects to forward the action plan to the Provost Board

6. Risk Register – Paper LTC.2017.30

6.1 The Head of Strategic Projects (Education Office) provided an update on the College risk register. It was agreed that this would be brought to the Committee periodically, with a view for the Committee to be aware of the most urgent risks and to consider how best to mitigate the risks identified.

6.2 Specific attention was drawn to the risk arising from delays in resourcing around roles for the Curriculum Review and to the perceived risk relating to a lack of adequate space; the latter issue had been discussed in depth in item 4 on the space project.

6.3 It was reiterated that due to the separate funding stream for activities related to the Learning and Teaching Strategy, recruitment of additional posts or spending on back-fill for those involved in Curriculum Review would not be allocated to Departmental or Faculty budgets or head counts. It was agreed that a message would be prepared for departments confirming this approach so as to address reluctance in some areas to take forward the posts needed for Curriculum Review due to flat-line budget requirements.

ACTION: Chair and Head of Strategic Projects (Education Office) to develop a communication for departments about the funding approach for resource related to Curriculum Review

6.4 It was emphasised that there was often a spike in resource requirements in the initial stages of innovative projects and that this needed to be flagged and managed appropriately as the Learning and Teaching Strategy was rolled out. This should not be seen as a barrier to engagement.

7. Implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy

7.1 Curriculum Review

7.1.1 Feedback on the Proposed Framework for Horizons/BPES Modules within new Curricula

7.1.1.1 The Committee received feedback from members on the proposal considered at the December meeting to further develop the commitment that all students should be given an opportunity to take a co-curricula module as part of their programme of studies at the College.

7.1.1.2 The main feedback from Faculties was that staff were keen and willing to give the opportunity to students to engage in modules outside their subject-based curricula but did not want to make it compulsory. It was noted in addition that in some areas such as Medicine, while staff supported the philosophy of the framework, they acknowledged there could be difficulties in practically embedding these opportunities.

7.1.1.3 There had been significant consultation around the overarching strategy behind the framework of having a space within all programmes for students to take optional modules including those under Horizons or BPES. Therefore it was not thought necessary to undertake further wide consultation again at this stage, including with students. The Imperial College Union had had internal discussions about the latest proposals and as with the faculties, were in favour of creating equitable opportunities for every student.

7.1.1.4 Alongside the practical issues on embedding optional opportunities, the culture towards options outside the subject area needed to be addressed. Feedback from employers suggested Imperial graduates were seen as lacking some of the transferable skills which other students were achieving and therefore it was important for graduate attributes to be embedded in core curricula and through the encouragement of students to broaden their engagement in a range of different content and pedagogic experiences. It was suggested that the Careers Service could also play a role in promoting these options.

7.1.2 Proposed approach on handling Curriculum Review programme changes through Programmes Committee – Paper LTC.2017.31

7.1.2.1 The Committee received a proposal from the Programmes Committee on the process for handling programme changes arising from Curriculum Review. The proposal was designed to ensure departments were actively engaged in the critical scrutiny of programme changes during the Curriculum Review process alongside a range of other contributors and to manage the workload for Programmes Committee.

7.1.2.2 The proposal was to set up reference groups to check proposed programme changes for both pedagogic coherence and quality compliance before the proposals went to Faculty Education Committees (FECs) and subsequently Programmes Committee. The proposal set out the proposed membership. It was agreed that the wording around student members should be amended to reflect the need to actively seek to engage students in the review process, even if it may prove difficult to manage their availability.

ACTION: Head of Programmes Committee to amend the wording around student members

7.1.2.3 It was noted that this approach correlated with practice in other institutions and the Committee supported the proposal. It was emphasised that the contribution of members on the reference group would be vital in steering proposals appropriately and effectively. It was suggested that opportunities to share practice across groups, such as through the teaching fellows group, would help members provide consistent support and scrutiny.

7.1.2.4 Concerns were raised about the workload for Faculty Education Committees and reference group members. The Committee was reminded backfill funding could be provided via the Learning and Teaching Strategy.

7.1.2.5 The Committee agreed that the output of Curriculum Review would need to be a full programme specification for all programmes and a module specification for all modules. This would ensure the College complied with its legal requirements under the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) and that applicants would have sufficient information to make informed decisions about the new programmes on offer.

7.1.2.6 It was emphasised that module specifications did not need to contain comprehensive details about all aspects of the syllabus and delivery but would be focussed around the learning outcomes, the teaching and learning strategy and the assessment strategy for the module. A set of minimum requirements for module specifications would be set out for those engaged in the Curriculum Review process and exemplars would be produced to assist colleagues. It was agreed this would be made available at the follow-up workshop on Curriculum Review on 21 March 2018; expectations would need to be managed about what would be available at the first workshop on 31 January 2018.

ACTION: Head of Academic Services, Head of Strategic Projects (Education Office) and Chair of

Programmes Committee to complete module specification template, guidance and exemplars

- 7.1.2.7 The Committee discussed the current modifications process and noted the timings for modifications did not fit with key deadlines for the production of the prospectus and for information being published on UCAS. This was due to concerns raised about programme teams needing to make timely changes for the following year based on feedback from External Examiners. However, this created additional work for the College as all applicants would need to be contacted about changes made after they had applied in order to ensure they were making an informed decision about their programme choice, in line with CMA requirements.

7.2 Pedagogy Transformation – Paper LTC.2017.32

- 7.2.1 Committee members were reminded of the current call for applications for funds. This round would consider proposals under both Stream A and Stream B. Future focus would be on Stream A only. It was advised that it was anticipated that there would not be a set deadline for future Stream A funding bids as the Education Office would work with departments on developing their proposals on a rolling basis.
- 7.2.2 The first workshop for Curriculum Review would take place on 31 January 2018. Participation rates looked positive, with at least three members of staff attending from each department.
- 7.2.3 Members praised the Talking Teaching seminar held on 17 January. It was confirmed that discussions were taking place with the Graduate School over the potential for expanding the project helping students to learn how to read and analyse academic papers.

8. Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Plan – Paper LTC.2017.33

- 8.1 The Committee considered an update on progress against the Learning and Teaching Strategy implementation plan.

9. Education Evaluation

- 9.1 The Director of Strategic Planning was absent so the update was postponed until the next meeting. It was noted that a number of departments were engaging with the pilot for subject-level Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and that action would be needed to address some of the metrics going forward, particularly in relation to the NSS.

10. Educational Research

- 10.1 The Director of Educational Development was absent for this part of the meeting so the update was postponed until the next meeting.

11. QAEC

- 11.1 The Committee heard that QAEC had considered a final draft of the student casework policies on Student Complaints, Academic Appeals, Academic Misconduct and Mitigating Circumstances. These were out for consultation with the Faculties and final approval would be sought at an extraordinary meeting of QAEC in March 2018. It was agreed that a date for the extraordinary meeting should be set as soon as possible to ensure member availability.

ACTION: Chair of QAEC to confirm date of extraordinary meeting

11.2 It was noted that the periodic review process for taught provision had been postponed in 2018-19 to enable departments to focus on Curriculum Review.

11.3 The Committee received a verbal update from the Head of Academic Services on the academic regulations. These were in progress and it was anticipated they would be ready for consideration by the end of January.

12. Senate

12.1 There had not been a meeting of Senate since the last meeting of the Committee so no update was required.

13. Any Other Business

13.1 It was agreed the next meeting of the Committee should consider the College approach to engaging with the apprenticeship levy and employers looking to engage in apprenticeships.

ACTION: Secretary to include item on Apprenticeships for the next agenda

13.2 Faculty members agreed to remind staff to promote to students the current round for nominations for Student Academic Choice Awards which would be open until 9 February 2018. Over 500 nominations had been received to date and the Union was hoping to beat last year's response of approximately 850 nominations.

ACTION: Faculty representatives to remind staff to promote the Student Academic Choice Awards to students

13.3 A query was raised about College preparations for the Knowledge Exchange Framework. It was advised that the Director of Strategic Planning would be best placed to respond to this query.

14. Dates of next meetings 2017-18

Tuesday 20th Feb 2018, 10:00-12:00, Boardroom, Level 4, Faculty Building

Thursday 22nd March 2018, 09:30-11:30, 909B, EEE Building

Wednesday 16th May 2018, 10:00-12:00, Ballroom, 58, Prince's Gate