

**THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
MASTER'S QUALITY COMMITTEE
(BUSINESS, ENGINEERING & PHYSICAL SCIENCES)**

**The minutes of the Graduate School Master's Quality Committee
(Business, Engineering & Physical Sciences)
held on
Thursday 24th January 2013**

Present:

Dr David McPhail, Graduate School Deputy Director & Department of Materials (Chair)
Professor Andrew George, Director Graduate School
Dr John Gibbons, Department of Mathematics
Professor Andrew Holmes, Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering
Mr Doug Hunt, ICU Deputy President (Education)
Professor Bassam Izzuddin, Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering
Professor Lesley Cohen, Department of Physics
Dr Rob Dickinson, Department of Bioengineering
Mr Nicholas Ng, Student Representative for Engineering
Ms Tilly Collins, Centre for Environmental Policy
Mr Simon Schillebeeckx, Student Representative for the Business School
Dr Fariba Sadri, Department of Computing
Professor Richard Thompson, Dean for Natural Sciences
Professor Richard Jardine, Dean for Engineering & the Business School
Professor Kang Li, Department of Chemical Engineering
Mr Nigel Wheatley, Academic Registrar

In attendance:

Mrs Clare Scheibner, Office Manager, Registry

Apologies:

Ms Maryam Habibzay, GSA President
Professor Debra Humphris, Pro Rector (Education)
Professor Denis Wright, Dean of Students
Professor Sergei Chernyshenko, Department of Aeronautics
Professor Howard Johnson, Department of Earth Science & Engineering
Dr Pat Leever, Department of Mechanical Engineering
Dr Marco Mongiello, Business School
Dr Nick Voulvoulis, Centre for Environmental Policy
Mr Ross Webster, Student Representative for Physical Sciences
Dr Tim Albrecht, Department of Chemistry
Ms Sophie White, Senior Assistant Registrar (Secretary)

Minutes

1. Welcome and Apologies

Dr David McPhail welcomed members to the meeting and apologies, as listed above, were noted.

2. Committee Minutes

2.1 Master's Quality Committee – PGT (Business, Engineering & Physical Sciences)

Paper A

The minutes from the Master's Quality Committee (Business, Engineering & Physical Sciences) held on 15th November 2012 were approved.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

Matters arising not appearing elsewhere on the agenda were discussed.

3.1 Further to Minute 4.2 regarding feedback from Physics and Materials to Betty Yue on her course costing tool, it was noted that the costing tool had been received but seemed too complicated and not particularly suitable.

3.2 Further to Minute 4.3.1 regarding feedback from the MQC (LSM) on the rating 'Satisfactory' for course reviews and whether action should be taken if a course continued to be rated satisfactory but never reached good. It was noted that a rating of 'Satisfactory' was nevertheless acceptable but a repeated rating of satisfactory could be used as a focus for discussion with the HoD.

3.3 Further to Minute 4.3.6 it regarding the new course Review Process it was noted that this will be approved by QAEC shortly. It was also noted that all courses due for review this year have been contacted.

3.4 Further to Minute 4.3.8 regarding Key Information Sets (KISs) for Postgraduate courses, it was noted that the College KIS return had recently been audited by HEFCE. There is currently no indication that KISs will be extended to PGT or PGR courses but in anticipation of this possible requirement it was suggested that an exemplar of a PGT course KIS could be produced.

3.5 Further to Minute 4.8 regarding amending minute 6.3 from the meeting of 31st May 2012 of the Joint Academic Advisory Board for the MA/MSc in Innovation Design Engineering, it was noted that this was in progress.

Action:RP

3.6 Further to Minute 11.3 regarding the approval of the new precepts by Senate, it was noted that Senate had now endorsed the Master's Precepts which will come into effect from 2013/14.

3.7 Further to Minute 11.6 regarding recruitment and selection training courses for course organisers, it was noted that the Recruitment and Selection Update e-Learning course could be accessed by the following link.

http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/staffdevelopment/ldc/workshops/index_recruitment/recruitment_update

Details of other recruitment and selection workshops could be found at:
http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/staffdevelopment/ldc/workshops/index_recruitment

Details of equality and diversity training could be found at:
<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/staffdevelopment/equality>

- 3.8** Further to minute 13.4 regarding the production of central guidelines for the use of peer assessment, it was noted that the production of the guidelines was still ongoing.

Action: AG

4. New Course Proposal

4.1 MRes in Mathematical Sciences

**Paper B
& Bi**

The Committee considered a proposal from the Department of Mathematics for a new MRes in Mathematical Sciences with effect from October 2013.

- 4.2** The proposal was presented by Dr John Gibbons. The Committee heard that there is a growing emphasis in Mathematics PhD programmes on taught elements in the early stages. Setting up a Doctoral Training Centre (DTC) programme with a 1-year MRes degree normally leading directly into a 3-year PhD in a related topic would help achieve this. Dr Gibbons stated that the current structure proposed should be seen as a transitional arrangement towards a DTC.

- 4.3** Dr Gibbons informed the Committee that during the first two terms students would take 5 taught courses in Pure Mathematics, Applied Mathematics or Statistics, drawn both from existing MSc programmes, and other advanced courses offered through the Taught Course Centre (TCC). Dr Gibbons stressed that TCC modules would be optional modules only.

- 4.4** Dr McPhail raised a concern regarding the resilience of the course should a TCC member withdraw a course module offered to students. There was a risk in relying on modules delivered by an external body.

- 4.5** Mr Wheatley confirmed that there would need to be a memorandum of agreement in place for the taught elements provided by other Universities who form part of the TCC.

- 4.6** The Committee heard that students would carry out a research project, in the same subject area as the taught courses, whose topic would be chosen with the Course Tutor, possibly at the course application stage or at the beginning of the course.

- 4.7** The Committee stressed that students must be clearly advised of the separation between their MRes project and their PhD topic.

- 4.8** It was further noted that students should be strongly recommended to attend suitable skills courses offered by the Graduate School.

- 4.9** Members noted the absence of cohort building in the proposal. While numbers on the course might be small and students might be working in disparate areas, it was desirable nevertheless that they should be brought together as a cohort. Dr Gibbon

welcomed further advice on this.

- 4.10** The Committee felt that attention should be given to promoting a unique selling point for the course.
- 4.11** Subject to the comments above, specifically with regard to research skills, the resilience of using lectures from outside the College, and cohort building, the Committee agreed to approve the course and recommend it for Senate approval.

Post Meeting Note

Following the meeting, Chair's Action was taken to approve the course for Senate approval, as it was

- clarified that, the none of the TCC/LTCC courses would be compulsory courses counting towards the final result. This meant that while it would be inconvenient if the courses were withdrawn, it would not fatal be to delivery of the MRes. It was further stressed that as the TCC provide a significant body of courses, of the right level, relevant to these 3 streams of the MRes curriculum the department felt it was right the students be encouraged to attend them.
- confirmed that, as part of the 'Research Skills' element, students would attend some of the Graduate School "MasterClass" sessions; in particular, the courses in Academic Writing, Note Taking and Efficient Reading, Preparing a Literature Review, Presenting Skills, Research Ethics, Research Skills and Reference Management.
- confirmed that, the department had identified some activities which all MRes students in the year would do together, e.g. a weekly seminar of common interest to students on all 3 streams, the 'Reading Scientific Literature' session and the 20-minute madness exercise. These activities would be supplemented with social events.
- confirmed that, the course handbook would contain explicit guidance to students that the MRes thesis and subsequent PhD thesis, though normally on related topics, should be disjoint.
- Confirmed that, further thought would be given to marketing and cohort-building activities once the course had been approved by Senate.

5. Follow up from course reports (2011-12)

5.1 MSc in Strategic Marketing (2011-12)

Paper C

The Committee considered the report of the entry and exit qualifications of the first cohort of students of the MSc in Strategic Marketing.

- 5.1.1** It was noted that this was a pleasing report demonstrating that the results of the first cohort reflected the high entry standards.

5.2 MSc in Innovation, Entrepreneurship & Management (2011-12)

Paper D

The Committee considered the report of the entry and exit qualifications of the first cohort of students of the MSc in Innovation, Entrepreneurship & Management.

- 5.2.1** It was noted that the report showed a number of students had struggled with the mathematical courses: Accounting & Corporate Reporting Analysis and Business Economics. Both of these courses had challenging examination papers which resulted in quite high failure rates.
- 5.2.2** It was further noted that the department had provided extra support in quantitative skills to students from non-quantitative backgrounds both prior to the beginning of the programme through the pre-study primer courses, and throughout the autumn term via ad hoc mathematics tutorials.
- 5.2.3** Mr Schillebeeckx suggested that the introduction of a mathematics entry examination at the point of application or modification of the current one week online mathematics course so that it became more comprehensive, would help identify applicants who may struggle with the mathematical element of the course. Through general discussion suggestions included an intensive one week mathematics course during the first week of the Autumn term, a mathematics test during the first week of the course with an option of re-sit for failures within the first term. The comments from the Committee will be given as feedback to the Business School.

Post Meeting Note

The Business School confirmed that they had taken action already to address the issues identified. Specifically, the Business School had intensified their offering of maths support during the online and the in-session courses. The contents of the courses were also checked and revised on a yearly basis by the tutors that most rely on maths skills. The Business School also confirmed that they were on route to provide even more support, in light of the wider and wider diversity of backgrounds among their students.

With regards to the specific suggestions from the Committee, the Business School provided the following responses:

Introduction of an entry test in Mathematics

“The ethos of this programme is to leverage on the students’ backgrounds as a source for a richer and more effective learning experience. In addition, the course is not highly quantitative. Therefore, discriminating against students from, for example highly creative backgrounds but low maths skills, would defeat the purpose of seeking such a valued diversity.

All students sit the Finance primer test in week 1 and students who score less than 50% are offered optional face to face maths tutorials. Next year we are looking at raising the pass mark to 70% and making the maths tutorials compulsory (although it's not clear how we enforce this.)”

Making the online course more comprehensive

“The content of the course was designed to fit with the content of quantitative courses on the Management programme. Although we believe the content was suitable we will check with the course leaders of Accounting and Business Economics next year to make sure it is still appropriate and if there is any way of making it clearer”.

Re-testing students later in the term

“This has always been happening already. In week 8 or 9 after a number of face to face tutorials we re-test students who fail the primer in Induction week. Generally students pass at this point although it partly depends on how many tutorials they have attended. This year we also ran a maths class for Business Economics which was specifically tailored to the Business Economics course”.

6. Course Modification

6.1 MSc in Advanced Chemical Engineering

Paper E

The Committee considered a request from the Department of Chemical Engineering to allow September re-sits on the MSc in Advanced Chemical Engineering with immediate effect.

6.1.1 It was noted that the students had been consulted and no objections had been raised.

6.1.2 There was general discussion through which it was agreed that courses which provided a September re-sit option must hold a Board of Examiners in the Summer so as to formally confirm the results of written exams. It was noted that students wishing to take their re-sit examination in September must receive appropriate counselling from the Department. It was further noted that there must be clear publicity as to whether or not a course offers September re-sits.

6.1.3 It was also noted that September re-sit options would not be viable for all departments and it was suggested that future requests should require a strong supporting argument.

6.1.4 Mr Wheatley confirmed that precedents for allowing September re-sits had already been set and that approximately ten courses already had this option in place.

6.1.5 The Committee approved the change with immediate effect and agreed to recommend it for Senate approval.

6.2 Executive and Full-time MBA – electives for 2012-13

Paper F

The Committee received the list of electives for the Executive & Full-time MBA for 2012-13. This included three new electives: Globalisation Challenges & Opportunities, International Business & Marketing and Managing Infrastructure Projects.

7. Reports from External Examiners 2011-12

Paper G

The Committee considered a paper summarising the External Examiners' Reports for Master's Degrees in 2011-12.

Discussion reported in Appendix 1 [not published with the minutes]

8. Application Statistics

The Committee considered the following reports on Postgraduate Admission.

8.1 Postgraduate Application Numbers for 2012-13 and 2011-12 entry

Paper H

8.1.1 It was noted that the number of overseas applications was very high in comparison with European and home student application numbers. It was also noted that home applicants made up less than 10% of Engineering Department course applications.

8.1.2 It was further noted that Natural Sciences Departments had received 24% less home student applications. It was commented that this may be an effect of the rise in tuition fees.

8.2 Postgraduate Application Numbers for 2013-14 and 2012-13 entry **Paper I**

8.2.1 The Committee agreed that there is a concern regarding the over-reliance on overseas student applications due to the low number of both home and European applicants. It was too early in the cycle to draw conclusions for the impact on 2013 entry.

9. Student Numbers 2010-11 and 2012-13 **Paper J**

9.1 It was noted that the overall number of enrolled students and the number of full-time enrolled students has increased year on year over this period. The number of full-time postgraduates has increased by 9.5% between 2010/2011 and 2012/2013.

9.1.1 It was further noted that the overall ratio between male and female postgraduate students has remained relatively static over the period at c60% male and c40% female. However, there are more female students taking MRes courses than male students in each of the three years.

9.1.2 It was also noted that the overall number of students classified as overseas has risen very slightly over the period. However, the number of overseas students taking postgraduate taught courses has increased significantly over the last year by 16.8%

10. Higher Degrees Obtained 2008-09 to 2010-11 **Paper K**

It was noted that the distribution of Fail, Pass, Merit and Distinction for MSc, MRes and MBA courses for 2010-2011 were:

Course	Fail	Pass	Merit	Distinction
MSc (2225 students)	7%	24%	44%	26%
MRes (212 students)	2%	13%	43%	42%
MBA (147 students)	1%	17%	69%	14%

It was further noted that there were significant differences in grade distribution between the three types of courses.

10.1 Through general discussion the possibility of providing departments with guidelines regarding the level at which grades are awarded was explored. It was agreed that the Committee did not want to suggest any guidelines for individual courses on the distribution of pass, merit and distinction given all the factors involved that could lead to different outcomes.

10.2 It was further agreed that a failure rate of 5% was probably tolerable for a course but if the failure rate reached a double figure percentage the Committee would feel that was a matter needing further scrutiny, especially if it stayed in double figures for several years.

10.3 It was agreed that the information in paper (K) on individual courses and on College

averages, as well as on long term trends, was very useful for those in charge of individual courses. The course leaders would be able to compare their course distributions (FPMD) with those achieved on other courses including those courses of a similar nature. It was hoped that when the new student software system was implemented that the generation of this data, perhaps in a graphical format, would be an easier task. It was agreed to circulate the paper to PGT course directors.

Action: SW

Post Meeting Note

Mr Wheatley confirmed further statistical tables which may be found of use to department can be found [here](#).

11. Chair's Report

Paper L

The Committee noted a report of actions taken since the last meeting.

12. Postgraduate Surveys – Master's Programmes

The committee receive an update on postgraduate surveys for Master's programmes.

12.1 The Committee noted that the Autumn PG SOLE closed at midnight on 20th January and the results will be circulated shortly.

12.2 The Committee noted the following surveys are due to take place this term:

PG SOLE – module/lecturer: due to open 12th March 2013

PG SOLE – overall course questions: due to open 12th March 2013

Master's Project survey – details to be confirmed

Post Meeting Note

The Master's Project survey has been postponed until the summer term.

13. Senate Executive Summary

The Committee noted that the latest executive summaries from Senate are available.

14. QAAC Executive Summary

The Committee noted that the latest executive summaries from QAAC are available.

14.1 The Committee further noted that QAAC has recently changed its name to QAEC – Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee

15. Any Other Business

15.1 Professor Li commented that not all MSc students within the Department of Chemical Engineering had been able to access or participate in the recent PG SOLE Survey and that this had adversely affected the number of Chemical Engineering students participating in the survey. This would be drawn to the Secretary's attention to investigate.

Post Meeting Note

Following the meeting, it was clarified that only one module had been missing from

the Chemical Engineering Autumn term survey. The omission of the module had no effect on the number of students participating in the survey. The missing module would be added to the Spring term survey.

16. Dates of next meetings 2011-12

16.1 Master's Quality Committee (Business, Engineering & Physical Sciences)

Thursday 21st March 2013 at 2pm – 5pm, venue to be confirmed

Thursday 23rd May 2013 at 2pm – 5pm, Council Room, 170 Queen's Gate

Thursday 11th July 2013 at 2pm – 5pm, Ballroom Room, 58 Prince's Gate

16.2 It was noted that the dates and deadlines for all other Graduate School meetings could be found at:

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/graduateschool/qualityassurance/graduateschoolcommitteestructure>

17. Reserved Areas of Business

17.1 Special Cases

Paper M

17.1.1 The Committee considered a report showing special cases made for admission for BEPS PGT courses made since the most recent report in November 2012.

17.1.2 It was noted that actions had been taken on behalf of the Committee for three special cases.