

# Imperial College London

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

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28 January 2013

### Confirmed Minutes

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#### Present

Professor Andrew George (Chairman)  
Dr David McPhail (Deputy Chair)  
Professor Tim Barraclough (Department of Life Sciences)  
Professor Steve Gentleman (Department of Medicine)  
Professor Kate Hardy (Department of Surgery and Cancer)  
Ms Maryam Habibzay (GSA President)  
Mr Doug Hunt (ICU Deputy President, Education)  
Professor Marjo-Riitta Jarvelin (School of Public Health)  
Dr Martyn Kingsbury (Educational Development Unit)  
Professor Robin Leatherbarrow (Dean for Natural Sciences)  
Dr Felicity Mellor (Humanities)  
Ms Helen Pennington (Academic and Welfare Officer – Life Sciences)  
Professor Sue Smith (NHLI)  
Professor Denis Wright (Dean of Students)

#### In Attendance

Ms Sally Baker (Graduate School Manager)

#### 1. Apologies for absence

Professor Debra Humphis (Pro Rector, Education)  
Dr Mick Jones (College Tutor)  
Ms Natalie Kempston (Academic and Welfare Officer – Medicine)  
Professor Myra McClure (Dean for Medicine)  
Mr Michael Weatherburn (Academic and Welfare Officer – Non Faculty)  
Mr Nigel Wheatley (Academic Registrar)

#### 2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2012 were approved.

**MLSDP/MQC/2012/28**

#### 3. Matters arising

**3.1 Minute 6.3 - MSc in Quality and Safety in Healthcare (2YPT)** – the Committee was reminded that the Course Organiser had been asked to provide further details on the students who had deferred in the 2009-2011 cycle, since the Committee had considered the number of students who had deferred during the cycle to be high. The Chair reported that information had been received to show that two students had been on maternity leave, two had suffered from serious illness, one had suffered bereavement and four students had submitted compelling mitigating circumstances. It was reported that all nine had subsequently completed or were currently completing, and the Committee agreed that the response from the Course Organiser was satisfactory.

#### ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

#### 4. Course Modifications

##### 4.1 MSc Human Molecular Genetics

The Committee received a request from the School of Public Health for a change to the scheme of assessment with effect from October 2013.

#### **MLSPD/MQC/2012/29**

**4.1.1** The Committee considered the proposal to allow assessment of the students' performance during their project by their supervisors. The Committee noted that the project write up currently contributed 30% to the MSc overall, and that the proposal was that feedback from the supervisor should make up 20% of the marks for the research project, so that the project supervisor would contribute 6% of the overall MSc grade.

**4.1.2** The Committee noted that the proposed changes had been recommended by the external examiners at the 2012 exam board.

**4.1.3** The Committee approved the request to include the supervisor's assessment of the student research project as part of the student's final MSc mark as described above, and approved the project feedback forms to be completed by the supervisors.

#### **4.2 MSc Medical Ultrasound**

The Committee received a request from the NHLI to permanently withdraw the Obstetrics and Gynaecology specialty from the MSc course in Medical Ultrasound, with effect from entry in October 2013.

#### **MLSPD/MQC/2012/30**

**4.2.1** The Committee noted that the current course tutor is relocating overseas and that the department had been unable to find a replacement.

**4.2.2** The Committee agreed the request on the basis that the Department had provided an undertaking to support current students until they had completed their programme of study, including any students who may be required to re-sit, and on the understanding that there were no students currently holding offers to follow this specialty.

**4.2.3** The Department was asked to inform current students of the decision.

#### **5. External Examiners**

**5.1** The Committee received the nominations to be considered for the Boards of Examiners in the 2012 – 2013 session.

#### **MLSPD/MQC/2012/31 & 31i**

The discussion is reported in Appendix I [not published with minutes].

**5.2** It was noted that there were two Boards of Examiners for which nominations for new external examiners were awaited.

#### **5.3 Reports from External Examiners 2011-12**

The Committee received the external examiner reports to be considered for taught courses for 2011-12.

#### **MLSPD/MQC/2012/32**

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 I [not published with minutes].

#### **5.4 External Examiner Summary Reports – Actions from QAEC**

**5.4.1** Members were reminded that, as a result of feedback received in last year's external examiners' reports, where external examiners had raised concern that the processes used to determine how marks are agreed between markers was not always clear or evidenced, the QAEC had resolved that Departments should develop appropriate mechanisms for determining how marks are agreed by markers, and that these mechanisms must be approved by Board Chairmen.

Members were asked to remind Master's Board Chairmen that they should ensure that such mechanisms had been developed, and were approved.

**5.4.2** Members were reminded that Departments whose external examiners had commented on poor supervision had been requested to ask those members of staff concerned to attend the EDU course on supervision. Departments were encouraged to contact the EDU for advice on the suitability of courses.

Members were asked to ensure that the above action is undertaken.

## **6. Joint Management Committee Annual Reports or Minutes**

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

### **6.1 MRes Biosystematics [Partner Organisation: Natural History Museum]**

Members noted that this was a collaborative Master's degree programme with Imperial as the awarding body and that the responsibility for the quality and standard of the programme rests with Imperial.

The minutes of the Joint Management Committee were not available at the meeting.

[No Paper 33]

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

Members noted that this is a collaborative Master's degree programme with Imperial as the awarding body and that responsibility for the quality and standard of the programme rests with Imperial.

The Committee received the minutes of the Joint Management Committee meeting held on 11 January 2012.

**MLSPD/MQC/2012/34**

### **6.3 MSc Taxonomy and Biodiversity [Partner Organisation: Natural History Museum]**

Members noted that this is a collaborative Master's degree programme with Imperial as the awarding body and that the responsibility for the quality and standard of the programme rests with Imperial.

The minutes of the Joint Management Committee were not available at the meeting.

[No Paper 35]

## **7. Internal Review of Master's Level Courses**

**7.1** The Committee received a schedule of the course reviews in 2012-2013 and members were reminded that they would be asked to undertake one or more reviews in time for discussion at the Master's Quality Committee on 18 March.

**MLSPD/MQC/2012/36**

**7.2** Members were reminded that the longer term intention was to move all course reviews in a Department to be reviewed in the same year to fit in with the periodic review schedule, and that this would inevitably take some time to achieve. The Committee agreed that courses which were currently out of step with the departmental review date would be asked to present an interim report to the MQC mid-way between their last review and the next scheduled departmental review, unless previous history suggested otherwise.

## **8. Application Statistics**

### **8.1 Postgraduate Application Numbers for 2012-3 and 2011-2 entry**

The Committee received, for consideration, the postgraduate application numbers for entry in 2012 compared to entry in 2011.

**MLSPD/MQC/2012/37**

The Committee noted that the total Overseas applications had increased by 12.58% and that European Union applications had risen by 6.64%, whilst Home applications had dropped by 14.10%. It was suggested that the high number of Overseas applications, in comparison with European and home student application numbers, may be as a result of the introduction of the deposit payment.

### **8.2 Postgraduate Application Numbers for 2013-4 and 2012-3 entry**

The Committee received, for consideration, the postgraduate application numbers for entry in 2013 compared to the same time for entry 2012.

**MLSPD/MQC/2012/38**

The Committee noted the fall in numbers of Home and European applicants, but agreed that it was too early in the application cycle to draw conclusions for the impact on 2013 entry. Members commented that it would be useful to see application numbers over the last five years in a graphical format.

## **9. Enrolment Numbers**

The Committee received, for consideration, the postgraduate enrolment numbers for 2012/2013 compared with figures for the previous two years.

**MLSPD/MQC/2012/39**

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

It was further noted that the overall ratio between male and female postgraduate students had remained relatively static over the period at around 60% male and 40% female. However, there were more female students taking MRes courses than male students in each of the three years.

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

Members commented that it would be useful to see the information broken down by Faculty and Department, and that this might highlight how factors such as the fee structure were impacting on the statistics.

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

The Committee received, for consideration, a report on the number and award of higher degrees obtained and on the number of failures during 2008-9, 2009-10 and 2010-11.

**MLSPD/MQC/2012/40**

In discussion, the Committee considered whether the report indicated any failure rates which gave cause for concern. It was reported that the Master's Quality Committee for Business, Engineering and Physical Sciences had suggested 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.

It was agreed that Departments should be advised to look at the data at individual course level, both to monitor with the distribution of their own course fail, pass, merit and distinction rates and to compare their course distributions with those achieved on other courses.

## **11. Reports from Departmental Representatives**

The Committee received verbal reports from Departmental Representatives not otherwise appearing on the agenda.

### **11.1 Department of Life Sciences - MSc in Ecological Applications**

The Committee was reminded that the MSc course in Ecological Applications had been suspended for entry in October 2012 due to staff changes. The Department requested permission to reinstate entry to the course from October 2013.

The Department reported that several new members of staff had been recruited to work in relevant areas and reassured the Committee that they were now in a position to cover all the material required to successfully deliver the programme.

The Committee agreed to recommend that the Senate should approve the resumption of the MSc in Ecological Applications with effect from October 2013.

### **11.2 Translation Studies Unit**

It was reported that applicants to the College to follow a programme of study in the Translation Studies Unit had been advised that the College was considering the Unit's future for strategic reasons. As a result of this, applications had been suspended until early April when a final decision would be made.

It was reported that applicants who had been offered a place for 2012 but who had deferred to 2013 had been similarly advised.

## **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION AND/OR DISSEMINATION**

### **12. Postgraduate Surveys – Master’s Programmes**

The Committee received an update on postgraduate surveys for Master’s programmes:

**12.1** The Committee noted that Autumn PG SOLE closed at midnight on 20 January and that the results would be circulated to departments shortly.

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

PG SOLE – module/lecturer: due to open 11 March 2013

PG SOLE – overall course questions: due to open 11 March 2013

PG Project survey – details to be confirmed

### **13. Reports from key College Committees**

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

**13.2 Quality Assurance Advisory Committee:** Members were reminded that the latest Executive Summaries from QAAC are available [here](#).

The Committee noted that the Senate had recently approved a change of name, and that QAAC had been renamed QAEC – Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee.

### **14. Any Other Business**

**14.1** It was reported that Chair’s action had been taken to approve the permanent withdrawal of the MSc in Integrative Neuroscience with effect from entry in October 2013. The course had been suspended since October 2011 and would not be reinstated.

**14.2** It was reported that Chair’s action had been taken to approve the permanent withdrawal of the MRes in Integrative Biomedical Sciences with effect from entry in October 2013. The course had been suspended since October 2009 and would not be reinstated.

### **15. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Monday 18 March 2013, in the Ballroom, 58 Prince’s Gate, South Kensington Campus. The meeting will start at 14:00. The deadline for papers is Monday 4 March 2013.

### **16. Reserved Business (not circulated to student members)**

#### **16.1 Special Cases Reports**

There were no reports on special cases to be considered.