Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC)
Minutes from the meeting held on
Wednesday 30 September 2020

Present
David Ashton, Academic Registrar – Chair
Dr Clemens Brechtelsbauer, Chair of Programmes Committee
Dr Lorraine Craig, Faculty of Engineering representative
Michaela Flegrova, ICU Deputy President (Education)
Professor Richard Green, Business School representative
Laura Lane, Head of Strategy and Operations, Graduate School
Martin Lupton, Faculty of Medicine representative
Rebecca Middleton, Faculty of Natural Sciences representative
Claire Stapley, CLCC/CHERS representative
Zixiau Wang, GSU President
Judith Webster, Director of Academic Quality and Standards
Scott Tucker, Deputy Director (Academic Quality and Standards) – Secretary

In Attendance
Leila Guerra, Vice Dean (Education), Business School
Professor Omar Matar, Vice Dean (Education), Faculty of Engineering
Professor Emma McCoy, Vice Provost (Education and Student Experience)
David Parrot, Head of Admissions [for Items 7 and 11]
Professor Richard Thompson, Vice Dean (Education), Faculty of Natural Sciences

Apologies
Professor Peter Openshaw, Senior Consul

1.   Welcome, apologies and announcements

1.1   The Chair welcomed attendees to the first meeting of the academic year, noting apologies
for absence.

2.   Minutes of the previous meeting   QAEC.2020.01

2.1   The Committee confirmed the minutes of 3 June 2020 as an accurate record.

3.   Review of Committee actions   QAEC.2020.02

3.1   The Committee received an action list, noting that progress against each action had been
reviewed and updated since the previous meeting.

3.2   The Committee noted that the action list had been updated following the previous meeting.

4.   Matters arising from the minutes

4.1   No matters arising.

5.   Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership

5.1   The Committee confirmed the QAEC terms of reference, constitution and membership for 2020-21. It was highlighted that the only changes from the previous academic year were to the Committee membership, with new members noted as follows: QAEC.2020.03

- Dr Clemens Brechtelsbauer, Chair of Programmes Committee
- Michaela Flegrova, ICU Deputy President (Education)
- Professor Richard Green, Business School representative
- Zixiau Wang, GSU President

5.2   The Committee noted that there were no changes to the terms of reference and constitution of the following subcommittees: Faculty Education Committees; Postgraduate Research Quality Committee; Programmes Committee; and Regulations and Policy Review Committee.

6.   Academic Regulations and Policy

6.1   The Committee considered (i) a new **Conducting Online Assessments Procedure** and (ii) minor updates to the existing **Policy on Late Submission of Assessment**. Both documents were considered under the same item due to the links between the two.   QAEC.2020.04

6.1.1   At its meeting in February 2020, QAEC approved an updated Procedure for the use of Computers in Examinations and Assessments. This had been reviewed with representatives from ICT and the Business School, following pilots held in the Business School. In March 2020, the decision was taken to move to Timed Remote Assessments as a result of Covid-19. Guidance was produced to support Departments with this transition and to set out the expectations of the College in the delivery of Timed Remote Assessments. This guidance and elements of the previous policy document have been brought together for 2020-21.

6.1.2   The Committee recommended a number of minor changes as well as the following more significant revision:

- Removal of the option of a 'closed book' online assessment due to the absence of effective proctoring software across the College. It was noted that in order to address concerns around open book examinations, assessment design will need to be considered carefully by programme teams. The EDU will develop Timed Remote Assessment guidance in due course.

6.1.3 The Committee approved the new Conducting Online Assessment Procedure, subject to amendments. The document will be reviewed and updated as lessons are learned from ongoing delivery of online assessment. The elements of the previous policy which relate to the use of computers in on-campus assessment will be reinstated for 2021-22.

6.1.4 *Post meeting note*

Further clarification was sought post-meeting as to whether the Policy permitted the restriction of named resources for online examinations. It was confirmed that this *was* permitted, however, as there is generally little or no control over conditions (i.e. no proctoring), examiners should restrict resources with caution. The following additions in bold text were added for clarity, and approved by the Vice Provost (Education and Student Experience):

(2.11)
Suitable types of assessment **are**:

- Open book examination - Students may **only** use resources identified by the examiner to complete the assessment and included in the instructions for the examination. These may include a student's own revision notes or information in offline or online resources
- Multiple choice questions (MCQ) - A set of questions with pre-defined answers to select from. For further information, see the College's Guidance on Using Multiple Choice Questions in Assessment.

For further information, see the College's Guidance on Timed Remote Assessments (TRAs)

(2.31)
Students are expected to act as responsible members of the College's community. In the context of open book assessment, this means students are:
(a) Permitted to:
- Refer to their own module and revision notes
- Look up information in offline or online resources (e.g. textbooks or online journals), **provided these resources have not been restricted in the context of the examination, as set out by the examiners.**

6.1.5 In drafting the Conducting Online Assessments Procedure, minor amendments were proposed to the College's existing Policy on Late Submission of assessment on Undergraduate and Postgraduate Master's Level programmes. The Committee approved the minor changes, which reflected the delivery of Timed Remote Assessments.

6.2 The Committee considered (i) new **Fitness to Study Procedure** and (ii) updated **Authorised Interruption of Studies Procedure**. Both documents were considered under the same item due to the links between the two.   QAEC.2020.05

6.2.1　There are a number of Policies and Procedures which enable students to inform the College when circumstances mean that they are unable to fully engage with their studies on a short, medium- or long-term basis (e.g. Mitigating Circumstance Procedure, Interruption of Studies Procedure). At present, students are deemed to be on an interruption of studies if their studies have been suspended by the College. There have been a growing number of student casework issues where it would have been helpful for the College to have a Fitness to Study Procedure. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) has also recommended that the College develops a Fitness to Study Procedure.

6.2.2　In developing a Fitness to Study Procedure, there was also a need to reconsider the role of the Interruption of Studies Procedure. It was proposed that an Interruption of Studies should only be used where students have proactively requested to take a period of leave from their studies. This could still be for the range of reasons that students need to take time away for, including for medical treatments. This would help to make a clearer distinction between a student who has *chosen* to interrupt and a student who is *required* to suspend their studies as the result of College process.

6.2.3　The proposed Fitness to Study Procedure requires support for students to be agreed and a clear action plan to be developed to support the student back to study where this is possible. The Authorised Interruption of Study Procedure is less prescriptive, but key to its successful implementation will be careful support and programme planning by the Department with any student who requests an interruption. The Committee agreed that a supported Interruption of Studies was essential and that further work is required to set out what resources students are entitled to access during an interruption.

6.2.4　The Committee noted that interruptions of study cannot normally be backdated by more than one month from the date that the interruption was requested. This is due to Tier 4 regulations and the need to ensure consistency for both Home and International students.

6.2.5　The Committee recommended both procedures to Senate, with the condition that further work is undertaken to ascertain what support and resources students are entitled to during an Interruption of Studies.

6.2.6　Should Senate approve the procedures then the Regulations for Students will also be amended, and Regulation 9 in particular, to reflect the new Fitness to Study Procedure. The proposed amendment to Regulation 9 was agreed in principle.

6.3　The Committee considered a proposed **Emergency Contact Policy and Procedure**, which was developed from the work initiated by the SIMP vision group, as one of three projects to be taken forward over 2019-2020.

QAEC.2020.06

6.3.1　The stated aim for the project was to implement a policy and procedure for the use of contact details in circumstances that constitute to be in a student's vital interests, and where it may be in a student's best interests due to significant concern about their

welfare. Although students are currently required to provide emergency contact details, the proposed policy sets out that advanced consent will be sought from students to use their details where the College has a serios concern about their wellbeing that falls below a 'vital interest' threshold.

6.3.2   A draft version of the policy was provided to all staff as part of a consultation in August. Notification of the consultation, and reminders, were in the Staff Briefing and were provided directly to Deans, Faculty Senior Tutors and other key stakeholders.

6.3.3   The project group proposed that the policy and procedure should be implemented after Christmas 2020 to ensure that there is time for staff and students to be advised of the new policy, if approved, and why this is being brought in.

6.3.4   The Committee welcomed the proposed policy, including the student representatives. The Faculty of Engineering representative reported that the Faculty's 'Trusted Contact Scheme' did not seem to have been considered. However, as thorough consultation had been carried out across Faculties, in order to prevent any delay in implementing the Policy, the Committee agreed that the policy should be implemented and reviewed within 12-18 months.

6.3.5   The Committee recommended the Emergency Contact Policy and Procedure to Senate, for implementation in January 2021, subject to a review being undertaken within 12-18 months.

6.4   The Committee considered the following updates to the **Academic Misconduct Policy**:   QAEC.2020.07

- Simplified and streamlined procedures and the re-empowerment of Boards of Examiners for minor/moderate cases. This would be a more supportive approach to students and create a simplified summary and panel processes, regardless to type of offence
- Amendment of the suggested penalty tariff to allow greater range of penalty decisions for exam offences
- Amendment of the main penalty tariff to include 'assessment capped' or 'module capped'. Both penalties are currently available to the Board of Examiners, but not the Academic Misconduct Panels
- Reiteration of the option to refer a case that is not related to the current year of study to the Student Discipline procedures, if appropriate.

6.4.1 The Committee also noted that the penalty 'module awarded zero, resubmission for credits only' has caused concern for those that are considering implementing it, and for students. For large modules it has a significant impact on a student's possible degree classification, and where relevant continued progression on their original programme of study. The Committee noted possible penalties used in other institutions, and that these may be considered as appropriate for the College when the policy and procedure is next reviewed:

- Remove eligibility for discretionary uplifts if final overall weighted average falls within the threshold
- Agree a set reduction in final overall weighted average, based on module academic level and credit value, and severity of offence
- Agree a set reduction in the submission (or resubmission) of mark in the assessment.

6.4.2 The Committee recommended to Senate, the proposed revisions to the Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedures.

6.5 The Committee considered interim changes to the **Unsatisfactory Progress Withdrawals Procedure**.   QAEC.2020.08

6.5.1 It was noted that Appendix 1 to the General Regulations relates the procedure for withdrawal for unsatisfactory progress. It also contains the appeal process for such withdrawals. However, it is not officially an Appendix for the Single Set of Taught Academic Regulations where unsatisfactory progress may be in session, or due to academic failure at a Board of Examiners. As a result, there are differences in regulations for students under the General Regulations or those under the Single Set. As a result, the proposed changes to the documentation for 2020-21 are a short-term solution as the procedure is reviewed over the next year to ensure that is remains fit for purpose in the light of changes in the sector and other internal regulatory or procedural changes, and how this process fits with other developments such as Fitness to Study. The Committee noted that the revisions put forward will not change current regulatory structure and only serve to provide clarification.

6.5.2 The Committee recommended the interim changes to Senate for 1st October 2020 implementation.

7.   Entry Requirements

7.1 The Committee considered Entry Requirement Matters 2021 Entry.   QAEC.2020.09

7.1.1 It was noted that due to Covid-19 a number of online English language testing options were added to the list of accepted tests for admissions in 2020. These included:

- IELTS Indicator
- TOEFL at home
- LanguageCert
- Duolingo

7.1.2 The Committee approved the following recommendations:

Undergraduate
- Continued acceptance of the English language testing options for entry in 2021 set out in the document
- Introduction of individual band scores for Duolingo set out in the document

7.1.3 Previously, the Business School put forward a request for Registry to review the guidance on entry requirements for India for 2021 entry, as it was felt some requirements were too high and that these should be reviewed in light of a) India being a key recruitment market for Imperial and b) competitor positioning.

7.1.4 The Committee approved the following recommendations:

Postgraduate
- The requirements for India for 2021 set out in the document
- To accept 3-year bachelor degrees from any HEI that would normally and otherwise be accepted where the degree was 4-year in duration where the grade requirements for the appropriate band of HEI have been met.

7.1.5 In the context of the recommendations put forward to the Committee, it was confirmed by the Head of Admissions that these do not represent a change to entry requirements for any given programme, merely an adjustment to the Registry guidance on the comparability of overseas qualifications that should inform Departments in taking appropriate decisions on those most suitable applicants for selection. Following some concerns raised by the Business School at the meeting, Faculties were given a further opportunity post-QAEC to provide feedback to the Head of Admissions by 7th October.

7.1.6 *Post meeting note*

It was confirmed post-QAEC by Strategic Planning that the new guidance does not have any implications for the College's data returns for university league rankings.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

8.1 The Committee considered the College PGT Annual Monitoring Report Summary 2019-20   QAEC.2020.10

8.2 The Committee received the College PGT Annual Monitoring Report Summary, noting issues raised by Faculties, including:

- Further investment and resource required to scale-up digital assessment
- Student attendance remains an issue
- Introduction of specialised remote proctoring software for remote assessments required
- Processing time of student applications
- Central support for fully online programmes required.

The Quality Assurance Team will follow up with the relevant service providers and collate responses, which will feed back to Departments/Faculties. Overall, assurance can be given to Senate that the College has oversight of academic standards.

8.3 The Committee considered proposed revisions to the 2020-21 UG annual monitoring during Covid-19.   QAEC.2020.11

8.3.1 The Committee approved the proposal, which set out a proportionate approach to UG annual monitoring in light of the College's continued efforts to deliver its provision during Covid-19. It was highlighted that the purpose of annual monitoring should be reiterated to Departments in the guidance documentation and supporting email from the QA Team.

8.3.2 The Committee also agreed that a review of annual monitoring should be undertaken in due course, with the timing of the review dependent on the workload as a result of Covid-19.

Action: Secretary

9.   Surveys

9.1 The Committee received the results of Spring 2020 UG & PGT SOLE   QAEC.2020.12

9.1.1 Spring SOLE opened on 10 March 2020, one week prior to College closure due to Covid-19. The Vice Provost (Education) and QAEC agreed to pause the survey and delay the closing date of the survey to 21 May 2020. Both the UG and PGT surveys closed on this date.

The Committee noted the results of Spring 2020 UG and PGT SOLE, with Summer SOLE results to be noted at QAEC in November 2020.

10.   Study Abroad

10.1 Re-establishing the Study Abroad Task and Finish Group

10.1.1 The Committee supported the re-establishment of the Study Abroad Task and Finish Group, which will reconvene in the next academic year, following a pause as a result of Covid-19. The group will address, among other things, the Committee's previous recommendation to 'address issues around considering marks from study abroad'

11   Admissions Policies and Procedures

11.1   The Committee approved minor updates to the Undergraduate Admissions Policy.   QAEC.2020.13

Approved version available at: https://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/admissions/ - Admissions

11.2   The Committee approved minor updates to the Postgraduate Taught Admissions Policy.   QAEC.2020.14
Approved version available at: https://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/admissions/ - Admissions

11.3   The Committee approved minor updates to the Postgraduate Research Admissions Policy. QAEC.2020.15
Approved version available at: https://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/admissions/ - Admissions

11.4   The Committee approved a new policy document, which sets out existing College practice   QAEC.2020.16
on undergraduate deferrals. Approved version available at:
https://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/admissions/ - Admissions)

11.5   The Committee approved a new policy document, which sets out existing College practice   QAEC.2020.17
on Postgraduate Deferment Policy. Approved version available at:
https://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/admissions/ - Admissions)

11.6   The Committee approved minor updates to the Procedure for Dealing with Complaints by   QAEC.2020.18
Applicants. Approved version available at:
https://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/admissions/ - Complaints from Applicants.

12.   College Covid-19 Update

12.1   The Committee received a verbal update on College actions in response to Covid-19. A   QAEC.2020.19
number of areas have been addressed, through the work of the Education Strategy and   (not received)
Operations Group (ESOG), covering: Wellbeing support; Extra-curricular activity; Academic
experience; Co-curricular activity; Student community; Research culture; and Amenities
and infrastructure.

13.   Government Policy Update

13.1   In September 2020, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the   QAEC.2020.20
Department for Education published a policy paper setting out proposals for the reduction
of bureaucracy across several areas (available at:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reducing-bureaucratic-burdens-higher-education/reducing-bureaucratic-burdens-on-research-innovation-and-higher-education)

The paper states that these two bodies are working closely together on a shared agenda 'to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy, and to ensure the higher education regulatory system is truly proportionate, risk based, transparent and accountable'.

QAEC received a summary of this policy paper, where the proposals were relevant to the work of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee, the Office for Students and the DfE.

14   Office of the Independent Adjudicator

14.1   The Committee noted the OIA consultation on mitigating circumstances.   QAEC.2020.21

14.1.1 The OIA's Good Practice Framework consists of five sections: Handling complaints and academic appeals, delivering learning opportunities with others, Supporting disabled students, Disciplinary procedures, and Fitness to practise. The OIA intends to publish a new section with further good practice guidance on requests for additional consideration (often called the "mitigating", "extenuating" or "special circumstances" procedures, or "factors affecting performance") and is consulting with institutions.

14.1.2 The Committee noted that the College has submitted a response to the OIA consultation document and was encouraged that the OIA's proposal for a new chapter aligns with the College's processes including recent changes that have been made to College procedures.

15.   Chair's Action

15.1   Programmes Committee Report   QAEC.2020.22

15.1.1 The Committee ratified major modifications, suspensions and withdrawals, which had been approved by Chair's action.

The following new Corporate Stream was ratified:

- Weekend (Saudi Aramco Corporate Stream) MBA
  To introduce the above corporate stream with effect from October 2020

15.2   Major Programme Modifications as a result of Covid-19   QAEC.2020.23

15.2.1 The Committee ratified major modifications as a result of Covid-19, which had been approved by Chair's action.

15.2.2 The Committee thanked Men-Yeut Wong, Assistant Registrar (Programme Development) and Departments for their efforts in managing such a large volume of modifications, necessary to ensure that the College's programmes remain well-designed and provide a high-level academic experience for students during Covid-19.

16.   Dates of Meetings 2020-21

16.1   The Committee noted the dates of meetings to be held in 2020-21:

- Wednesday 18 November 2020
- Wednesday 20 January 2021
- Wednesday 24 February 2021
- Wednesday 28 April 2021
- Wednesday 26 May 2021