Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC)
Minutes from the meeting held on
Wednesday 18 November 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
Professor Peter Openshaw, Senior Consul
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
Amy Huynh, Quality Assurance Administrator (Programme Development)
Professor Omar Matar, Vice Dean (Education), Faculty of Engineering
Professor Emma McCoy, Vice Provost (Education and Student Experience)
Professor Richard Thompson, Vice Dean (Education), Faculty of Natural Sciences
Dr Jeffrey Vernon, Faculty of Medicine

1.   Welcome, apologies and announcements

1.1   The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting, noting that all members of the Committee
were present.

2.   Minutes of the previous meeting   QAEC.2020.24

2.1   The Committee confirmed the minutes of 30 September 2020 as an accurate record.

3.   Matters arising from the minutes

3.1   *Interruption of Studies – update on student access to facilities prior to return to College
(Item 6.2, Paper QAEC.2020.05, refers)*

3.1.1   It was noted that work is ongoing under the guise of the Vision Group and through
consultation with Faculty Senior Tutors. In the interim, it was noted that the College's

current practice is for students to receive access to College systems 30 days prior to re-enrolment following an Interruption of Studies.

3.2   *Updates to the Academic Misconduct Policy (Item 6.4, Paper QAEC.2020.07, refers)*

3.2.1   It was confirmed that, following updates to the Academic Misconduct Policy, guidance for Boards of Examiners will be revised accordingly and published.

3.2.2   Due to the significant number of Boards held across the College and resource implications, it is not possible for members of the Quality Assurance Team to attend Boards. However, it was agreed that staff development materials and/or sessions could be offered in future to Departmental staff, where requested. In the first instance, the demand for such provision needs to be established.

Action: Director of Academic Quality and Standards / Secretary

4.   **Review of Committee actions**   QAEC.2020.25

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

5.   **Academic Calendar**   QAEC.2020.26

5.1   The Committee received a proposal for the planned review of the College's academic calendar. The Committee welcomed the proposal, noting that this will support improvements to organisation; an area recommended for improvement in the ICU's 2020 National Student Survey Response.

5.3   The Committee discussed the types of dates and deadlines that could be included in the academic calendar, noting that prospectus deadlines would be useful. It was agreed that the academic calendar should make key academic College dates explicit, and that other useful dates might be better placed elsewhere.

5.4   The Committee approved the proposal to undertake a review of the academic calendar to ensure that it most effectively supports the management of the student lifecycle in the way in which it defines periods for key College activities.

The Committee agreed the proposed review process for the calendar, which will be led by a small core group. The group will consult with key stakeholders and make proposals for the 2021-22 academic calendar to the Committee at its April 2021 meeting.

Action: Secretary

6.   **Programme and Module Modifications**

6.1   The Committee received a proposal to make changes to the major and minor modifications   QAEC.2020.27
deadlines for 2020-21 and 2021-22.

6.1.1   The Committee discussed the proposal, which set out to bring the minor and major modifications deadlines forward, in a phased approach over the next two academic years. The proposal acknowledged that the Programme and Module Modification Procedure should allow sufficient time for: programme teams to make modifications in response to a range of data in order to enhance provision; Professional Services to collect and process modifications in order that key College systems can be updated; the College to communicate accurate information to prospective/current students and external stakeholders.

6.1.2   The Committee discussed the proposal in detail. The benefits of bringing deadlines forward were highlighted and included gains in the effective management of College systems including timetabling. However, there was significant concern from Committee members representing academic Faculties, who did not feel the proposed new deadlines allowed sufficient time to reflect on delivery and draw on data sets in order to make informed programme enhancements.

6.1.3   It was agreed that a full review of the modifications procedure and schedule should be carried out, including a wider consultation with Faculties and students, before further consideration by the Committee.

Action: Director of Academic Quality and Standards / Secretary

6.2   An interim process for the approval of temporary modifications for 2020-21 as a result of Covid-19 was agreed by QAEC in March 2020. All in-year major modifications to programme level information were recommended by Departmental Teaching Committee and reported to the Quality Assurance Team, who sought approval from the Programmes Committee and QAEC. In order to ensure a proportional approach to managing the approved temporary modifications going forward, the Committee approved a proposal that any temporary programme modifications that Departments wish to be made permanent for 2021-22 need to be confirmed by Departments to the Quality Assurance Team. These changes will not require any additional approval and will be reported to Programmes Committee and QAEC.

7.   Student Surveys

7.1   The Committee noted the Undergraduate Summer SOLE 2020 results. Student satisfaction (% agree) for module-based questions was broadly in line with the previous academic year as follows:

- 'The content of the module is well structured' (74%, no change)
- 'The content of the module is intellectually stimulating' (81%, +3%)
- 'Where applicable, I have received helpful feedback on my work submitted so far' (63%, -5%)
- 'Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the module' (72%, -1%)

QAEC.2020.28

7.2   The Committee approved the following survey opening and closing dates, which are in line   QAEC.2020.29
with previous years:

Survey	Opening Date	Closing Date (UG)	Closing Date (PG)
Autumn SOLE	3 December 2020	4 January 2021	5 January 2021
Spring SOLE	16 March 2021	19 April 2021	20 April 2021
Summer SOLE	25 May 2021	22 June 2021	22 June 2021

7.3   The Committee considered the SOLE data requirements update 2020-21.   QAEC.2020.30

It was agreed that Departments will continue to submit data required for SOLE for the
Autumn term as per in previous years. However, it was also agreed that for Spring and
Summer SOLE, further exploration would be carried out to ascertain whether there is a
technical solution to use Banner data for SOLE. It was highlighted that Banner can report
on many of the required SOLE fields but that, whilst SOLE remains both a module and
lecturer evaluation survey, Banner does not capture the required staff data for each
module (often taught by multiple staff). This data is still held at departmental level.

Action: Secretary

7.4   The Committee considered the NSS 2020 Imperial College Students' Union Response   QAEC.2020.31

7.4.1   The Committee noted that this year, the ICU produced three separate sets of
recommendations based on the NSS results: for Departments; for the ICU; and for the
College.
NSS recommendations for Departments:
1. Inconsistent marking and feedback provided
2. Quality of feedback or academic guidance, including feedback on lab reports and
exams
3. Wellbeing and support
4. Late feedback
5. Poor organisation, including late release of timetables and communication of
changes
6. Workload, including clustering of deadlines

7.4.2   NSS recommendations for the ICU:
1. Improve engagement with the student body
2. Improve volunteer training and support
3. Implement a customer relationship management solution
4. Review processes for Clubs, Societies and Projects
5. Work on improving venues, spaces and events

7.4.3   NSS recommendations for the College
1. Review aspects of the support offered to departments by the College
2. Review the management of staff at Imperial
3. Review student welfare support in departments
4. Develop and implement a policy on marking transparency in departments
5. Continue the work on student spaces around campus, including the work on the
provision and parity of informal learning and social spaces

7.4.4	The Committee thanked the ICU Deputy President (Education) for her work and welcomed the new format of the report, which provided bespoke recommendations.	
7.4.5	The full ICU NSS 2020 response can be accessed at: https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/your-representatives/responses	
7.5	The Committee received a NSS / PTES Working Group update	QAEC.2020.32
7.5.1	The Committee noted the status of NSS key recommendations for 2019 and 2020. Progress on the eight key NSS recommendation areas of 2019 had been updated to include additional commentary on the impact of Covid-19.	
7.6	The Committee considered the proposed NSS 2021 dates	QAEC.2020.33

7.6.1 The Committee approved the following opening and closing dates for the NSS 2021:
- Opening Date: 6 January 2021
- Closing Date: 30 April 2021

As per the previous year, the NSS will open on Wednesday 6 January to students in the Faculty of Medicine only (this is the earliest date the College is permitted to open the survey by Ipsos Mori). All other eligible College students will be contacted on 11 January 2021.

7.7	The Committee considered the surveys calendar 2020-21.	QAEC.2020.34

The Committee noted that the following College-wide student surveys will run during 2020-21:
- UG SOLE
- PG SOLE
- National Student Survey (NSS)
- Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)
- Student Experience Survey (SES)
- Student Bursary Survey (SBS)

8. Staff-Student Committees

8.1	Updated Staff-Student Committee Good Practice Guidelines.	QAEC.2020.35

8.2 The Committee approved minor revisions to the Staff-Student Committee Good Practice Guidelines, subject to the following recommendations:
- 6.3 – remove reference to recording meetings
- The addition of an indicative agenda, which Departments can modify as appropriate.

Action: Secretary

8.3   Committee members reported mixed views on the effectiveness of SSCs. Members unanimously agreed that issues should be resolved as quickly as possible and effective action should ideally be taken prior to SSCs. The ICU Deputy President (Education) is working closely with Departments to promote a culture of proactive resolution.

9.   Postgraduate Research Quality Committee Report

9.1   The Committee received a report of the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee from the meeting held on 21 October 2020.   QAEC.2020.36

9.1.1   *Using Report and Support to identify cases of poor supervision [PRQC.2020.05]*
QAEC considered a proposal to allow cases of poor supervision to be raised via the Report and Support Tool. Poor supervision would be defined as not fulfilling the requirements of the Mutual Expectations document. Any such reports would be sent to the Graduate School in the first instance who will take the matter forward as needed. QAEC agreed with PRQC's recommendation that further discussions were needed between the ICU and the Graduate School to ensure that cases where students choose to disclose (rather than make an anonymous report) are treated appropriately and sensitively. QAEC also asked that further discussion should take place with Registry and Central Secretariat to ensure that any implications on student casework processes are considered before the proposal is adopted.

9.1.2   *Proposal for a new supervisor training and development programme [PRQC.2020.06]*
The Committee noted that, following discussions with students, supervisors, DPSs and senior tutors the Graduate School is proposing a new supervisor training and development programme for new and existing supervisors. The programme has been developed using subject expertise from across the College and aligns with national and international frameworks for researcher recruitment, support and development. The Committee endorsed the proposal and noted that the new programme should be available from October 2021.

9.1.3   *Persistent Identifiers for Research Data Interim Report [PRQC.2020.09]*
The Committee approved the proposal to implement the use of persistent identifiers (PIDs) for research data in PhD theses with the proviso that this is not a College requirement. Implementation will require work from several teams including the Library, ICT and Assessment Records. The Committee agreed to PRQC's recommendation that students should be encouraged to create a data management plan (DMP) for their research in its early stages and before the ESA, if it was felt to be appropriate for the project. The Research Data Manager, Library Services (Wayne Peters) to be contacted to operationalise the process.

Action: Secretary

10.   Student Exchange Partnerships

10.1   Student Exchange Partnerships: 2020-21   QAEC.2020.37

10.1.1   QAEC noted that as of 30 September 2020 there were 170 exchange links, involving 92 exchange partners.

10.1.2   The 2019-20 academic year saw most undergraduate year abroad impacted in one way or another by the pandemic. It was confirmed that the College's exchange partners were able to work with Departments to supporting students to achieve the planned educational goals whether they returned to their home country or remained in the host country.

10.1.3   QAEC noted the summary on Erasmus+. The picture remains unclear since EU-UK post-transition negotiations have yet to conclude. Whether the UK maintains a presence in Erasmus in the long term or not, the aim of the College in the short term can be to avoid gaps in the mobility grant funding normally in place for mandatory undergraduate year abroad students attending partner universities in Europe, and where possible avoid gaps with support for other types of student and staff mobility. Registry is therefore exploring how it can stretch current funding to mobility undertaken in 2021-22 as well as in 2020-21. A domestic mobility scheme should the UK not continue its participation in Erasmus is being worked on by the Department of Education (DfE) and may also provide funding where there are gaps in support, and may become in time the principle source of mobility grant funding for students.

11   **Annual Quality Report 2019-20**   QAEC.2020.38

11.1   QAEC received the Annual Quality Report (October 2020). As evidenced in the report and through the quality processes overseen by Senate and its subcommittees, QAEC agreed that:
- The College is discharging its quality assurance and enhancement responsibilities appropriately and through agreed processes;
- The College is meeting the following Conditions of Registration: B1-6; C1-3
- For all programmes leading to an Imperial College London award, academic standards have been appropriately set and maintained in accordance with the College Regulations, requirements of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) UK Quality Code for Higher Education and appropriate Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements;
- The College is managing appropriately the impact of Covid-19 on education and student experience.

12.   **Any other business**

12.1   **Programmes Committee Summary Report [QAEC Item 12 & QAEC Paper 2020.39]**

QAEC approved the recommendations of the Programmes Committee held on 18 September 2020, including the following new programme proposal:
- Postgraduate Diploma in Surgical Education (Online)
   To introduce the above programme with effect from October 2021

QAEC noted that other items considered at Programmes Committee on 18 September 2020 that required further information will be presented at the next QAEC.

12.2   **Programmes Committee Chair's report [QAEC Item 12 & QAEC Paper 2020.39]**

QAEC ratified the modifications presented, which had been approved by Programmes Committee through Chair's action.

13.   **Dates of Meetings 2020-21**

13.1   The Committee noted the dates of meetings to be held in 2020-21:
- Wednesday 20 January 2021
- Wednesday 24 February 2021
- Wednesday 28 April 2021
- Wednesday 26 May 2021