**Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC)**
Minutes from the meeting held on
Wednesday 2 March 2022

**Present**
David Ashton, Academic Registrar – Chair
Dr Clemens Brechtelsbauer, Chair of Programmes Committee
Dr Lorraine Craig, Faculty of Engineering representative
Prof Richard Green, Business School representative
Laura Lane, Head of Strategy and Operations, Graduate School
Daniel Lo, ICU Deputy President (Education)
Martin Lupton, Faculty of Medicine representative
Rebecca Middleton, Faculty of Natural Sciences representative
Prof Andrew Parry, College Consul representative
Claire Stapley, CLCC/CHERS representative
Dr Jeffrey Vernon, Faculty of Medicine representative
Judith Webster, Head of Academic Services
Scott Tucker, Deputy Director (Academic Quality and Standards) – Secretary

**In Attendance**
Leila Guerra, Vice Dean (Education), Business School
Dr Camille Kandiko Howson, Associate Professor of Education (Item 6.2)
Prof Jason Riley, Vice Dean (Education), Faculty of Engineering

**1.    Welcome, apologies and announcements**

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

**2.    Minutes of the previous meeting**

**2.1**    The Committee confirmed the minutes of 26 January 2022 as an accurate record.          QAEC.2021.46

**3.    Matters arising from the minutes**

**3.1    Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (Item 7.2.1.i refers)**

**3.1.1**    At the previous meeting, the Committee agreed to add the following additional
institutional questions to the College's 2022 PTES:
    1.  I am comfortable about discussing my wellbeing issues with my supervisor
    2.  My research group is an inclusive and supportive community
    3.  I am happy with my work-life balance

It was highlighted that in some Departments it was more likely that students would discuss wellbeing issues with their personal tutor rather than their supervisor. As a result, it was agreed that question 1 would be revised as follows:

1. I am comfortable about discussing my wellbeing issues with my **personal tutor or supervisor**

**Action: Secretary**

**4.        Update on QAEC actions**                                                    QAEC.2021.47

**4.1**     The Committee received an update on outstanding QAEC actions, as noted in the action list. The Secretary reported that some actions had been delegated to sub-committees and working groups, before reporting any recommendations to QAEC. It was agreed that the action list would be updated to indicate delegated actions.

**Action: Secretary**

**5.        Curriculum Review**

**5.1       Full Time MBA Curriculum Review Proposal**                                 QAEC.2021.48

**5.1.1**   The Committee considered the curriculum review proposal and supporting documentation presented by the Business School for the Full Time MBA programme, for September 2022 delivery. The proposal had been considered by Programmes Committee on two occasions and a number of recommendations had been made and responded to by the School. One matter remained; the Business School proposed the use of 2.5 ECTS modules, which was not an approved module size within the College's Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study. Programmes Committee agreed that the Business School had not provided a sufficient rationale to merit approval of the non-standard module size so further information was provided to QAEC for consideration.

The Business School confirmed that the proposal to use 2.5 ECTS modules did not apply to the Global MBA, Weekend MBA or Executive MBA.

**5.1.2**   At the Programmes Committee meetings held in September and November 2021, the Business School put forward the following rationale to support the proposal to use 2.5 ECTS modules:

- Accreditation: Criteria set out by the Business School's Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies may not be met if the eleven compulsory modules were to be condensed and keeping the modules at 5 ECTS would take the programme beyond the standard 90 ECTS overall programme weighting.
- Pedagogy: If modules were to be combined to merged subjects as suggested by the Programmes Committee, subjects would be artificially linked; different lecturers would teach different parts of a module, and joined overall assessments would be confusing to students and employers. In response to raised concerns around student workload, the proposed model of adjusting the modules to 2.5 ECTS would be broadly in line with the existing version of the MBA, for which student feedback suggests the workload was appropriate.

- Competition: Reducing the number of compulsory modules would put the Business School at a disadvantage to its major competitors (namely INSEAD, Oxford and Cambridge) who have a similar if not higher number of core modules. In addition, MBA students are keen to personalise their curricula via electives, hence the Business School was offering a sufficiently high number of electives. Keeping the proposed compulsory and elective modules would allow the Business School to compete with their main market competitors on a like-for-like comparison. One of the Business School's main objectives was to progress in the Financial Times ranking from around 40 to a top 20 position. Merging subjects could create the impression of lowering the perceived quality of the Business School's offering.

5.1.3    Members of both Programmes Committee and QAEC were not convinced that accrediting bodies would require programmes to have specific designated modules for each of their core subject requirements listed in their criteria. Widespread experience across the college indicated that as long as a programme encompassed the key learning outcomes and appropriate verification methods that students achieve them, module design was left to the creativity of the institution. It was noted that there are many accredited programmes across the College which are compliant with the Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study, and that departments liaise with their accreditors in an ongoing dialogue to ensure that their programmes align to accreditation frameworks during curriculum redesigns.

The Business School highlighted that an external auditor, who was part of the AMBA Board strongly recommended against the grouping of the proposed 2.5 ECTS modules. Nonetheless, the Business School had taken steps to reduce the number of 2.5 ECTS modules by creating two larger 5 ECTS modules resulting from a consolidation of academically linked subjects.

5.1.4    Programmes Committee and QAEC noted that other UK institutions offer triple-accredited MBA courses which are based on larger module sizes than 2.5 ECTS (or equivalent CATS credits). The Business School reported that neither the College's direct competitors nor the leading global providers see value in grouping discipline-based modules into larger modules. Programmes Committee did not agree that being competitive meant that the Business School should model their programme design on their main competitors. Instead, a unique Business School MBA programme should be distinct from the competition and rise through the rankings by celebrating its own uniqueness. The Business School highlighted that providing a solid basis in all business relevant disciplines represented a minimum standard requirement, applying to all MBAs, not a differentiator. Removing modules or combining subjects that do not belong together would result in a weakening of the offering. In addition, it was reported that product differentiation in the MBA market revolved around other features such as curriculum flexibility, student experience, careers offering and connecting with the College. The Business School reported that the proposal pinpointed what was unique about the Imperial MBA, such as the Imperial Innovation Challenge, strong entrepreneurial ecosystem, and focus on personal leadership development.

**5.1.5** Programmes Committee and QAEC noted that eight 2.5 ECTS compulsory modules in the Autumn term contained a total of sixteen assessments; this indicated overassessment. The Business School commented that the relationship between the number of modules and the number of assessments was not linear and that concerns on overassessment were being followed up separately with module leaders, with a particular focus on avoiding assessment 'peaks'. In addition, when student feedback was sought in relation to the curriculum review, it was made clear that students felt the current workload was appropriate.

**5.1.6** The Business School reiterated that the curriculum redesign was led by an academic review group consisting of six Business School faculty members, including the two MBA Suite Academic Directors and the Business School's Vice Deans (Education; Research and Faculty). All academic departments as well as students and alumni were consulted. The redesign was strongly supported by the Management Board, including Heads of Department, and decisions were made based on extensive research into the MBA market and consultation with students, alumni and other stakeholders.

**5.1.7** Following in-depth discussion and taking into account detailed Programmes Committee feedback, QAEC agreed that the Business School had provided sufficient evidence, in additional to that presented at Programmes Committee, to support the use of 2.5 ECTS modules in the MBA (Full Time) programme. It was felt that grouping the remainder of core modules into larger modules would lead to counterintuitive combinations of subjects and weaken the MBA's competitive position in the marketplace. QAEC agreed that the proposal combined the uniqueness of the College with the major foundations of an MBA as accepted by the market.

**5.1.8** The Committee considered the proposed 'Assessment Rules and Degree Classification' set out in the programme specification. It was proposed that additional requirements above those set out in the Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study are met by students in order to achieve certain degree classifications. For example, a student would be required to achieve an average of 70% or above in each of the three specified module groups (Compulsory, Elective and Leadership modules) in order to gain a distinction, whereas the College's Regulations require a student to achieve a Programme Overall Weighted Average of 70% (or 69.50% with automatic rounding up at the borderline), including 70% in the major project. It was highlighted that the Regulations and Review Policy Committee (RPRC) would be considering degree algorithms and schemes of awards for PGT programmes over the next two meetings so this matter would be discussed further.

**5.1.9** The Committee approved the redesigned MBA (Full Time) programme for September 2022 delivery, subject to further consideration of the proposed degree classification algorithm/scheme of award at RPRC.

**Action: Secretary**

**6.** **Module Evaluation Survey (MEQ)**

**6.1** The Committee received a College summary of undergraduate and postgraduate MEQ       QAEC.2021.49

results for Autumn 2021. The MEQ was used to evaluate modules on undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes delivered by the Faculty of Engineering (including iBSc students) and the Faculty of Natural Sciences. I-Explore modules (BPES, Horizons, STEMM, Multidisciplinary Project) were also within the scope of the MEQ.

The College response rate was 26% (16,340 module evaluation responses out of 62,887 module enrolments).

UG MEQ
- The response rate was 25% (this compared to 36% for SOLE in Autumn 2020)
- There were 12,758 module evaluation responses out of 50,676 module enrolments

PG MEQ
- The response rate was 29% (this compared to 40% for SOLE in Autumn 2020)
- There were 3,582 module evaluation responses out of 12,211 module enrolments

The Committee noted the College percentage of respondents answering 'definitely agree' and 'mostly agree':

| Question Categories | UG | PG |
|---|---|---|
| Teaching Delivery | 80% | 86% |
| Assessment and Feedback | 69% | 78% |
| Engagement with Staff and Students | 80% | 87% |
| Access and Support | 85% | 90% |

## 6.2    Evaluation of student feedback on the MEQ                                      QAEC.2021.50

6.2.1    As part of MEQ, students were asked 'the Module Evaluation Questionnaire (previously 'SOLE') was updated this year. Please provide any comments on your ability to feed back on the quality of your modules (e.g. length, questions, accessibility, or anything else).' The Data Analytics, Evaluation & Monitoring Group reviewed the results.

There were over 1000 responses to the feedback question. Overall students were very positive about MEQ, praising it for being faster, short, efficient, accessible and easy to follow.

6.2.2    There were a few noted technical improvements to be made and suggestions for additional areas the survey could cover (mainly around different module elements such as tutorials, more options to feedback on assessment and on the course overall, in addition to evaluating modules). There were noticeable differences across year groups: Year 3 and 4 students had more adamant feedback about wanting to be able to 'rate' their individual lecturers, whereas there were few such comments from Year 1, 2 and PGT students - who were more likely to suggest being able to feedback on the different parts of a module.  Students also noted how mid-module feedback options could allow

them to provide feedback on different parts of the module to improve their experience while taking the module.

6.2.3    The Committee agreed to the following recommendations set out in the MEQ evaluation:

- For the College to continue to use the MEQ and follow-up on student suggestions for further improvements (including technical enhancements and additional optional questions).
- For Departments to use mid-module and pulse surveys to capture the different elements of a module, with MEQ capturing overall module evaluation.
- For the College and Departments to communicate to students any actions taken (or alternative response) as a result of feedback.

**Action: Secretary**

6.2.4    It was agreed that feedback from staff on the MEQ would be collected via FECs over the course of the academic year.

**Action: Secretary**

**6.3     Redaction and distribution of qualitative MEQ data**

6.3.1    The Committee noted that there were ongoing discussions around the MEQ and how free text comments are distributed and shared. Unlike SOLE, individual lecturer email addresses are no longer collected for module evaluation, nor stored in Banner. In addition, the College needs to revisit how and when free text comments are redacted prior to wider circulation. Both technical and policy implications would be considered at the June QAEC in order to inform enhancements to the MEQ.

**Action: Head of Academic Standards, Secretary**

**7      Policy and Procedure**

**7.1     Policy on progress of students who are remanded or given a custodial sentence whilst on course**                                                  QAEC.2021.52

7.1.2    The Committee considered minor updates to the Policy on progress of students who are remanded or given a custodial sentence whilst on course. The updates addressed specific job roles/titles that are no longer in place and provided clarity that a nominated representative of Registry would take a record of risk assessment review discussion and final decision.

As there was to be a review of the Student Discipline Policy (Ordinance E2) over the next year, it was agreed that it would be appropriate to fully review this policy at the same time or immediately afterwards to ensure that it is fit for purpose.

7.1.3    The Committee approved the proposed updates, subject to the following minor revisions to para 1.6:

- Indicate that the Academic Registrar would act as Chair
- Remove ICU Student Advisor (QAEC agreed that a student advisor would not normally act as a reviewer)
- Add Faculty senior tutor (or nominee)

**Action: Secretary**

**8.      Sub Committees**

**8.1      Programmes Committee**                                           QAEC.2021.53

8.1.1   The Committee approved the recommendations set out in the Programmes Committee report from the meeting held on 26 January 2022.

The following curriculum review proposals were approved for October 2022 delivery:

Faculty of Engineering
- Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering
  - MSc Advanced Materials for Sustainable Infrastructure
  - MSc Advanced Mechanical Engineering

Faculty of Natural Sciences
- Department of Chemistry
  - MSc Advanced Molecular Synthesis
  - MRes Biological and Physical Chemistry
  - MRes Catalysis: Chemistry and Engineering
  - MRes Chemical Biology and Bio-Entrepreneurship
  - MRes Drug Discovery and Development: Multidisciplinary Science for Next Generation Therapeutics
  - MRes Green Chemistry: Energy and the Environment
  - MRes Nanomaterials

- Department of Physics
  - MSc Optics and Photonics and MRes Photonics
  - MSc Optics and Photonics
  - MSc Photonics
  - MSc Physics
  - MSc Physics with Extended Research
  - MSc Quantum Fields and Fundamental Forces
  - MSc Security and Resilience: Science and Technology
  - MRes Soft Electronic Materials

**8.2      Postgraduate Research Quality Committee**

8.2.1   The Committee considered the report from the Postgraduate Research Quality        QAEC.2021.54
Committee meeting held on 16 February 2022.

The Committee considered the report from PRQC, from the meeting held on 16 February 2022, noting the following items:

- Withdrawal of the EngD Nuclear Engineering (ratified by QAEC following PRQC Chair's Action)
- Postgraduate Research Experience Survey 2021 College action plan Revised Writing Up procedure
- Department of Mathematics centres for doctoral training – request to amend regulations
- Remote Vivas Working Group
- Implementing new support for student-supervisor partnerships
- Faculty PRES 2021 action plans
- Approval of amendments to the College's precepts for research degrees and College's CPD framework for supervisors
- Special cases annual report - non-standard examiner nominations & thesis extensions

**8.3      Regulations and Policy Review Committee (RPRC)**

**8.3.1**      The Committee considered the report from the Regulation and Policy Review Committee, from the meeting held on 16 February 2022, noting the following items:      QAEC.2021.55

- The Committee approved minor updates to the RPRC constitution and membership.

**9.      Admissions**

**9.1**      The Committee noted the OfS Post-Qualification Admissions Consultation Response (published 24 February 2022): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1056912/Post-Qualification_Admissions_Consultation_Response_February_2022_web_version.pdf

**9.2**      It was noted that the full post-qualification admissions reform would not be carried forward. It seemed that the DfE had taken on board the views of respondents and considered the concerns of FE and HE, both of whom in the majority felt that neither reform model would lead to a better system than already in place. The sector felt that both reform models would have come with significant restructuring/disruption and had the risk of building out quality within the existing system in order to address what were identified as the limitations. It was felt that more focused minor reform was a sensible approach.

**9.2**      The Committee considered a report from the Education Committee, noting the following items:      QAEC.2021.56

- Assessment
- Resits
- Resit fees PhD student stipend extensions

- Use of strike funds
- Differential outcomes app
- OfS consultation on TEF and student outcomes
- Long-term education strategy and approach
- Activity in departments
- Remote study

Notes from previous meetings accessible on the Education Committee webpage: https://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/leadership-and-strategy/provost/vice-provost-education/education-committee-/

**10.     Any Other Business**

**10.1     Exceptional circumstances policy**

**10.1.1**   It was noted that the College's existing 'Exceptional circumstances for Taught Students not travelling to London for the 2021/22 Academic Year' Policy would apply to all students affected by the war in Ukraine. In addition, it was reported the College had set up a quick response group to deal with queries.

**11.     Dates of Meetings 2021-22**

**11.1**    The Committee noted the dates for future QAEC meetings to be held in 2021-22 (all 10:10-12:00) as follows:
- Wednesday 6 April 2022 (for 18 May Senate)
- Wednesday 1 June 2022 (for 29 June Senate)