

Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC)

Minutes from the meeting held on
Tuesday 27 July 2021

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
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

Dr Camille Kandiko Howson, Associate Professor of Education, CHERS [Item 8.3]
Lloyd James, ICU President elect
Daniel Lo, ICU Deputy President (Education) elect
Professor Omar Matar, Vice Dean (Education), Faculty of Engineering
Dr Helen Walkey, Education Insight and Evaluation Analyst [Item 8.3]

Apologies

Martin Lupton, Faculty of Medicine representative
Professor Peter Openshaw, Senior Consul

1. Welcome, apologies and announcements

- 1.1** The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting, noting apologies for absence.
- 1.2** The Committee welcomed Lloyd James (ICU President elect) and Daniel Lo (Deputy President (Education) elect). The Committee thanked Michaela Flegrova, the outgoing Deputy President (Education).
- 1.3** The Committee noted that Zixiao Wang had resigned as GSU President and that student postgraduate representation structures were being reviewed. In the interim, queries relating to the representation of postgraduate students should be directed to the ICU President elect.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

2.1 The Committee confirmed the minutes of 26 May 2021 as an accurate record. QAEC.2020.91

3. Matters arising from the minutes

3.1 Senate approved all QAEC recommendations as follows:

- (Minute 5.1.1.ii refers) Senate approved the proposed revision to the College's Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study to require that all postgraduate taught programmes contain level 7 modules only. Secretary would communicate the change in regs and liaise with affected Departments.
- (Minute 5.2.2 refers) Senate approved the revised Regulations for the awards of MPhil and PhD, for implementation for new and continuing students from October 2021, subject to minor updates.
- (Minute 9.3 refers) Senate approved the College Degree Outcomes Statement.

4. Update on QAEC actions

4.1 The Committee received the action list. Completed, Superseded or Closed Actions had been set out in a separate table, for information, and would not be rolled over for 2021-22. It was noted that 'July 2019 - 6.2.2 – Action re: Mitigating Circumstances' requires updating. QAEC.2020.92

5. Academic Regulations

5.1 The Committee considered recommendations from the Regulations and Policy Review Committee (RPRC) from the meeting held on 16 July 2021. QAEC.2020.93

5.1.1 Degree classification algorithms / schemes of awards

Department of Aeronautics

i) The Committee considered a proposal from the Department of Aeronautics for programme specific regulations relating to the scheme of award to be applied for the following programmes:

- MSc Advanced Aeronautical Engineering
- MSc Advanced Computational Methods for Aeronautics, Flow Management and Fluid-Structure Interaction
- MSc Composites: The Science, Technology and Engineering Application of Advanced Composites.

These programmes had not yet been curriculum reviewed and were currently operating under the 'old' Academic Regulations. However, the Department would like to keep their scheme of award under the 'Single Set' of Regulations and requested an exemption concerning information published on the transcript as part of their request.

- ii) The request set out that under their own scheme of awards under the old Academic Regulations, PGT degree classifications are awarded as follows:
- Distinction: The student has achieved a mark of 70.0% or greater for their taught modules' assessment aggregate AND a mark of 70.0% or greater for their project.
 - Merit: The student has achieved a mark of 60.0% or greater for their taught modules' assessment aggregate AND a mark of 60.0% or greater for their project but either the taught modules' assessment aggregate or the project mark or both are below 70.0%
 - Pass: The student has achieved a mark of 50.0% or greater for their taught modules' assessment aggregate AND a mark of 50.0% or greater for their project but either the taught modules' assessment aggregate or the project mark or both are below 60.0%.

Given the proposed classification criteria outlined above, and to avoid confusion in interpreting results (e.g. where a student has achieved a Programme Overall Weighted Average of 70% but has not met the criteria to be awarded a distinction), an exemption from reporting and publishing the Programme Overall Weighted Average on academic transcripts was requested. Instead, it was proposed that transcripts would set out the aggregate mark for taught modules and the mark for the dissertation or final major project.

- iii) It was noted that under the Single Set of Regulations, students are not required to achieve a minimum aggregate mark for taught modules to achieve a given degree classification. Students must achieve a specified Programme Overall Weighted Average and, normally, a specified mark in the designated dissertation or final major project module that corresponds to the given classification (e.g. for a distinction, a student must achieve a Programme Overall Weighted Average of 70.00% or above, or in practice, 69.50-69.99% for automatic rounding up. In addition, a student must normally achieve a minimum of 70.00% in the designated dissertation or final major project module).

The Department of Aeronautics felt that the existing algorithm for postgraduate taught awards set out in the Single Set of Regulations was problematic, where a programme contains a significantly sized research module (i.e. 45 ECTS within a 90 ECTS programme), as was the case in PGT Aeronautics programmes. The Department felt that by basing a final degree classification on Programme Overall Weighted Average it may be possible to obscure weaknesses in some areas with extreme strength in other areas. For example, a student obtaining a mark of 90% in the final major project but only a 50% aggregate in the taught modules would have a Programme Overall Weighted Average of 70% and therefore be eligible for a distinction.

- iv) The Students' Union Representative was concerned about parity across College, a view supported by the Committee. It felt that such a significant change should be considered in the wider College context.
- v) The Committee agreed that the following should be given further consideration before any amendment to the regulations is confirmed:
- That in principle, a specific scheme of award for PGT programmes that contain a dissertation or final major project that comprises 50% or more of the ECTS (e.g. a 45 ECTS dissertation within a 90 ECTS programme) was appropriate.
 - That a scheme of award specific to programmes which contain a dissertation or final major project that comprises 50% or more of the ECTS should apply across the board, not just for some Departments. Such a scheme of award should not be treated as a programme specific regulation but considered as part of the Single Set of Regulations.
 - That further consideration is given to what is included on a transcript, including the reporting and publishing of a Programme Overall Weighted Average if that is not used in the calculation of the degree classification.

Action: Chair / Judith Webster

Imperial College Business School

- vi) The Committee considered a proposal from the Business School for programme specific regulations relating to the scheme of award to be applied for the following programmes:
- MSc Finance
 - MSc Risk Management and Financial Engineering
 - MSc Finance and Accounting
 - MSc Investment and Wealth Management
 - MSc Financial Technology

The proposal set out that degree classification would be based on a number of factors including: the average across module groups; a minimum threshold across the largest individual component marks in each module; a minimum threshold in examination components and coursework components; and a minimum threshold mark in the Foundations in Risk Management & Financial Engineering module.

- vi) Committee members were unclear as to the academic rationale for the proposal and felt that a number of existing College regulations could cater for some of the components in the proposed scheme of award (e.g. module compensation regulations and module type). It was noted that the College allows some flexibility in setting qualifying marks for components where sound pedagogical reasoning exists in reference to module level learning outcomes. The Committee did not approve the proposal and agreed to set up a meeting outside of QAEC to explore the matter further.

Action: Chair / Judith Webster

5.1.2 Zero credit modules

- i) The Committee discussed the use of zero credit modules across the College. It was noted that there appeared to be three main categories for zero credit modules across College (noting some differences in department practice):
- Module primers/pre-sessional 'courses' used to provide students with the relevant knowledge in key areas to complete the programme. It was noted that a requirement to complete this type of module was dependent on the programme (on some programmes these were compulsory and on others they were optional).
 - Modules used to provide students with relevant knowledge/expertise and assessed. May or may not be required to successfully complete the programme but required to be attempted.
 - 'Dummy' modules used to support integrated assessment for multiple modules and ensure relevant access for the student to College material
- ii) The Committee, supported by the Students' Union representative, felt that modules with required effort and/or assessment should have associated credit. The Committee sought assurance around how the student effort would be accounted for within a programme with zero credit modules. Where primers were 'pass before you arrive', it was felt that this should be built into admissions requirements.
- iii) It was noted that the Regulations and Policy Review Committee would further review the use of zero credit modules across College.

Action: Secretary

5.1.3 Guidelines regarding the access and retention of assessment for students on taught programmes

- i) Although there was some concern around the significant resource required should a large number of students request access to scripts, it was felt that the existing College guidelines had not caused any resourcing issues to date. As a result, the Committee approved the proposed updates. It was agreed that it was appropriate that only an academic member of staff could supervise access to scripts to ensure that any feedback provided is appropriately informed.

5.1.4 Guidelines for issuing provisional marks to students on taught programmes

- i) The Committee approved the proposed updates.

6. Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure

6.1 Updates to the Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure

QAEC.2020.94

6.2 Following the discussion at QAEC on 28 April 2021, the updated policy was presented for approval. The Committee noted that penalty 'c' (resubmission for an uncapped mark) was removed, as previously recommended by the Committee. In addition, it was proposed that the available sanctions are reviewed to address the following issues:

- The relatively large differences between some of the penalties. This is particularly felt between the penalty that requires a module to be repeated with a capped mark, and the module to be give a zero, if passed at resubmission.
- That there is insufficient gradation in the range of penalties within the same band for example 'moderate plagiarism', particularly where students have raised significant mitigation.

6.3 The Committee recommended the following:

- That there should be further gradation between the penalty that requires a module to be repeated with a capped mark, and the module to be give a zero, if passed at resubmission. The 'gap' between these penalties should be addressed by including some of the possible options presented in the proposal (e.g. assessment capped at 'x' marks below the pass mark and the module capped at 'x' marks below the pass mark). The Committee agreed that the additional sanctions should not be too granular as this could create a sense of arbitrariness if too fine grained.
- That the use of specific letters in the sanctions table (which correlated to the full list of available sanctions) was a useful aid and should remain.

6.4 The Committee discussed the following:

- The importance of plagiarism training. It was noted that this could be considered as a possible outcome, where MSc students are asked to re-take the Masters online plagiarism training course
- That the sanctions for Masters students might be considered harsh, particularly for international students, where poor academic practice was not an available offense. However, it was highlighted that the OfS has stated that all students should be treated equally; a message that would need to be highlighted for any new panel members.

6.5 In addition, at the recent RPRC, there was discussion regarding mitigation raised as part of an allegation of misconduct, and how that may impact on other considerations regarding the student. Particular concerns raised were:

- Mitigation could be 'double counted' (considered by the panel and then in a separate claim with the Board of Examiners)
- Mitigation claim was used to reduce or nullify a penalty for proven misconduct (outside the remit of the panel to do so)
- Other assessment taken at the same period of the alleged misconduct would not have any appropriate consideration of mitigation, as students had only raised this through the AM process.

Further discussion would take place at a future QAEC to address these concerns.

6.6 It was confirmed that the panel discretion for mitigating factors could be relevant in the case of a 'severe first offence'.

7. QAA Quality Evaluation and Enhancement of UK Transnational Education Higher Education Provision 2021-22 to 2025-26

7.1 The Committee considered College membership of the QAA's Quality Evaluation and Enhancement of UK Transnational Education Higher Education Provision Programme. The core purposes of the programme and approach were defined as follows: QAEC.2020.95

- Strengthening the reputation of UK TNE
- Providing valued information and insights
- Building mutual trust
- Delivering benefit for TNE stakeholders

7.2 The scheme would operate over a five-year cycle so membership would be from 2021-22 to 2025-26, with cost based on the number of TNE students within the College's academic portfolio. Based on the HESA figures for 2019-20, the College had 915 students reported in TNE provision so membership would be £2,500 per year. It was noted that it is not possible to subscribe for a shorter period; the total cost would therefore be £12,500 over five years. However, it is likely that the College would increase to over 1,000 TNE students in future years given the anticipated growth in the Global MBA and the Global Public Health programmes therefore it is likely that costs could increase to £3,000 per academic year.

7.3 The Committee considered the benefits and limitations of College membership set out in the paper, as well as any perceived risks associated with joining (e.g. resource implications of taking part in QAA TNE reviews). Given the College's commitment to its TNE students and the likely future increase in College TNE student numbers, it was felt that membership would be beneficial. The Committee agreed to join the scheme for the initial five-year period, with regular review of the benefits to inform any future renewal decision.

In order to participate in the programme, the College needs to register by 31 August 2021.

Action: Judith Webster / Secretary

8. Student Online Evaluation (SOLE)

8.1 The Committee considered UG & PGT SOLE results for Spring 2021 for the following: QAEC.2020.96

- Faculty of Engineering
- Faculty of Natural Sciences
- BPES
- Horizons
- I-Explore STEMM

8.1.2 The Committee noted the following results:

UG SOLE:

- Total participation in the survey was 33%, a 7% increase in response rates from the Spring 2020 survey.
- At College level, satisfaction increased between 3-5% for each module question compared to the same survey in 2020.
- Question 3 (feedback on work submitted) continues to receive the lowest satisfaction scores of all module questions, however in 2021 satisfaction increased by 3%.
- Overall satisfaction with the quality of the module (Q4) increased by 4% compared to the same survey in 2020.
- Overall satisfaction with the lecturer (Q4) fell by 1% from the same survey in 2020.

PG SOLE:

- Total participation in the survey was also 33%. This was a 7% increase from the Spring 2020 survey.
- At College level, satisfaction increased between 1-2% for each module question compared to the same survey in 2020.
- Question 3 (feedback on work submitted) continues to receive the lowest satisfaction scores of all module questions. However, in 2021 satisfaction increased by 2% and is an increase of 5% from the same survey in the 2018-19 academic year.

- Overall satisfaction with the quality of the module (Q4) increased by 1% compared to the same survey in 2020.
- Student satisfaction with lecturers in the College improved on the 2020 survey across Q's 1 and 3 and remained the same for Q's 2 and 4.

8.1.3 It was noted that UG and PGT Summer SOLE results as well as the Faculty of Medicine's MBBS and MSc Medical Biosciences programmes would be considered at QAEC on 29 September 2021.

8.2 Replacement of Student Viewpoint for 2021-22

8.2.1 The Committee received a verbal update on the replacement of Student Viewpoint for 2021-22. The Project Team has a deadline of 2 August 2021 to decide on which supplier to proceed with or whether a number of interim contingency options should be considered further. A more detailed update would be provided at the next meeting once a decision has been made.

8.3 Module evaluation survey pilot 2021 – summary and recommendations

8.3.1 Dr Camille Kandiko Howson and Dr Helen Walkey presented the summary and recommendations from the module evaluation survey pilot 2021.

QAEC.2020.97

Drawing on technical requirements and feedback from staff and students, the following aspects were tested through a pilot during Spring 2021: questions; module focus; platforms; and use of data.

8.3.2 Following delivery of the pilot and review of feedback received from participating students and from the Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Imperial College Union (ICU) on the SOLE pilot report, alongside lessons from the Business School and Faculty of Medicine, the Committee noted the following recommendations for changes to SOLE from 2021-2022:

1. That students should be asked to evaluate the teaching and learning on each module through Likert-scale response questions and open text comments, and not to answer questions about specific lecturers.
2. That the core module question set is expanded to 8 questions covering 4 topics, plus an open text question. Students should be prompted to consider the different components of a module to encourage more specific feedback that staff could use to identify areas for enhancement.
3. That SOLE should allow one additional bank of questions to be asked per module.
4. That numerical data should be shared with ICU student academic departmental representatives.

8.3.3 The Committee welcomed the recommendations and agreed that these should be taken forward by the project team working on the replacement for Student Viewpoint, for 2021-2022 implementation.

9. Education Strategy and Operations Group (ESOG) - Update on College Action in the light of Covid-19 July 2021 QAEC.2020.98

9.1 The Committee noted the action taken and activities undertaken by ESOG across the following areas:

- Education and Student Experience delivery in 2021/22 and meeting OfS/CMA requirements
- Timetabling in AY 2021/22 (as social distancing restrictions are expected to be eased for the 21/22 academic year, ESOG Timetabling continues to support academic departments in clarifying arrangements to produce the teaching timetable)
- Return of students to campus
- International student support
- Exceptional Circumstances Policy (a policy had been agreed outlining a set of exceptional circumstances under which the College would consider it acceptable for a taught student to study remotely during all or a significant part of the 2021-22 academic year)
- Quarantine Hotel Support

10. Office for Students Consultation on Quality and Standards Conditions

10.1 The Committee received a verbal update on the [OfS quality and standards conditions consultation](#).

10.2 The OfS is currently consulting on its approach to regulating quality and standards in higher education (delivered through the 'B' Conditions of Registration). Since 2018, the focus has been on assessing providers seeking registration but now that most providers are registered, the approach would be developed further. The

10.2 The consultation closes on 27 September 2021 and there would not be a QAEC until 29 September. The College response would therefore be shared via email.

Action: Judith Webster

11.1 The Committee noted the NSS 2021 results as follows:

College Level Outcomes

- Overall satisfaction improved by 3.1 percentage points up to 84.5%.
- The Sector average for overall satisfaction decreased by 7.2 percentage points to 75.4%.
- The College's percentage satisfaction improved in seven question categories: Teaching (+2.6 percentage points to 86.3%); Learning Opportunities (+1.9 percentage points to 82.9%); Assessment and Feedback (+3.5 percentage points to 63.8%); Academic Support (0.6 percentage points to 77.5%); Organisation and Management (+1.9 percentage points to 76.3%); Learning Community (+0.3 percentage points to 77.7%); and Students' Union (+3.4 percentage points to 57.7%).
- The College's percentage satisfaction fell in two question categories: Learning Resources (-2.0 percentage points to 87.5%); and Student Voice (-0.4 percentage points to 74.6%).

College Ranking

- The College had risen 80 places and now ranks 15th in the Sector for Overall Satisfaction, out of the 165 Higher Education Institutions (excluding Further Education Colleges and Alternative/Private Providers) with overall results. The College moved up into the first quartile for Overall Satisfaction.
- The College ranked in the top quartile for all question categories except for Assessment and Feedback where it ranks in the bottom quartile.

11.2 The Committee welcomed the positive results, which were achieved under challenging circumstances. The Students' Union would undertake further analysis of the NSS data and work with Departments to agree actions to further enhance the College's provision.**12. Any Other Business****12.1** No other business reported.**13. Dates of Meetings 2021-22****13.1** The Committee confirmed the dates for QAEC meetings to be held in 2021-22 (all 10:10-12:00) as follows:

- Wednesday 29 September 2021 (for 13 October Senate)
- Wednesday 17 November 2021 (for 8 December Senate)
- Wednesday 26 January 2022 (for 23 March Senate)
- Wednesday 2 March 2022 (also for 23 March Senate)
- Wednesday 6 April 2022 (for 18 May Senate)
- Wednesday 1 June 2022 (for 29 June Senate)