

Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC)

Minutes from the meeting held on
Wednesday 26 May 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
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)
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 meeting, noting apologies for absence.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

2.1 The Committee confirmed the minutes of 28 April 2021 as an accurate record, subject to the following amendment: QAEC.2020.74

- 9.1 - The Committee considered the CLCC - Horizons – Autumn Term 2020 SOLE results. Overall satisfaction was ~~66%~~ **85%**, compared to a College average of ~~52%~~ **81%**.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

3.1 No matters arising.

4. Update on QAEC actions

- 4.1** The Committee received the action list and recommended that the actions are reviewed and rationalized, where appropriate. QAEC.2020.75

5. Academic Regulations

- 5.1** The Committee considered recommendations from the Regulations and Policy Review Committee (RPRC) from the meetings held on 19 March 2021 and 21 May 2021. QAEC.2020.76

- 5.1.1** The Committee considered a recommendation from RPRC, that the College's Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study (the 'Single Set') are revised with immediate effect, to require that all postgraduate taught programmes contain level 7 modules only (i.e. no level 6 modules permitted).

- i) The College's Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study currently permit a maximum of 15 level 6 credits as part of a 90-credit postgraduate taught programme. This is in line within the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). Under the Regulations it is possible for a student to pass all modules at the threshold academic standard (40% for level 6 modules, 50% for level 7 modules) but fail to meet the minimum Programme Overall Weighted Average required to pass the programme (50%). Furthermore, it was noted that whilst the FHEQ permits level 6 modules in postgraduate taught programmes, the sector was moving away from this model. There are instances where this approach could be deemed pedagogically sound, for example to support students returning to academic study, but this was not felt best suited to the needs of the College's students, who are typically high academic achievers.

- ii) The Committee recommended to Senate that the revision to the Regulations is approved. Should the proposed revision be approved, the Committee agreed that any postgraduate taught programme containing level 6 modules that had undergone curriculum review would need to be modified to ensure that only level 7 modules are delivered. To allow programme teams sufficient time to plan for the change, the Committee agreed that modifications should be approved for October 2022 delivery. It was noted that the EDU and QA support would be available, if required, as Departments may decide to modify Level 6 modules to become Level 7 modules in order that some of the existing lectures and sessions could be used across levels, where appropriate.

- 5.1.2** The Committee approved updates to the Conduct of Boards of Examiners 2020-21 document, which set out the requirements for the constitution and operation of Boards of Examiners considering results, progression and award decisions for undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes. The principles and guidance included in the document help the College to provide assurance of the academic standards of its awards through decision made by the Boards of Examiners and set out how the Boards should be established and operate effectively. QAEC agreed that the document would be implemented with immediate effect.

QAEC approved updates to the Board of Examiners Notes. The notes support the effective operation of Boards by providing advice and guidance on the following areas:

- Impact of strike action
- Impact of Covid-19
- Running Boards during remote working
- Dealing with missing marks or not being able to access marked scripts which are locked on campus
- Continuing advice for the application of Mitigating Circumstances decisions
- Fair Assessment
- Academic Misconduct
- Ongoing impact of curriculum review
- Referral limits and compensation

5.1.3 The Committee noted the following:

- i) An updated Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedure would be considered at the next QAEC, which would take into account good practice guidance published by the Office for the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).
- ii) The use of zero credit modules would be discussed at the next QAEC, with a view to review current College practice and develop policy and guidance.
- iii) The following updated documents would be considered at the next QAEC:
 - Guidelines regarding the access and retention of assessment for students on taught programmes
 - Guidelines for issuing provisional marks to students on taught programmes

5.1.4 The Committee noted that a number of requests for programme specific regulations and exemptions to College regulations would be discussed at the next RPRC. Much discussion would focus on degree algorithms.

5.1.5 The Committee noted that RPRC would develop the current Religious Observance Policy in place for this academic year in order to further support students for subsequent years.

5.2 The Committee considered updated Regulations for the Awards of MPhil and PhD, as recommended by the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee (PRQC) from the meeting held on 12 May 2021.

5.2.1 It was noted that a Working Group was established to review the Regulations for the award of the MPhil and PhD and to bring them up to date to reflect the research degree milestones in more detail in the Regulations. The Committee noted the following updates:

- The Admissions section had been updated to reflect the Postgraduate Research Admissions Policy.
- The requirements for the Early Stage Assessment and Late Stage Review milestones had been more fully articulated in a new section on progression.
- The outcomes available to the examiners had been more clearly articulated
- Milestone and review deadlines for part-time students had been revised with a 0.5 FTE calculation.

5.2.2 The revised Regulations were recommended to Senate for implementation for new and continuing students from October 2021, subject to the following updates:

- To reflect the Thesis Submission Extension Policy into the Regulations as they relate to milestones and the final submission, prior to submission to Senate in June 2021.
- To include the requirement for the Thesis to be submitted to Turnitin which is effective from 2021-22. The wording for the guidance is being developed for this.
- To amend the formatting and numbering of the document for consistency and embed check links to related documents.

The Committee agreed that continuing students would continue to work towards their agreed milestone deadlines as planned from their initial date of registration where there is any conflict with the deadlines included in the revised Regulations.

5.2.3 The Committee noted that further work would be undertaken over the next academic year to update and produce associated policy and guidance, including the below:

- CDT arrangements
- EngD and MD(Res) regulations
- Updated PGR Interruption of Studies Policy
- Updated milestone guidance
- Writing Up Policy (including access implications)

6. Study Abroad Task and Finish Group

6.1 The Committee considered the updated procedure for the approval, reapproval & review of student exchange partnerships, as recommended by the Task and Finish Group. The procedure set out arrangements for approving institutions of higher education abroad as partners in delivering study opportunities as part of a degree programme at both undergraduate and postgraduate taught level.

QAEC.2020.78

6.2 The Committee approved the Procedure subject to a further update to the following section:

1.3 The College will only enter into a student exchange partnership with another institution whose quality of provision, mission, vision and ethos are compatible with that of the College.

The Committee felt that it should be made clear that the procedure should also permit the College to enter into a student exchange partnership with another institution whose quality of provision differs from that of the College but nonetheless offers valuable learning opportunities to the College's students. This could be particularly pertinent to emerging partnerships with institutions based in low- and middle-income countries that would offer complementary perspectives.

6.3 The Committee noted that further work in this area would be undertaken over the next academic year and thanked Adrian Hawksworth (Assistant Registrar, Placements) for his work through the Task and Finish Group.

7. Student Casework

7.1 The Committee considered the Student Complaints (Taught Programmes) Summary Report, noting the following challenges:

QAEC.2020.79

- Resource issues in managing cases
- Increase in the complexity of cases
- Student concerns around a perceived conflict of interest at Stage 2
- Identifying a 'responsible authority' where complaints span multiple areas
- The absence of a College casework management system
- The need to formalise an acceptable behaviour code for all those involved in casework (students and staff) and set out what action would be taken if this is not followed.

These challenges would be addressed through Committees, Working Groups, and further policy development over the next academic year.

7.2 The Committee noted that it was challenging to evaluate data across years due to the absence of a casework management system.

7.2 The Committee considered amendments to the Fitness to Study Procedure.

QAEC.2020.80

- 7.2.1** Following the approval of the Fitness to Study Procedure by Senate in the Autumn Term 2020-21, there had been further discussion with the Head of the Central Secretariat on the implementation of the Procedure. As a result of these discussions, the Committee approved minor amendments and clarifications to the procedure as follows:
- Paragraph 16 - updated to state that the outcome agreed at the Case Review meeting would normally be one that had not already been attempted as part of any informal action taken by the Department or Faculty, or the hall warden team. However, there may be situations where that might be appropriate.
 - Paragraph 19 - membership of the Fitness to Study Panel updated to clarify that the membership should be drawn to include a Faculty Senior Tutor from a Faculty other than that of the student. This draws a clearer distinction between Stage 1 and Stage 2 Panels
 - Paragraph 21 – updated to clarify that in a situation where a Panel is unable to reach a majority decision, the outcome would be presented as a decision of the Panel
 - Additionally, the section of the right of appeal (paragraphs 35 to 42) had been updated to clarify the role of the Casework Team and the Central Secretariat in the conduct of appeals.
- 7.2.2** The Committee noted that Hannah Bannister (Director of Student Services) is aware of the challenges in quickly convening panels following an incident on campus and is working to address this.
- 7.3** The Committee noted the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) Annual Report 2020, available at: <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/resources-and-publications/latest-news-and-updates/oia-publishes-2020-annual-report/> QAEC.2020.81
- 7.4** The Committee noted a summary of the OfS statement of expectations for preventing and addressing harassment and sexual misconduct affecting students in higher education. QAEC.2020.82
- 7.4.1** QAEC noted the Office for Students statement of expectations for preventing and addressing harassment and sexual misconduct affecting students in higher education, available at: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/d4ef58c0-db7c-4fc2-9fae-fcb94b38a7f3/ofs-statement-of-expectations-harassment-and-sexual-misconduct.pdf>
- 7.4.2** In response to the Statement, the Committee noted that Senate had agreed to the establishment of a small working group to undertake an initial mapping exercise and identify work to be completed for the start of the new academic year and then over the 2021-22 academic year.
- 8. Postgraduate Taught Annual Monitoring**
- 8.1** The Committee noted Faculty PGT Annual Monitoring Reports 2020-21 (reporting on 2019-20). QAEC.2020.83

- 8.1.1** The Committee received Faculty Postgraduate Annual Monitoring Reports for the academic year 2019-20. Faculty and College level issues put forward by Departments were considered and instances of good practice were noted.
- 8.1.2** Faculty and School representatives commented as follows:
- Colleagues across Departments and Schools were praised for their dedication and hard work during a challenging period
 - PowerBI is a useful tool and should be utilised for PGT data – this is currently being investigated with Strategic Planning
 - An annual monitoring theme should be considered – this would be addressed through the annual monitoring review
 - There are currently challenges with receiving PGT student representative input for draft annual monitoring reports - this would be addressed through the annual monitoring review
- 8.2** The Committee considered the College PGT Annual Monitoring Report Summary 2020-21 (reporting on 2019-20). QAEC.2020.84
- 8.2.1** The Committee noted that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was a significant area of concern across most departments. Although many issues were identified in having to amend teaching and learning delivery (often at short notice due to changes in government restrictions), departments were also able to identify positive changes that had resulted and are likely to be continued once restrictions are lifted.
- 8.2.2** The Committee noted good practice across the following areas: curriculum enhancement; student support; providing opportunities for student feedback; and project allocation.
- 8.2.3** The Committee noted the following cross College themes: space constraints; and assessment and feedback challenges.
- 8.2.4** College level issues raised by Departments had been recorded and would be responded to by service providers for dissemination to Departments via Faculty Education Committees. It was agreed that the Committee would periodically receive updates on progress against College level issues.
- 9. Degree Outcomes Statement**
- 9.1** The Committee considered a draft of the College’s Degree Outcomes Statement. QAEC.2020.85
- 9.2** In 2019, the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assurance (UKSCQA) coordinated a consultation on behalf of the UK HE sector on degree classification. The resulting report proposed for a UK wide statement of intent regarding the protection of the value of the honours degree qualifications over time. In addition, institutions in England committed to publishing a ‘degree outcomes statement’ demonstrating how they meet the relevant OfS conditions of registration and expectations of the QAA Quality Code.
- 9.3** QAEC recommended the College Degree Outcomes Statement to Senate, subject to the deletion of competitor comparison.

10. Programmes Committee

10.1 The Committee approved the recommendations set out in the Programmes Committee report from the meeting held on 18 May 2021. QAEC.2020.86

10.2 The following new programme proposals were approved, subject to recommendations:

- MRes Machine Learning and Big Data in the Physical Sciences (30th March 2021 meeting)
To introduce the programme with effect from October 2021
- BSc Biomedical Technology Ventures
To introduce the programme with effect from October 2022
- MRes AI and Machine Learning
To introduce the programme with effect from October 2021
- MSc Applied Paediatrics
To introduce the programme with effect from October 2021
- MSc Computational Genomics
To introduce the programme with effect from October 2021

10.3 The Committee recommended that, for clarity, the summary report could make clear that the BPES and Horizons modules being withdrawn from some engineering programmes were still available within I-Explore.

10.4 The ICU Deputy President (Education) reported student concerns on the approval of the following modification:

- Module: MEDI97003 Clinical Placement III
- Proposal: Amendment to the Pre-Foundation Assistantship and electives dates and creation of a single 5-week revision and exams block from 2022-23.

Pre-Foundation Assistantship (PFA) had been introduced to improve students' preparedness for practice in the NHS. This would become an integral component of the course from April 2023. Students concerns centred on the reduced summer break. The School reported that lessons had been learned from the student consultation but that this modification was a direct result of a PSRB requirement and so had to be implemented to ensure professional standards were being met.

11. Postgraduate Research Quality Committee

QAEC.2020.87

11.1 The Committee a report from the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee (PRQC) report from the meeting held on 12 May 2021, noting the following items:

- Graduate Worker Route - a new immigration permission is being introduced by UKVI on 1 July 2021. This new visa would permit international PhD students to remain in the country for up to 3 years after graduation to work or seek employment.
- Guidance on plagiarism issues in theses – PRQC approved updated guidance on plagiarism in theses. In particular, the section relating to the use of previously

published materials had been expanded and the use of Turnitin for thesis submission had been included.

- Turnitin thesis submission process map and website - PRQC approved the final process map for the use of Turnitin for thesis submission.
- Interruptions of Study for research students - PRQC approved amendments to the Interruptions of Studies Guidance and Interruptions of Studies Form for PGR students to reflect that some funders would pay sick leave for sponsored students.
- Postgraduate research Periodic Review schedule (2020/21 – 2024/25) - PRQC approved the schedule but felt that there should be flexibility around dates when scheduling reviews.

12. College Covid-19 Update

- 12.1** The Committee noted an update on the College's Covid-19 response and planning for 2021-22 delivery: QAEC.2020.88

February 2021 to the start of the Summer Term 2021:

- Exams, Covid-19 and religious observances
- PhD Covid-19 impact statements
- International student support
- Study Abroad
- Student Experience Survey
- Planning for Easter Break

Summer Term 2021

- Approach to fair assessment
- Return of students to campus
- Student Experience

Preparations for the 2021-22 Academic Year:

- Education and Student Experience delivery in 2021/22 and meeting OfS/CMA requirements
- Timetabling
- Building Communities

13. Any Other Business

13.1 Chair's Action - Major Modifications (Chair's action)

- 13.1.1** The Committee ratified an in-year major modifications to programmes in the Department of Earth Science and Engineering as a result of Covid-19, approved by Chair's action. QAEC.2020.89
- 13.1.2** The Committee ratified an in-year major modification to the MBBS programme as a result of a major technical issue with the exam provider, approved by Chair's action. QAEC.2020.90

14. Dates of Meetings 2021-22

14.1 The Committee noted that an additional QAEC meeting would be arranged in July 2021 (date TBC) to address any outstanding business of the academic year.

14.2 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 20 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)