

## SENATE

### Confirmed Minutes of Meeting held on 17 March 2021

**Present:** Professor Ian Walmsley (Chair); Professors Buluwela, Chilvers, Craster, Distaso, Eisingerich, Green, Haynes, Kingsbury, Lindstedt, McCoy, Meeran, Openshaw, Spivey, Thompson, Xu; Drs Costa-Pereira, Craig, Fobelets, Gounaris, Malhotra, Rutschmann; Ms Bannister, Ms Flegrova, Ms Makuch; Mr Lupton, Mr Sood, Mr Tebbutt, Mr Wang; Mr Ashton (Secretary); Ms Webster (Minute Secretary).

In attendance: Professor Haskard, Ms Chris Banks, Ms Amy Maddin, Mr Jason Yarrow

**Apologies:** Professors Dougherty, Green, Lindstedt, Veloso, Weber; Dr Field

#### **2514 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were noted as above.

#### **2515 Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Senate held on 9 December 2020 were confirmed as an accurate record.

#### **2516 Matters Arising**

##### **.1 OfS Consultation on Quality and Standards (Minute 2520 refers)**

That the College's response to the Office for Students Consultation had been finalised and submitted on behalf of the College in January 2021. The second phase of the consultation was due to take place in the late Spring.

##### **.2 Supporting Trans and Non-Binary Gendered Students Policy and Guidance (Minute 2510 refers)**

That no additional comments had been received and so the Policy would be approved by Chair's Action.

#### **2517 Chair's Action**

There was no Chair's Action to report.

#### **2518 Provost's Business**

Received: A verbal report from the Provost

Reported: (1) Dealing with many of the issues under the agenda – just to note that it is near the end of a third term of almost remote provision. Very Challenging for staff and staff survey indicated that staff are feeling more stressed than during previous lockdowns.

Hopefully the end in sight. Thank you to everyone for all their hard work. Many students have now returned.

### **Admissions Update**

#### **Received: A presentation from the Director of Academic Services.**

Reported: (1) that a new organisational unit, Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions had been established within the Academic Services Directorate. The new unit incorporates the Admissions Team from Registry and Student Recruitment and Outreach so was building from a position of strength. Thanks were extended to Leila Guerra in the Business School who was working with the new Directorate for bringing her expertise to the new unit. Thanks were also extended to the Provost for agreeing funding to provide more proactive recruitment services and for eight additional fixed term posts to support this crucial area of work.

(2) That new fee regulations had been approved by Parliament and enacted as of 1 March 2021. The new regulations were complex but did bring some clarity to some categories in terms of rights but further guidance was awaited from UKCISA on complex cases and exact conditions of the new frameworks.

(3) That applications for undergraduate programmes showed stable growth with a growth of 20% for UK and OS nationals but reduction in applications from EEA nationals. The application window for undergraduate programmes was now closed and decisions needed to be made by mid-April. Guidance had been provided to Departments on how to mitigate against over-recruitment in this cycle. It was noted that the arrangements for A Levels in 2021 were causing some concern over the potential for grade inflation with Teacher Assessed Grades. In terms of Postgraduate applications, there was an overall 7.5% growth compared with this time last year in the cycle and also showed a decline in applicants from EEA nationals. The College had signed a new agreement with Qualification Check which provides an online checked-at-source academic credential verification service. This was a very positive development and thanks were extended to the Head of Admissions for taking this forward.

(4) That the College's response to the Department of Education's (DoE) consultation on the reform of the undergraduate admissions system towards a post qualification model had been drafted and shared across College through the Admissions Networks. Two options were proposed within the consultation. Of these, Post Qualification Offers (PQO) is favoured within the College and would address some of DoE's concern but might not be different enough. The other option of Post Qualifications Admissions (PQA) would have a more significant impact.

Considered in discussion: (1) That in there was ongoing concern respect of grade inflation especially around borderline candidates where there could be a tendency for teachers to be more generous.

(2) That the increase in applications was not consistent across the College with some very high demand programmes and a small number where there is a decline but that overall it was a healthy position. There was growth in postgraduate provision in Business and Engineering. Numbers were steady in the Faculty of Natural Sciences but a decline for postgraduate medicine. From a qualitative perspective, there was an over reliance on some markets such as China and Europe and that the new Directorate would be looking to support recruitment and conversion campaigns to support broadening out recruitment activities.

(3) That in respect of the recruitment of Research Degree Students, it was difficult to gauge whether recruitment patterns were changing as this currently operating under two sets of regulations so there would not be a clear position until September 2022 but it would be difficult to make a like for like comparison. Application rates in terms of nationality or place of domicile would continue to be monitored but would be less easy to determine. It was noted

that some early applications may need to be reviewed or be subject to appeal as a result of the change to the set of regulations after the application cycle had opened.

## **2520 Covid-19 Response**

**Received:** A report from the Education and Strategy Operations Group (ESOG) (**Paper Senate 2020/14**)

Reported: (1) That the report includes the measures taken following the introduction of the new national lockdown from early January and the resultant postponement of the staggered return to Campus at the start of the Spring Term except for a very limited number of students.

(2) That ESOG Education had been focussing on the approach to Fair Assessment following the agreement of the Russell Group that the Safety Net approach adopted for the 2019/20 academic year was not appropriate for this academic year as we do not have enough data to base their awards on. The approach taken by the College is as set out in the paper. The Imperial College Union have been very closely involved in reaching these arrangements for the current year.

(3) That enhanced guidance for PGR Supervisors had been developed on how to support their students through the prolonged periods of Covid restrictions and the impact on both their research and their well being.

(4) That the report also includes information on financial support and on the review of support for students over the Christmas Holidays.

(5) That this work has relieved on extensive collaboration from staff across the College and with the Imperial College Union as well. This way of working has put the College in good stead to support its delivery of education and the student experience in the next year and anticipate changes brought about by the UK government, reacting to the need to manage the pandemic. Senate is asked to note and acknowledge all these areas, too many to mention, for their contribution.

Considered in discussion: (1) That the President of the Imperial College Union wished to thank the Chair and members of ESOG who had worked together really well. The Union had flagged up some issues around ensuring better co-ordination with departments. The response from students to the Fair Assessment measures had been mixed but the Union had tried to make a positive statement on these measures noting that The College was doing what it could within the bounds of what is reasonable. The Union would continue to work with students to understand their concerns and feed these into the work of ESOG.

(2) Senate members reported that students had also raised some concerns about the integrity of the Timed Remote Assessment process and that staff had noted that as many of the extra curricula activities were not available to students they had been spending far more time on some pieces of coursework. It was reported that some of the data collected in CHERS shows that while the effort made in providing material to students had been excellent, the social normalisation of study had been missed by the students and that this was an area for further consideration to avoid students overworking in the mixed-mode approach.

## **2521 OfS Regulation of Student Protection**

Received: A paper from the Academic Registrar (**Paper Senate/2020/15**)

Reported: (1) That the paper sets out the action the College has taken in respect of the obligations we hold in respect of consumer protection law. Senate was initially advised of the action taken during the summer of 2020 which included sending letters to all applicants

and continuing students to set out the arrangements for their programmes of study in 2020-21 and the steps that would be taken in event of restrictions placed upon the College by local or national public health advice. Students gave their consent to these changes through registration and enrolment for the current academic year.

(2) That in January 2021, Faculties were asked to undertake an audit against the statements made previously and asked whether they had been any additional communications to students about the provision and whether any further adjustments would be required as a result of the national restrictions put in place from January 2021 in order to deliver programme and module level learning outcomes for students. The check also provided an opportunity to check on whether there had been any adverse impact on any particular groups of students.

(3) That the audit concluded that the provision was in line with the statements provided over the summer of 2020. There is only one programme where there might be difficulty to deliver the learning outcomes on one module which requires students to observe clinical observation and the related assessment.

Approved: Senate noted and approved the outcome of the Audit.

## **2522 Education Delivery Planning for 2021-22**

Received: A presentation from the Vice Provost (Education and Student Experience)

Reported: (1) That the College was working on a set of principles to underpin education delivery for the next academic year. The desire of staff and students to return to normality needed to be planned for alongside any regulatory requirements and public health guidelines and so needed to be flexible to accommodate any ongoing conditions, travel restrictions and any further significant outbreaks of Covid-19, including new variants.

(2) That the College needed to provide timely communications to applicants and continuing students about the arrangements for 2021-22 and that this was planned to happen by the end of July through updated CMA/OFS letters. The principles would be finalised in collaboration with departments and their impact on the broader student experience themes would be considered. It was also planned to reflect on what had been learned through the current academic year and update advice and guidance to staff on multi-mode delivery and consider methods of assessment and less reliance on high-stakes end of year exams. Developments in space on campus and more flexible space should stand the College in good stead for the next year and beyond

Considered in discussion: (1) That a cautious approach to delivery in the next academic year and a focus on student welfare and experience alongside education was welcomed. However, the need to communicate the Colleges ambitions to do as much face-to-face as was allowable was needed. Senate members felt reassured by the presentation and acknowledged that there was a clear need to undertake the work to plan for different scenarios next year, there was a hope it wouldn't be needed.

## **2523 Distribution of Undergraduate Degree Classifications 2019-20**

Received: A paper from the Academic Registrar (**Paper Senate/2020/16**)

Reported: (1) That this was an annual report to Senate. This is the first time that the data for the report had been derived from data held and processed from Banner. The 2019-20 academic year was also impacted by Covid which meant caution was required when comparing the 2019-20 results with previous years. The College total for combined percentage of first and upper second class honours degrees awarded in 2019-20 was 94%, up from 93% in 2018-19.

(2) That QAEC would be working on the Degree Outcomes Statement which we are expected to publish and which sets out the approach for our classification arrangements. This would be developed for Senate approval for the end of the year.

Considered in discussion: (1) That there was a need to look at more split metrics for this data drawing on the benefits of the data being held in Banner. It was noted that there are some marked gender differences in degree outcomes in some departments but it was noted that these were long standing and not just as a result of Covid.

(2) That the quality of the student intake at the College should result in higher student outcomes and that the tension between the concern about grade inflation from the OfS against their expectation on successful outcomes for all students had also been a conflict on the Teaching Excellence Panels on which Senate members had served. It was also noted that employers often require a 2:1 for employment purposes.

(3) That this was an area that needed to be kept under review as the Undergraduate Curriculum Reviewed programmes graduated their first cohorts and the student outcomes data from Banner becomes more comprehensive.

#### **2524 Undergraduate Failure Rates 2019-20**

Received: A paper from the Academic Registrar (**Paper Senate/2020/17**)

Reported: (1) That this was an annual report to Senate. Senate members noted that the figures were broadly in line with previous years

#### **2525 Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee**

Received: A report from the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (**Paper Senate 2020/18**)

Reported: (1) That the deadline for the programme and module modifications was amended for in year changes to accommodate any changes needed following the national restrictions impacting student access to campus.

(2) That QAEC had reviewed the reports from the Undergraduate external examiners in 2020. It was noted that where externals had commented on the College's response to the pandemic, they were very supportive of the measures that had been put in place, including the use of Timed Remote Assessments.

(3) That QAEC had considered the SOLE results from the Autumn Term. QAEC was pleased to note that at College level, the question 'overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the module' received 81%, an increase of 4 percentage points from undergraduate responses and a 5 percentage points rise to 84% from postgraduates on the previous year. The platform on which SOLE is delivered is to be replaced and work is currently underway on understanding the requirements.

(4) That QAEC had also considered items on the Turing scheme, the PRES Survey and reports from the programmes committee as set out in the report.

#### **2526 Learning and Teaching Committee**

Received: A report from the Learning and Teaching Committee (**Paper Senate 2020/19**)

Reported: (1) That the Committee had received an update on the work being undertaken in Strategic Planning on Differential Outcomes data to improve the usability of the PowerBI app and the transparency of the methodology used to produce the data. The hope is that the changes would enhance the consideration of the differential outcomes rather than just focussing how the College is performing overall.

(2) That the Committee considered the Imperial College Union response to the National Student Survey which included five College level recommendations.

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.

Members of staff had been identified to take forward the individual recommendations and the more detailed departmental recommendations, developed by the Union and the Departmental Reps, would be responded to by Departments.

(3) That the Committee looked at work being done to support the transition to College and received an update on the College's 'Deferral Support Package' to provide academic, developmental and social support over the 2020-21 academic year. 30-35% of offer holders on deferral were actively engaged with one or more courses.

(4) That in terms of the Access and Participation Plan, it was reported that the College had met or exceeded all three WP admissions targets and that further analysis of data would be undertaken to establish if the WP admissions data is consistent across the College.

(5) That the Committee also heard about Education Infrastructure Developments and received an update on the publication of the independent review of the Teaching Excellence Framework, The Pearce Report and on the government's response to it.

## **2527 Dates of Terms**

**Received:** a note from the Academic Registrar (Paper Senate/2020/20)

Reported: That This is a standard annual report which sets out the provisional dates of dates for the period up to 2030-31.

Senate confirmed the dates for session 2022-23 and Approved the proposed dates for 2023-24

## **2524 Date of Next Meetings – 2020-2021**

Wednesday 19 May 2021

Wednesday 16 June 2021