

Science Studies Committee

19 November 2015
12:15
301E, RSM Building
South Kensington Campus

Minutes

Present: Professor A Parry (Chair), Professor John Seddon, Professor D Evans, Dr Andrew McKinley, Dr R Forsyth, Dr H Williams, Dr S Archer, Mr J Balloch, Mr C San.

In Attendance: Mr E Roney (Secretary)

1 **Apologies for Absence**

Received: Professor S Gibson, Dr E Meyer, CLCC Representative

2 **Minutes**

Approved: The Minutes of the last meeting held on 27 May 2015 [**Paper B**].

3 **Matters Arising**

None Reported.

4 **Chair's Action**

Noted: That the following item has been approved under Chair's Action since the previous meeting of the Committee:

4.1 **Imperial College Business School**

An amendment to the assessment format of the Business Economics module (BS0815) [**Paper C**]. The module will now be assessed by 50% MCQ (20 questions), 25% Short Answer Questions and 25% short essay questions.

5 **Surveys**

5.1 Received and noted: the UG SOLE Lecturer Module Results [**Paper D**]. The Committee

noted that improvements had been made over the previous results, but that The Faculty's results still lagged behind those of The College.

5.2 The Committee raised the following concerns:

- That the timing of the survey at the end of the session, around the exam period, may affect the results.
- That the poor response rates only gave a part of the picture.
- That despite efforts to increase participation (especially within Chemistry) improvements were slight.

5.3 The Committee suggested that timing the survey to closer correspond to the lecture period would be beneficial.

Mr James Balloch informed the Committee that no changes can now be made for the 2015/16 survey, but that he would investigate the possibility of changing the timing of following surveys.

5.4 The Committee considered that the SOLE tool may not be as conducive to student participation as desired, or give departments sufficiently detailed feedback. The Committee suggested that students should see the results of the survey in action, and feel they are stakeholders in a process of change. The Committee considered that other survey tools (specifically Qualtrics) may tackle these concerns.

Mr James Balloch will investigate other survey tools and report back to The Committee.

5.2 Received and Noted: the surveys calendar for 2015 – 2016 [**Paper E**].

5.3 The committee reiterated its concerns over the timing of the UG SOLE survey.

6 Academic Standards Framework

6.1 Noted: Report of the ASF Steering Group to Senate [**Paper F**].

6.2 The Committee requested details of the membership of the ASF Steering Group and leads of the Education Committees. Mr James Balloch agreed to circulate these to the Committee members at a later date.

7 Senate Executive Summary

Noted: The Senate Executive Summary for the meetings held on 24 June 2015 [**Paper G**], and 21 October 2015 [**Paper H**].

8 QAEC Executive Summary

Noted: Report by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee 2 June

2015 Meeting [**Paper I**] and 14 July 2015 meeting [**Paper J**].

- 8.1 The Committee noted the emphasis on the standardisation of module sizes for ECTS. It considered that this was not without issues, but generally agreed that standardisation would be beneficial.

9 **ESC Executive Summary**

Noted: Report by the Engineering Studies Committee from the June 2015 meeting of Senate [**Paper K**].

10 **MSC Executive Summary**

Noted: Report by the Medical Studies Committee from the June 2015 meeting of Senate [**Paper L**].

11 **Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Update**

Noted: the QAA document: Mathematics, Statistics and Operational Research subject benchmark statement [Paper M].

12 **Modifications to Undergraduate Programmes of Study**

Chemistry

- 12.1 The Committee considered a proposal to introduce an admissions test for 2017/18 entrance [**Paper N**].

- 12.2 The Deputy DUGS for Chemistry presented the rationale for introducing an admissions test.

Problems with current admissions process:

- 20% overshoot in admissions.
- Unsuitable candidates getting offers.
- Does not identify creativity

Proposed benefits of an admissions test:

- To identify good students whose educational or social backgrounds may not prepare them for traditional academic exams, or coach them for interviews, to the same extent as others.
- To identify creativity in candidates.

- 12.3 The committee raised concerns:

- How can applicants not able to be present be tested and receive equal opportunity.
- Provision for applicants with dyslexia and other learning difficulties.
- Possibility of elite schools reacting quickly to test and coaching candidates thus undermining a main purpose of the test.
- Lack of detail on a transparent marking scheme may create issues providing feedback to applicants, and raises issues of scrutiny.

12.4 Decision Deferred: The committee decided to defer decision on the proposal. The Committee agreed that feedback from the pilot admissions task during this UCAS round would be necessary to make a final decision. The Department will monitor progress of students admitted in this UCAS round in relation to the admissions test pilot. Feedback will be provided to a future committee.

Mathematics

13.0 Approved (Subject to Student Consent): Changes to the assessment method of the 2014-15 module M3S7 Statistical Pattern Recognition **[Paper Q]**.

The Committee considered the proposal to change the assessment method of the 2014-15 module M3S7 Statistical Pattern Recognition (which is not running this year).

The original assessment was by project/ coursework, with 3 pieces of work, worth 10 percent, 40 percent and 50 percent. For the reassessment

The Committee approved the proposal to set a single piece of coursework consisting of the types of questions which made up the original 3 pieces of coursework and allow a longer period of time to complete the work (4 weeks).

13.1 It was noted that there are 3 candidates who need to take this assessment. Two are resit candidates for whom the mark will be capped at the pass mark; the other candidate is one who had special circumstances last year and who would be taking this as a first attempt (this candidate has permission to re-take all modules as a first attempt, but needs to be certified fit before doing so; so they may defer to 2016-17). It is undecided whether this module will be offered again.

Post-meeting note: The required student approval is pending, Committee Approval is subject to this.

14.0 Approval and Renewal of Student Exchange Partners

Chemistry

14.1 Approved: The proposal to establish an exchange partnership with The University of Toronto **[Paper O]**

The committee considered the benefits of growing the number of English-language partners, the good ranking of the institution and advantageous staff connections between the institutions.

14.2 Approved: The proposal to renew the exchange partnership with Georgia Institute of Technology [**Paper P**]

The Committee raised concern at the low numbers of outbound, and lack of inbound, students. It was noted that the exchange had not been promoted well in the past, but with a Placements Officer starting in the Department it is expected this will change.

The Committee agreed to review the exchange again in three years.

18 Dates of Next Meetings

The Committee noted the prospective changes to the Committee's format; it was noted that its successor would meet on Wednesday 03 February 2016

19 Any Other Business

None

E Roney
November 2015