

Science Studies Committee
12 February 2014
12.15 The Boardroom, 58 Prince's Gate
South Kensington Campus

Minutes

Present: Professor R Thompson (Chair), Professor A Parry, Professor D Wright, Professor S Curry, Professor A MacKinnon, Professor J Mestel, Dr E Price-Davies, Miss N Kempston, Mr D Pateman, Professor A Spivey

In Attendance: Miss H Kopecka (Secretary), Mr R Monk, Mr D Surtees

1 Apologies for Absence

1.1 Received: Professor D Humphris, Dr B Duncombe, Dr S Archer, Miss M de Souza

2 Minutes

2.1 Approved: Minutes of the previous meeting held on the 6 November 2013 (**Paper 1**).

3 Matters Arising

3.1 Received and Noted: A list of actions from previous meetings of the Committee and progress made so far to address these (**Paper 2**).
Professor S Curry presented a paper explaining the proposals for dealing with students from the Department of Life Sciences 'with management' degree programmes who are within 2.5% of a class boundary. These proposals were agreed by the Committee. The agreed algorithm will also be considered by the Department of Chemistry, adoption (if appropriate) would ensure consistency across the board.

4 Senate Summary Report

4.1 Received and Noted: The summary report from the meeting of the Senate held on the 11 December 2013 (**Paper 3**).

5 Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee Summary Report

5.1 Received and Noted: The summary report of the meeting of the QAEC held on the 26 November 2013 (**Paper 4**).

6 Engineering Studies Committee Summary Report

6.1 Received and Noted: The summary report of the meeting of the Engineering Studies Committee held on the 13 November 2013 (**Paper 5**).

7 Medical Studies Committee Summary Report

7.1 Received and Noted: The summary report of the meeting of the Medical Studies Committee held on the 27 November 2013 (**Paper 6**).

8 Undergraduate Annual Monitoring 2012-13

8.1 Received: The undergraduate annual monitoring form for the Imperial College Business School for the 2012-13 session (**Paper 7**).

8.2 Reported: Major Changes to Programme Structure

The BEST suite of courses (modules) has been replaced with a new programme - Business for Professional Engineers and Scientists (BPES) for the 2013/14 session. The new title reflects the overall objective to provide Engineers and Scientists with a commercially relevant business experience/pathway during their undergraduate degree programmes.

8.3 Reported: Reports of External Examiners

The overall tone of the reports from the External Examiners is positive; general issues raised included lack of diversity of assessment and concern about over-reliance on group coursework and MCQ examinations. It was suggested that group sizes (for group assessment) should be reduced to 4 (from 6) students, and it was recommended that negative marking and long numerical exercises should not be used for MCQs.

Examples of Good Practice highlighted by External Examiners included commendations on well balanced degree programmes; in terms of content and desired outcomes, it was also noted that the group project is of a very high standard and students can apply a range of skills many of which are necessary to getting things done in the real world of business.

8.4 Reported: Innovative Teaching

A new learning environment has been made available to the Joint Honours programme during 2013-14 session. The Communication Hub delivers all programme information including course material to the students. The Hub is designed to be compatible with mobile devices and includes online discussion forums that enable students to discuss topics both amongst themselves and with the course leaders outside of lectures.

9 Student Progression Data

9.1 Reported: Undergraduate Failure Rates 2012-13 (**Paper 8**).

It was noted that due to the differences between individual Faculties, the paper is essentially not comparing 'like with like', and consequently overall numbers are distorted. Results following September re-sits/SQTs might be a better point to compare the failure rates.

Nevertheless, the numbers are in line with previous year, no department is standing out. One point to make is that second year failure rates are slightly higher than first year, which should ideally not be the case.

10 Student Surveys

10.1 Received: The results of Autumn SOLE 2013 (**Paper 9**).

10.2 Reported: Overall there was good satisfaction with module content and structure as well as lecturers.

10.3 Reported: There is still some way to go in terms of feedback satisfaction rates in the Department of Life Sciences. As per the discussion following Spring SOLE, this was acknowledged as an issue which is being addressed.

11. **Revising Periodic Review and Programme Monitoring**

11.1 Received: The above as part of an ongoing consultation (**Paper 10**).

In response to feedback from Departments and review panels the Registry has reviewed the existing periodic review processes. This paper includes a number of proposals that are intended to achieve efficiencies in the volume and frequency of such processes and the requirements therefore placed on Departments.

The frequency with which Departments are required to engage with both monitoring and periodic review activity and the concomitant academic and administrative load that this places on Departments, particularly when considered alongside other significant competing priorities such as the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and professional accreditation visits, suggests a need to review whether the existing arrangements are fit for purpose.

Faculties and Departments are invited to submit comments on the proposals contained within this paper either as a combined Faculty response, or individually from Departments. Any comments or concerns will be fully considered before final proposals are submitted to QAEC and Senate in June 2014.

12 **Student Placement Learning policies and procedures**

12.1 Received: Student Placement Learning Policies modifications (**Paper 11**).

13 **Approval and Renewal of Exchange Agreements**

13.1 Received and Approved:

Department of Chemistry - The renewal of links with the following Student Exchange Partner Institutions: Erlangen, Ecole Polytechnique and Ecole Normale Sup (**Paper 12**).

Department of Physics - The renewal of links with the following Student Exchange Partner Institutions: Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg and Universität Hamburg (**Paper 13**).

Department of Life Sciences - The establishment of new links with the following Student Exchange Partner Institutions: Université Aix-Marseille and Université Paris-Descartes and the renewal of link with the following Student Exchange Partner Institution: SupAgro Montpellier (**Paper 14**).

14 **New Undergraduate Degree Proposal**

14.1 Received and Approved: MSci in Physics with Science Education (**Paper 15**).

The purpose and objectives of the programme are to enhance the existing BSc in Physics with Science Education to offer a Masters level qualification together with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). Consultation with current students has revealed that the lack of a Masters level version of this programme is a significant deterrent to students who expect to achieve a Masters level qualification.

As with the existing BSc, this new programme aims to increase the supply of high quality Physics teachers by enabling students to achieve an accredited Physics degree at Masters level together with Qualified Teacher Status.

The programme adds at least 60 ECTS of Masters level material to the existing BSc programme in Physics with Science Education. This will be made up of up to 60 ECTS of Physics at FHEQ level 7 and up to 20 ECTS of Education, with a minimum of 40 ECTS of Physics.

15 Horizons Programme

15.1 Received and Noted: The course proposals for the Horizons Programme in 2014-15 (**Paper 16**).

16 Modifications to Undergraduate Programmes of Study

16.1 Department of Mathematics

Approved: New optional course nomination - "Theory of Complex Systems" (**Paper 17**).

16.2 Department of Life Sciences

Approved: Change to the title of two optional modules (**Paper 18**):

To better reflect current course content and future directions of the course and to increase its appeal to students, Advanced Topics in Plant Molecular Biology will be renamed **Plant Biotechnology and Development** and Molecular Plant-Microbe Interactions will be renamed **Symbiosis, Plant Immunity and Disease**.

17 Date of Next Meeting

17.1 Confirmed: The date of the next meeting of the Science Studies Committee:

20 May 2014, 12.15pm – 3pm, Boardroom 58 PG.