

QUALITY ASSURANCE & ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee (QAEC)
held on
Tuesday 5th March 2013

Present:

Professor Debra Humphris, Pro Rector (Education) - Chair
Dr Simon Archer, College Tutor
Professor Nigel Bell, Centre for Environmental Policy
Professor Andrew George, Director of the Graduate School
Professor Glenda Gillies, Department of Medicine
Mr Doug Hunt, ICU Deputy President (Education)
Mr Ebrahim Mohamed, Imperial College Business School
Professor Sue Smith, Faculty of Medicine
Professor Richard Thompson, College Consul for Natural Sciences
Mr Nigel Wheatley, Academic Registrar

In attendance:

Mr Chris Harris, Quality Assurance & Enhancement Manager, Faculty of Medicine
Ms Sophie White, Senior Assistant Registrar (Secretary)

Apologies:

Professor Nigel Gooderham, Senior College Consul
Professor Dot Griffiths, Imperial College Business School
Professor Robin Leatherbarrow, College Consul for Natural Sciences
Dr Paul Lickiss, Department of Chemistry
Professor Omar Matar, Department of Chemical Engineering
Dr David McPhail, Deputy Director of the Graduate School
Professor Denis Wright, Director of Student Affairs

Minutes

1. **Welcome and Apologies**
Professor Humphris welcomed members to the meeting and apologies, as listed above, were noted.
2. **QAEC minutes** **QAEC/2012/68**
The minutes from the Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee held on 17th January 2013 were approved.
- 2.1 **Matters arising from the minutes** **QAEC/2012/69**
It was noted that all outstanding actions were in the process of being resolved.
3. **QAA Institutional Audit**
The Committee noted the latest developments regarding the 2010 Institutional

Audit.

- 3.1** Professor Humphris reported that, due to changes to the QAA audit process, the QAA no longer required the College to undertake a mid-cycle review. However, the College Management Board had agreed that an internal mid-cycle review should take place to ensure that the College remained focused on addressing the recommendations made by the QAA as part of their 2010 Institutional. The interim review would be a paper-based exercise and Professor Denis Wright was in the process of putting it together.
- 3.2** The Committee received the latest version of the College's 2010 Institutional Audit Action Plan. It was noted that there were a number of items still outstanding. **QAEC/2012/70**
- 3.2.1** Professor Humphris reported that, with regards to the QAA recommendation that the College should "*expedite its review of assessment procedures to ensure consistency...*" Faculties were in the process of moving towards ensuring consistency but that there were further discussions to take place, particularly concerning advocacy and anonymity at Examination Boards before the revised "*Conduct of Boards of Examiner's Meeting procedure*" could be approved at the April QAEC.
- 3.3** It was noted that the QAA's programme of institutional review was available at <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/Pages/Programme-of-reviews.aspx> and that Imperial's next review was scheduled to take place in 2016-7. It was further noted that at least 12-18 months were needed to prepare for the review.
- 4. Higher Education Review; a more risk-based approach to the quality assurance of higher education**
- 4.1** It was reported that the QAA was now consulting on a draft handbook for Higher Education Review. The new method would apply to all subscribers in England and Northern Ireland, as well as to providers with access to funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) or the Department for Employment and Learning (DELNI) who are not subscribers to QAA. Higher Education Review would be launched in 2013-14 and would succeed two methods: Institutional Review of Higher Education Institutions in England and Northern Ireland (IRENI) and Review of College Higher Education (RCHE). It may also succeed Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review for further education colleges in Northern Ireland from 2014-15, and Review for Educational Oversight from January 2014. Institutions are invited to respond to the consultation no later than the 22nd April 2013.
- 4.2** The Committee discussed the draft "*Handbook for Higher Education Providers: Draft for Consultation*" and a copy of the survey questions. **QAEC.2012/71**
- 4.2.1** It was agreed that there was a danger that a risk-based approach could put undue emphasis on assessing and identifying risks and would fail to assure standards/quality and promote good practice.
- 4.2.2** It was agreed that, in principle, the College would have no objection to the use of international reviewers provided they had appropriate training but that the QAA needed to exercise care when deciding the composition of the review panels to ensure appropriate expertise was available.

- 4.2.3 The Committee agreed that they supported the proposal to increase student representation in the review but felt that it should be recognised that the QAA were asking for a heavy commitment in this area.
- 4.2.4 It was agreed that the Committee did not support the proposal for a separate judgement for collaborative programmes.
- 4.2.5 It was agreed that the proposed method to determine the intensity of the review visit was flawed.
- 4.2.6 It was agreed that Committee members should send their comments on the proposal to Ms Sophie White, who would circulate a draft response for approval by the Committee by email in time for the QAA's 22nd April deadline. Due to the importance of the document, Committee members were asked to consult widely.

Action: ALL

5. Approval and Review of Courses.

- 5.1 It was noted that the paper concerning amendments to the *"Procedures for the Review of Existing Master's Courses"* would be available at the next meeting. **QAEC/2012/72**

6. Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others

- 6.1 It was reported that the final Chapter B10 of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (now entitled *"Managing Higher Education Provision with Others"*) had been published on the QAA's website [here](#). It was noted that, previously, the Committee had agreed to establish a Working Group to review the College's procedures for the management of its collaborative arrangements in light of this Chapter of the Code.

- 6.2 The Committee approved the membership and terms of reference for the Managing Higher Education Provision with Others Working Group, subject to Mr Chris Harris and A.N Other from Medicine (to be confirmed by Professor Sue Smith) joining the party. The working group would complete its work by October 2013. **QAEC/2012/73**

Action: Professor Sue Smith

7. Cheating Offences Policy and Procedures

- 7.1 The Committee were reminded that at its last meeting, the Committee considered amendments to the *"Cheating Offences Policy and Procedures"* in relation to PGR students. Whilst minor amendments to the process for dealing with the final appeal process were approved, the Committee were concerned as to whether sufficient measures were in place to train students in the understanding of plagiarism and thereby how to avoid plagiarism. The Committee had noted that all departments had responsibility for issuing guidance to their students on academic integrity and avoiding plagiarism and that departmental activities were complemented by the Library. However, it was agreed that the Graduate School, in tandem with appropriate parties, should review what was available and identify whether additional training could be put in place, particularly with regards to PGR students.

7.2 Professor Andrew George reported that the Graduate School and the Library were putting together a course for PGR students which would include some discipline specific examples. The Postgraduate Research Quality Committee were minded to make the course compulsory but wanted to see the content of the finalised course first.

7.3 There followed some discussion on when was the best time for PGR students to receive plagiarism training and how best to present the message. It was agreed that a suitable time would be leading up to the 9 month period when PGR students had their first milestone but that it was important to embed the message from the outset and remind students of the issue throughout their programme. It was also agreed that the message should be presented in a positive light, as ensuring academic integrity rather than avoiding plagiarism.

7.4 Professor Andrew George reported that he was going to produce a development framework or timeline for all PGR students so that they could see what training and milestones they needed to complete at each stage of their programme. The framework would include all training available such as plagiarism, professional development courses but would also include other areas such as English language support. It was agreed that Professor George would present the framework for QAEC consideration at the beginning of the next academic session.

Action: Professor Andrew George

8. Cheating Offences 2011-2

8.1 The Committee received a report on cheating offences during AY 2011-2. It was noted that the report had been considered by Senate at its February 2013 meeting. **QAEC/2012/74**

8.2 It was noted that whilst the number of minor cases appeared high, this might reflect that Registry had become more efficient in collecting the information. Students who were punished for minor plagiarism could of course benefit from remedial training so that they did not repeat the offence.

8.3 The Committee enquired whether it was possible to get a breakdown of the minor offences by department in order to ascertain if the issue was confined to only a small number of departments. It was also noted that that not all departments may report offences in the same manner but that since an interim, less draconian, penalty had been introduced, reporting had been improved. It was agreed the Committee would like to see a departmental level breakdown of the minor offences at the next meeting.

Action: Mr Nigel Wheatley

9. Roles and Responsibilities

9.1 Mr Doug Hunt reminded the Committee that, in response to the Committee's consideration of Indicator 4 of *Chapter B5 of the UK Quality Code, Student Engagement*, it had been agreed that the ICU would draft Student Representative Roles and Responsibilities documents. It was noted that Indicator 4 states: **QAEC/2012/75**

“Higher education providers ensure that student representatives and staff have access to training and on-going support to equip them to fulfil their roles in

educational enhancement and quality assurance effectively.”

- 9.2 Mr Hunt further reported that that the ICU provides training for new reps in late October/November. New reps have their roles and responsibilities explained at these sessions and good and bad practice is also highlighted. About 50% of reps attended the last session. Professor Humphris suggested that the Education Office would be happy to work to strengthen the partnership with the ICU in relation to training the reps, particularly with regards to the College’s management/committee structures and Mr Hunt was asked to consider whether this would be beneficial.

Action: Mr Doug Hunt

- 9.3 The Committee considered the Roles and Responsibilities documents for the following:

Year Representatives (Undergraduate)
Departmental Representatives (Undergraduate)
Academic Affairs Officer (Undergraduate)
Course Representative (Postgraduate)
Group/CDT Representative (Postgraduate)
Departmental Representative (Postgraduate)
Academic & Welfare Officer (Postgraduate)

- 9.3 The documents were warmly received and a few minor changes were suggested. With regards to the Group/CDT rep, Professor Andrew George suggested that the term “Group” needed to be defined and the type of group would then dictate the best type of communication for the rep to adopt. He also suggested groups should be built around cohorts. Professor George also highlighted that it is difficult to ensure handover training for PGT reps due to the nature of their course and this may need to be addressed further.

- 9.4 Overall, it was felt that there were a number of generic activities associated with each post and that it may be better to group these together in one section and then have another section which detailed the specific activities assigned to each post. It was felt that this format may make the documents less daunting for prospective reps.

- 9.5 It was agreed that the documents would be revised in the light of the above suggestions and they would then be published on the Registry’s Good Practice webpage. Mr Hunt was thanked for his excellent work.

Action: Mr Doug Hunt

10. Independent Chairs for PhD Viva Examinations

- 10.1 Professor George reminded the Committee that at its meeting on the 20 November 2012, the Committee considered “*Chapter B11 of the UK Quality Code: Research Degrees*”. The Committee was informed then that the QAA has increased its focus on the role of independent Chairs in PhD viva examinations. In response to this, the Committee agreed that the Graduate School would establish a Working Party to consider whether independent Chairs should be appointed to PhD Viva Examinations at the College.

10.2 The Committee considered the report from the Working Party which had previously been considered by the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee (PRQC). QAEC agreed with the PRQC's decision that there was no evidence to suggest that the College's current procedures for the appointment of examiners were not robust and that there were no compelling reasons to introduce the requirement for an independent non-examining Chair. **QAEC/2012/76**

10.3 QAEC also agreed with the PRQC's decision that there was sufficient provision within the current system to allow an independent observer, or a person other than the supervisor, to attend the viva examination in exceptional circumstances should this be necessary.

11. Quality Assurance of the Centre for Co-curricular Studies

11.1 The Committee considered an external examiner nomination for the Music Technology programme for the 2012-3. **QAEC/2012/77**

11.2 QAEC approved the nomination, subject to confirmation, that Mr Burnand's involvement with the course and with the Royal College of Music did not pose a possible conflict of interest.

Post Meeting Note

Following the meeting it was confirmed that Mr Burnand's involvement with programme was 8 years ago and informal and the appointment was therefore approved.

12. Enhancement Advisory Group

12.1 The Committee received a report from the Enhancement Advisory Group (EAG). The report was presented by Professor Richard Thompson. **QAEC/2012/78**

12.2 Professor Thompson reported that the EAG were minded to recommend that all departments should put a prominent link on their departmental Staff Student Committee website to the ICU "You Said, We Did" campaign. QAEC supported the proposal but also stressed that the ICU's commitment and energy behind the campaign needed to continue. Mr Hunt confirmed that he would be prioritising the campaign in this handover notes.

Post Meeting Note

All departments were asked to link to the campaign at:

<https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/you-said-we-did>

12.3 Professor Thompson explained that EAG had discussed how best use could be made of the free text comments from SOLE to promote change and enhancements with departments. QAEC agreed that it would be helpful for there to be department level summaries which could be circulated and discussed widely. QAEC agreed that the current questions in the SOLE module/lecturer evaluation were too focused on individuals to be used in this manner and it was therefore agreed that amendments should be made to the SOLE overall course evaluation questions to better capture instances of good practice and recommendations for improvements. It was agreed that it should be left to a department's discretion as to who should produce these

summaries. Due to fact that students could either inadvertently identify themselves or individual members of staff in their responses, it was further agreed that it was not appropriate for student reps to write these summaries, unless the responses had been first been approved for release by their department and all inappropriate references to individuals removed.

Post Meeting Note

The SOLE overall course questions were amended in time for the 12th March launch and departments were alerted to the new requirement.

- 12.4** Professor Thompson explained that the EAG were recommending that the College create a temporary post for an Education Portal Editor who would be tasked with redeveloping the good practice pages on the College website as interactive tool for sharing good practice and as a practical “how to” resource as well as a source of information. QAEC approved the recommendation and it was agreed that Professor Humphris would take this forward as part of the education and student strategy review.

Action: Professor Debra Humphris

- 12.5** Professor Thompson explained that the EAG were recommending a proposal from the EDU, to re-establish a network of Departmental Teaching Advisors, co-ordinated by the EDU. These Departmental Teaching Advisors would be responsible for promoting good practice in education within their department. QAEC strongly supported the idea of creating a network of volunteers who were enthusiastic about education but did not want to formalise a new role as it was felt this may create inconsistencies in practice across the College. It was agreed that in order to be an effective network it would need good co-ordination and therefore resource. It was agreed that it would be beneficial to create an education enhancement/innovation fund which staff could apply to for small grants to support their own projects and Professor Humphris agreed to add this to her education strategy green paper.

Action: Professor Debra Humphris

- 12.5.1** It was further agreed that QAEC would be happy to consider the Departmental Teaching Advisor role further once more work had been done on fleshing out the role’s function within their department and their relationship to existing posts such as DUGs and DPGs. The primary objective should be that the post added value and that it did not create inconsistencies in practices across the College. It was further agreed that it was important to ensure there was strong Faculty and department level support for the role before it could be agreed.

Action: EDU

13. UK Quality Code for Higher Education schedule changed

- 13.1** It was reported that the QAA had made a change to their development schedule for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Previously the development of *Part A: Setting and maintaining threshold academic standards, Chapter B1: Programme design and approval, Chapter B6: Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning* and *Chapter B8: Programme monitoring and review* were all due to run independently. The QAA is now developing these sections simultaneously, as they are very closely linked in terms of subject matter.

13.1 All four sections of the Code are now due for publication in October 2013 with the consultation period due to take place from 30th May to 1st August 2013.

14. Education and Student Strategy Update

14.1 Professor Humphris reported that the first stage of the consultation process for the Education and Student Strategy had gone well. Around 100 responses (including collective responses) to the online survey had been received. These had provided some very positive ideas and thoughtful contributions. The Green Paper had been drafted and would be discussed by the Management Board at their meeting on 22nd March. Following this, the next phase would be a consultation of the Green Paper in April with a view to the final White Paper and Implementation Plan being presented to the Management Board in June prior to implementation from July.

15. UK Quality Code

15.1 The Committee received the College's final response to the consultation on *Chapter B9: Complaints and Appeals*, which was submitted to the QAA on the 31st January 2013.

16. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

17. Dates of next meetings

Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee

Thursday 25th April 2013 at 2pm – 5pm, Ballroom, 58 Prince's Gate (Change of date/venue)

Thursday 30th May 2013 at 10am – 1pm, Council Room, 170 Queen's Gate

Monday 1st July 2013 at 10am – 1pm, Solar Room, 170 Queen's Gate

18. Reserved Areas of Business

There was no reserved business.