

## Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC)

Minutes from the meeting held on  
Wednesday 8 February 2023

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### Present

David Ashton, Academic Registrar – Chair  
Dr Lorraine Craig, Faculty of Engineering representative  
Prof Richard Green, Business School representative  
Laura Lane, Head of Strategy and Operations, Graduate School  
Shangyi Liu, ICU PGT Representation Chair  
Prof Jonathan Mestel, Senior College Consul  
Prof Jason Riley, Faculty of Engineering representative  
Claire Stapley, CLCC/CHERS representative  
Dr Mike Tennant, Faculty of Natural Sciences representative  
Karen Tweddle, Business School representative  
Dr Jeffrey Vernon, Faculty of Medicine representative  
Judith Webster, Head of Academic Services  
Chengning Yao, ICU PGR Representation Chair  
Jason Zheng, ICU Deputy President (Education)  
Scott Tucker, Deputy Director (Academic Quality and Standards) – Secretary

### In Attendance

Leila Guerra, Vice Dean (Education), Business School

### Apologies

Dr Clemens Brechtelsbauer, Chair of Programmes Committee  
Martin Lupton, Faculty of Medicine representative  
Rebecca Middleton, Faculty of Natural Sciences representative

## 1. Welcome, apologies and announcements

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting. Apologies for absence were noted.
- 1.2 On behalf of the Committee, the Chair congratulated Prof Peter Haynes, who had been appointed as Vice Provost (Education and Student Experience).

## 2. Minutes of the previous meeting and terms of reference

- 2.1 The Committee confirmed the minutes of 23 November 2022 as an accurate record, subject to a minor amendment to the updated membership (2.2.1 refers). QAEC.2022.20

### 3. Matters arising from the minutes

3.1 No matters arising.

### 4. Update on QAEC actions

4.1 It was reported that the action list had been updated with revised target milestone/ completion dates. Some of the actions had been devolved to other committees and working groups and any outcomes would be reported back to QAEC. QAEC.2022.21

### 5. Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study

5.1 The Committee considered a proposal to amend the College's postgraduate taught classification algorithm. QAEC.2022.22

5.2 Through the Curriculum Review process for postgraduate taught programmes, and in discussions within faculties and departments, there had been concern that the current method of classification did not meet the needs of all programmes across the range of postgraduate taught provision. As a result, a number of programme specific regulations to the classification algorithm had been requested. It was felt that continual deviation from the *Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study* would not be beneficial to students and may further obfuscate College award decision-making process.

Following consideration of feedback, and modelling of the likely impact of a number of draft algorithms, RPRC proposed that the following algorithms were made available for postgraduate taught programmes:

- i. Programme Overall Weighted Average meeting the threshold mark
- ii. Programme Overall Weighted Average **and** designated final major project mark meeting the relevant threshold mark (current algorithm)
- iii. Threshold mark required to be met in the designated research element/final major project and in the weighted average score of the taught part of the programme.

5.3 The Committee recommended to Senate that the *Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study* are amended to provide programme teams the opportunity to select one of three classification algorithms for each programme.

5.4 If approved by Senate, the Committee agreed that the following principles should be adopted:

- That any approved programme degree classification algorithm would apply to the entire student cohort. Boards of Examiners would not have the authority to apply different algorithms for students within the same cohort.
- That any changes to a programme degree classification algorithm would apply to new students registering from October 2023. Existing part time postgraduate taught students would be classified against the algorithm by which they

registered against. Students returning from interruption of studies would be treated on a case by case basis and consulted on any changes to their programme and regulations in line with College procedures.

- That approved programme/department borderline algorithms would need to be reviewed in line with any changes to degree classification algorithms.

5.5 The Committee briefly discussed the following topics:

- The importance of ensuring the correct inputs into any agreed algorithm
- Whether the College should continue to regulate for borderline cases
- Whether the College should continue to offer 'Pass', 'Merit' and 'Distinction' classifications
- Equivalencies of assessment types
- Norm referenced assessment (i.e. marking on a curve), which was currently being explored by the Business School.

## 6. Postgraduate Research Policy

### 6.1 Policy for the Award of Posthumous and Aegrotat Postgraduate Research Degrees

6.1.2 The Committee considered the Policy for the Award of Posthumous and Aegrotat Postgraduate Research Degrees. QAEC.2022.23

6.1.3 It was noted that under the current *Regulations for the Awards of MPhil and PhD*, there was no provision to consider a posthumous or an aegrotat award for students completing any form of doctoral study. Within the *Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study*, a posthumous award can be granted to a student who has died during their programme but has completed the majority of their studies and assessment and so was able to be considered for a classified award. The College has also agreed to award relevant exit awards posthumously.

6.1.4 It was noted that for undergraduate students, excluding MBBS, there was provision for an aegrotat award. An aegrotat award was an honours or ordinary degree without classification, granted to a student who has completed the full period of study but was unable to complete the requirements of any assessments due to serious illness or other incapacity, under the presumption that, had they completed those assessments, they would have satisfied the standard required for that degree.

6.1.5 A posthumous or aegrotat degree may only be granted where a student cannot be awarded the degree on which they are registered based on the assessment that they have taken.

6.1.6 Agreement in principle has been given to the development of a policy to support the award of posthumous and aegrotat awards within the College's research provision.

6.1.7 Following cross-College consultation, the Regulations and Policy Review Committee (RPRC) recommended the draft Policy to QAEC. QAEC subsequently recommended the Policy to Senate.

6.1.8 The Committee recommended the Policy to Senate, along with the following principles:

- Following implementation, the College would initially permit back dated applications for 3 years, with flexibility for appropriate exemptions on case-by-case basis. The College would be unable to accept applications for students previously registered for a University of London MPhil or PhD.
- Normally, the time limit to make an application for a posthumous or aegrotat award would be 1 year, in line with undergraduate provision.
- Awards under the policy would not be limited by the minimum attendance requirements articulated in the Regulations (Full time:12 months for MPhil, 24 months for PhD, doubled for part time candidates) as the nature of study would mean that the quality of work available would determine if an award could be made.
- There would be no grounds for appeal under the Policy.
- Where a posthumous or aegrotat award was made it would not be required that the resulting degree certificate was marked as such.
- Students on the Partner Research Institution (PRI) Scheme or registered on Split PhD programmes would be considered in line with the Policy.
- The policy would remain standalone and be cross-referenced in the *Regulations for the Awards of MPhil and PhD*.

**Action: Secretary**

## 6.2 **Research Degree Student Leave Policy**

6.2.1 The Committee noted the following updates to the Research Degree Student Leave Policy, which were recommended by the Committee at the previous meeting:

QAEC.2022.24

- Clarification that the Policy did not apply to research degree students who were employed by the College. These students were subject to the staff terms and conditions for annual leave entitlement.
- Clarification that students were entitled to receive both holiday and mandatory leave (bank holiday and College closure days), during their parental leave period.

## 7 **Sub-Committees**

### 7.1 **Regulations and Policy Review Committee (RPRC)**

7.1.1 QAEC considered the reports from the RPRC meetings held on 14 December 2022 and 11 January 2023, including the following items: QAEC.2022.25

(i) QAEC approved the following programme regulation exemption requests, recommended by RPRC:

- Global Masters in Public Health: increased maximum registration period to 5 years.
- Genomic Medicine: increased maximum registration period to 5 years.
- MBA Programmes (Executive MBA, Weekend MBA Saudi Weekend MBA): exemption to the classification requirements to maintain parity between the relevant cohorts.

(ii) QAEC endorsed a proposal from Imperial College Business School for an optional fourth term for Masters programmes, with an additional 30 ECTS and an additional 4 months to facilitate internships or exchanges. Further development of the relevant operational and procedural matters would be needed to support the proposal, such as fees, visa issue and management, and placement management.

(iii) QAEC noted the briefing notes provided by the Office for the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) and the Office for Students (OfS) in relation to industrial action. The OfS briefing notes highlighted the requirement to remain compliant with the Conditions of Registration, meet the expectation of consumer protection legislation, and to ensure that any complaints are considered with due care and attention.

(iv) QAEC noted that RPRC agreed to monitor the impact of industrial action, including provision of external examining as a standing item of the Committee, with a view to producing additional guidance for staff such as in the Board of Examiners notes. It was noted that this would need to take into account any relevant advice from the HR department.

## 7.2 Programmes Committee

7.2.1 The Committee considered the report from the Programmes Committee meeting held on 29 November 2022. QAEC.2022.26

The following curriculum review proposals submitted by the Faculty of Engineering were approved, subject to the recommendations set out in the report:

Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Faculty of Engineering

- MSc Transport
- MSc Transport with Data Science and Mathematical Optimisation

Department of Computing, Faculty of Engineering

- MSc Computing
- MSc Advanced Computing
- MSc Artificial Intelligence

7.2.2 The Committee considered the report from the Programmes Committee meeting held on 24 January 2023. QAEC.2022.27

The following curriculum review proposals submitted by the Faculty of Engineering approved, subject to the recommendations set out in the report:

Department of Computing, Faculty of Engineering

PGT MSc Computing Specialisms

- MSc Computing (Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning) G5U10
- MSc Computing (Management and Finance) G5U11
- MSc Computing (Software Engineering) G5U16
- MSc Computing (Security and Reliability) G5U21
- MSc Computing (Visual Computing and Robotics) G5U13

Department of Earth Science and Engineering, Faculty of Engineering

- MSc Applied Computational Science and Engineering (F6UC)
- MSc Environmental Data Science and Machine Learning (H2G16)

### 7.3 Admissions Subcommittee (ASC)

7.3.1 The Committee noted the terms of reference and proposed schedule of business for the ASC. The ASC would report directly to the Education Committee, but relevant items would be submitted to QAEC. QAEC.2022.28

7.3.2 Committee members were encouraged to contact the ASC Chair and/or Secretary should they have any queries over the remit of the ASC and how FECs or other Faculty Groups should communicate information to the ASC.

## 8. Student Survey Results

### 8.1 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)

8.1.1 PTES 2022 Department Results QAEC.2022.29

(i) At the November meeting of QAEC, the Committee received the College PTES results. There were 971 respondents to PTES 2022. The overall satisfaction students had with their studies was 82%; this was 2% higher than the score for London institutions, 2% higher than the score for Russell Group institutions and 1% higher than the score for Pre-92 institutions. QAEC noted Department level PTES results. A PowerBI dashboard was being developed, which would allow for a more in-depth, granular analysis.

(ii) It was acknowledged that the College should focus on the 'big ticket' items and that a holistic approach should be taken in responding to survey data. It was noted that the Survey Working Group of the College was set up for that purpose, in order to evaluate survey data holistically.

## 8.2 Module Evaluation Questionnaire

### 8.2.1 MEQ 2022-23 UG and PG Autumn Term results summary

(i) This was the second academic year of the Module Evaluation Questionnaire (MEQ) and, following approval by QAEC, the following updates were made: QAEC.2022.30

- Where a module was delivered by more than one lecturer in clearly distinct elements, Departments were asked whether they wanted to 'split' the module to have separate questionnaires for each element
- Two extra questions were added to enable "overall satisfaction" to be evaluated, as requested by departments
- Students were informed that all responses would be included in the results analysis, regardless of module enrolment numbers
- Free text comments for each module were returned to a single designated 'lecturer', agreed by the DUGS/DPS

(ii) The Autumn Term MEQ opened on 7 December 2022 and closed on 10 January 2023. However, following some module registration data quality issues, a subsequent MEQ was opened on 25 January 2023 and closed on 2 February 2023. The data had been combined and presented into one report.

(iii) The Committee noted the 2022-23 UG and PGT Autumn Term MEQ 2022-23 results at College and Department level.

College level results across question categories:

Percentage of respondents answering 'definitely agree' and 'mostly agree'.

Question Categories	UG	Change	PG	Change
Teaching Delivery	78%	-2%	85%	-1%
Assessment and Feedback	68%	-1%	77%	-1%
Engagement with Staff and Students	79%	-1%	87%	0%
Access and Support	83%	-2%	89%	-1%

8.2.2 It was confirmed that free text comments had been distributed to Module Leaders or named lecturers but there were concerns over sharing module level quantitative data across Faculties or the College as a whole. A PowerBI dashboard was being developed by ICT but, in the interim, it was agreed that module level quantitative data should be sent to Module Leaders or named lecturers, as per the previous SOLE survey.

**Action: Secretary**

## 9. Student Exchange

- 9.1 The Committee noted the Student Exchange Partnerships Report 2022-23. As of January 2023 there were 162 exchange partnerships active for 2022-23, involving 88 exchange partners. At UG, a total of 123 exchange links (involving 57 institutions) exist. At PGT and PGR, a total of 39 exchange partnerships (involving 38 institutions) exist. QAEC.2022.31

The report provided an updated across the following areas:

- Erasmus
- Swiss European Mobility Programme (SEMP)
- The Turing Scheme:
- Renewal of Student Exchange Partnerships

## 10. Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)

- 10.1 The Committee noted the College TEF Submission, submitted to the OfS on 24 January 2023. QAEC.2022.32

As part of the Office for Students' (OfS) regulatory requirements, English Higher Education Providers were required to submit a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) submission. The TEF was expected to cover the two aspects of student experience and student outcomes and relates to academic years 2018-19 to 2021-22, and undergraduate students only. As well as articulating the College's approach to these two aspects, the submission also addressed the College's TEF metrics relating to the NSS, continuation, completion and progression.

## 11. External Policy and Guidance Developments

- 11.1 QAEC noted the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) briefing note to support providers in tackling challenges to academic integrity which have been brought about by the rise of artificial intelligence tools.  
<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/news-events/news/qaa-briefs-members-on-artificial-intelligence-threat-to-academic-integrity>

## 12. Chair's Actions

- 12.1 **MRes Machine Learning and Big Data in the Physical Sciences** QAEC.2022.33

The Committee ratified a late major modification for the MRes Machine Learning and Big Data in the Physical Sciences (F314) programme.

## 13 Any other business

- 13.1 No other business reported.



## **14. Dates of Meetings 2022-23**

14.1 The Committee noted the dates of QAEC meetings to be held in 2022-23 (all 10:05-12:00).

- 15 March 2023 (reporting to Senate on 10 May 2023)
- 26 April 2023 (also reporting to Senate on 10 May 2023)
- 7 June 2023 (reporting to Senate on 28 June 2023)