

## Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC)

Minutes from the meeting held on  
Wednesday 26 January 2022

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### Present

David Ashton, Academic Registrar – Chair  
Dr Clemens Brechtelsbauer, Chair of Programmes Committee  
Dr Lorraine Craig, Faculty of Engineering representative  
Prof Richard Green, Business School representative  
Laura Lane, Head of Strategy and Operations, Graduate School  
Daniel Lo, ICU Deputy President (Education)  
Martin Lupton, Faculty of Medicine representative  
Rebecca Middleton, Faculty of Natural Sciences representative  
Prof Andrew Parry, College Consul representative  
Claire Stapley, CLCC/CHERS representative  
Judith Webster, Head of Academic Services  
Scott Tucker, Deputy Director (Academic Quality and Standards) – Secretary

### In Attendance

Leila Guerra, Vice Dean (Education), Business School  
Prof Emma McCoy, Vice Provost (Education and Student Experience)  
Prof Jason Riley, Vice Dean (Education), Faculty of Engineering  
Prof Richard Thompson, Vice Dean (Education), Faculty of Natural Sciences

### 1. Welcome, apologies and announcements

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and introduced Professor Andrew Parry, the new College Consul representative.
- 1.2 It was noted that all members were present.

### 2. Minutes of the previous meeting

- 2.1 The Committee confirmed the minutes of 17 November 2021 as an accurate record. QAEC.2021.36

### 3. Matters arising from the minutes

- 3.1 No matters arising.

### 4. Update on QAEC actions

QAEC.2021.37

- 4.1 The Committee received an update on outstanding QAEC actions, as noted in the action list.

## **5. Governance**

### **5.1 Schedule of Delegation**

**5.1.1** The Committee noted that the review of the College's Schedule of Delegation would take place following the outcomes of a number of key OfS consultations, most notably the consultation on quality and standards conditions of registration.

## **6. Student Casework**

### **6.1 Updated Academic Misconduct Report**

QAEC.2021.38

**6.1.1** As requested at the QAEC held on 17 November 2021, an updated report was produced by the Head of Student Casework, which provided data relating to the timeliness of processing allegations of major academic misconduct.

**6.1.2** It was noted that between 1 January and 11 October 2021, 176 individual allegations of major academic misconduct were reported to Registry. The majority of the allegations related to collusion or plagiarism in timed remote assessments (TRAs). Prior to the College wide introduction of TRAs in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, fewer than 25 major cases per year were reported across taught programmes. With such a significant increase in the number of reported cases this year, the primary challenge was the turnaround of cases in a reasonable timeframe.

**6.1.3** Despite the significant challenges faced by the number of academic misconduct allegations, the Committee noted that many cases had been concluded, maintaining academic integrity and standards.

**6.1.4** The Committee discussed the issues that had been experienced across College including difficulties securing experienced panel members and sometimes significant gaps between panel meetings. In addition, it was noted that further guidance would be welcomed by departments.

**6.1.5** The Committee agreed to the recommendations set out in the paper as follows:

1. To provide staff with support following the revisions to the Academic Misconduct procedure for the 2021-22 academic year to ensure increased understanding of the stages of the procedure and the penalties.
2. To develop, with the involvement of experienced Panel Members, good practice guidance to support departments in the identification and reporting of allegations of academic misconduct, including supporting evidence requirements such as the rubrics and any relevant assessment criteria and candidate instructions are provided to with the other papers, as part of the evidence base of the Panel. To hold virtual 'drop-in' sessions for procedural support in addition to written guidance.

3. To identify a wider pool of academic staff for academic misconduct panels during the peak period (July-September) and to consider pre-arranged Academic Misconduct Panels based on staff availability.
4. To refer some issues raised under Concerns Identified to the Regulations and Policy Review Committee for consideration.
5. That resource to support this area of casework is kept under review.
6. That the Casework Team would continue to keep workflows under review to address the timeliness issues and identify further enhancements to process.
7. That the date of future resit opportunities should be recorded on the allegation forms.
8. With Assessment Records and Student Records, work with departments to identify a process for managing progression and enrolment requirements for allegations outstanding at the end of September.

**Action: Head of Academic Services**

## 7. Student Surveys

### 7.1 National Student Survey (NSS) 2022

**7.1.1** The Committee noted the following survey options for 2022, which had been approved by the Vice Provost (Education and Student Experience) and the ICU Vice President (Education): QAEC.2021.39

#### (i) Survey Start Week

- In line with previous surveys, the College would launch in Week 1: Monday 10 January 2022
- In line with previous surveys, Medicine students would be contacted on Thursday 6 January to inform them that the survey has opened and that they can respond if they wish whilst they are still on campus

#### (ii) Questions

- In line with the previous three surveys the College would include two optional banks of questions: B7, Course Delivery and B9, Welfare Resources and Facilities. This would allow for comparability over multiple years. The NSS is currently under review by the OfS so it was not deemed appropriate to add new questions sets for one academic year only.

#### (iii) Incentives

- In line with previous surveys the College would not offer incentives centrally. Students can be incentivised at a Department level in non-cash forms.

#### (iv) Institutional Support Text

- The wording for the previous survey would be used, subject to the following amendments:

*Your feedback is vitally important this year as we continue to ~~deliver work to develop and implement~~ new curricula for all our taught undergraduate programmes as part of the Learning and Teaching Strategy. The survey takes just 5 minutes to complete but will set in place lasting changes that will benefit our students for years to come.*

**7.1.2** It was noted that a UK-wide consultation on proposed changes to the NSS would take place in summer 2022, with the intention that new developments are implemented from 2023.

## **7.2 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) 2022**

**7.2.1** The Committee approved the following survey options for 2022:

QAEC.2021.40

(i) Survey window

- Open: Monday 16 May 2022
- Close: Monday 13 June 2022

It was confirmed that the window falls in line with the previous College PTES.

(ii) Additional Institutional Questions

1. I am comfortable about discussing my wellbeing issues with my supervisor
2. My research group is an inclusive and supportive community
3. I am happy with my work-life balance

It was confirmed that the College had not previously asked these questions but that the agreed wellbeing questions reflected those selected by the College for the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES).

**Action: Secretary**

## **7.3 Module Evaluation Questionnaire (MEQ)**

**7.3.1** The Committee received a verbal update on the Autumn 2021 MEQ, which closed on 24 January 2022. A brief early analysis indicated a final response rate of approximately 26%. This was 16,260 individual module responses out of 62,861 module enrolments included in the MEQ. In comparison, the previous year's Autumn SOLE final response rates were 36% UG and 40% PG.

**7.3.2** It was noted that a College level summary would be presented at the next meeting.

**Action: Secretary**

**7.3.3** The Committee discussed how Department module evaluation data should be reviewed, where any additional surveys had been run. It was agreed that this data should be reviewed through the formal annual monitoring process.

## **8. Student Exchange Partnerships**

**8.1 Annual Report on Student Exchange Partnerships 2021-22**

QAEC.2021.41

**8.1.1** The Committee received an annual report on the number of active student exchange partnerships and individual exchange links by subject. It was noted that as of 30 September 2021 there were 165 exchange links (129 at UG and 36 at PG), involving 87 exchange partners.

**8.1.2** The Committee noted the following matters related to student exchange partnerships:

(i) Impact of the pandemic: 2020-21 once again saw outward exchange mobility, most notably undergraduate year abroad activity, and inward exchange activity impacted in one way or another by the pandemic and this remains the case as we move through 2021-22. Our exchange partners continue to work with the relevant department at Imperial in supporting their and our students to achieve the planned educational goals through reasonable adjustment where necessary.

(ii) Erasmus: Following the end of the transition period after the UK's exit from the EU the UK government confirmed that it would not seek participation in Erasmus 2021-27. The College would therefore conclude its current 2020 Erasmus+ project by 31 May 2023. The Erasmus scheme would not disappear entirely as universities would be able to use a certain amount of funding should they wish to support mobility amongst their students to the UK, as UK would be considered a third country not associated with the Erasmus scheme. This would be important in helping our partners to continue to make mobility to London, with its inherent cost, available to students of all backgrounds.

(iii) Swiss European Mobility Programme (SEMP): Swiss European Mobility Programme (SEMP): The Swiss federal government is seeking re-admission to the Erasmus scheme and therefore SEMP may be discontinued. If SEMP is discontinued as a source of funding then the focus for sourcing student mobility grants would move from SEMP to the Turing scheme should the College's expected (second) application to the Turing scheme be successful.

(iv) The Turing Scheme: As referenced above but depending on the value of any Award made to the College in any one academic year, the Turing scheme would become the primary source of financial support for mobility abroad.

**8.1.3** The Committee welcomed the report and fully supported the continued provision of student exchange opportunities. It was acknowledged that the benefits to students were wide ranging but that it was important for the College to ensure that the resource to support these activities was fully costed.

## **8.2 Verbal update on the Study Abroad Task and Finish Group**

**8.2.1** It was noted that whilst the Study Abroad Task and Finish Group has not had cause to meet since QAEC approved the amendments to the student exchange partnership procedure, Registry has been considering the other items that the TFG raised at its meeting on 21 April.

Registry has allocated time to undertake further fact-finding in order to consolidate QAEC's understanding of the activity, including, but not limited to, a detailed audit of:

- Example study plans at partners (with reference to paperwork which is pending for consideration by FECs in the spring)
- Year/study abroad referencing in programme specifications
- The use of the module specification template for the elements of template study plans.

**8.2.2** It was reported that discussions had taken place with the Director of Student Administration to identify where potential quick wins may be achieved regarding the issues identified by the TFG such as enrolment/progression, processing of results and recording of academic achievement, and to broaden this to include where relevant other placement activity, including the year in industry.

**8.2.3** At its meeting on 21 April 2021 the TFG supported the concept that in the longer-term study abroad would be well served by the establishment of an internal practitioner group. A further update would be provided to QAEC at its April meeting.

## **9. Admissions**

**9.1** The Committee approved proposed amendments to the Centre for Academic English Pre-Sessional English entry requirements for 2022. QAEC.2021.42

## **10. Sub-Committees**

### **10.1 Programmes Committee**

**10.1.1** The Committee received a report from the Programmes Committee from the meeting held on 30 November 2021. The Committee approved a new programme proposal, redesigned programmes as part of Curriculum Review and major modifications. QAEC.2021.43

New programme proposal:

Imperial College Business School

- BSc Economics, Finance and Data Science  
To introduce the above programme with effect from October 2023

Redesigned programmes as part of Curriculum Review:

Imperial College Business School

Intercalated BSc

- iBSc Medical Sciences with Management – Year 3 (A127)
- iBSc Medical Sciences with Management – Year 4 (A127)  
To introduce the redesigned programmes above with effect from October 2022

Joint Honours with Management

- Medical Biosciences with Management – Year 4 (B111)
- Biology with Management – Year 3 (C1N2)
- Biology with Management – Year 4 (C1NG)

- Biochemistry with Management – Year 3 (C7N2)
- Biochemistry with Management – Year 4 (C7NG)
- Chemical Sciences with Management – Year 3 (F1N2)
- Chemistry with Management – Year 3 (F1NF)
- Biotechnology with Management – Year 4 (J7N2)

To introduce the redesigned programmes above with effect from October 2022

**10.1.2** It was noted that the Business School had submitted a curriculum review proposal for the Full-Time MBA to Programmes Committee in September 2021 and November 2021. Most of the recommendations had been incorporated into a revised proposal but a College decision was required on the proposal to implement 2.5 ECTS modules, which are not permitted under the College’s Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study. It was agreed that the proposal would be considered at the next QAEC.

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

**10.2.1** The Committee noted an indicative schedule of business for the Regulations and Review Policy Committee (RPRC). There were a significant number of regulations and policies due for review so the work of the Committee would be prioritised based on the business needs of the College. QAEC.2021.44

**10.2.2** The Chair provided a verbal update on the last meeting of RPRC, including the following items:

- Religious observance
- Associateships, Diploma of Imperial College and certification
- Unsatisfactory academic progress regulations

**10.2.3** It was noted that RPRC agreed that the decision to convene Boards of Examiners virtually should be delegated to Departments. QAEC endorsed this approach.

**10.2.3** It was confirmed that RPRC would explore differences in degree characteristics when considering models of degree classification algorithms.

## **11. Suspension to Academic Regulations**

**11.1** List of suspensions to academic regulations approved by the Academic Registrar since the previous QAEC held on 17 November 2021 QAEC.2021.45

## **12. College Response to Covid-19**

**12.1** The Committee received a verbal update on the College’s continued response to Covid-19. The Chair summarised the following:

- Communications were sent to students before the Christmas vacation regarding the College closure due to the Omicron variant
- Some Faculties were offering both in-person and remote delivery
- The College had agreed to consider an exceptional circumstances policy for remote study during the Spring Term

The Vice Provost (Education and Student Experience) summarised the following:

- The updated guidance for higher education set out that providers can no longer use risk-assessments to limit in-person teaching or mandate face coverings
- The College would ensure that vulnerable students in the community are supported; face covering would be expected and testing would continue until the Easter vacation before a review is carried out
- That maximum room capacities are still being investigated and would need to increase to accommodate increased in-person teaching. In the interim, it was confirmed that students would be informed that ‘the College is gradually increasing in-person teaching that has been limited by COVID restrictions, and departments would be in touch with you with further details. In some cases, there are good pedagogical reasons for online learning, and this would continue where there is evidence that it is the most appropriate teaching method for that element of a programme.’

### **13. Imperial Values**

**13.1** The Committee noted the suite of core College Values and Behaviours that will guide behaviour as a community: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/values/our-values/>

### **14. Any Other Business**

#### **14.1 Sector Consultations**

**14.1.1** The Committee received a verbal update from the Head of Academic Services on recent Office for Students (OfS) consultations. The OfS held a phase two consultation on proposed conditions of registration for the revisions to the quality and standards B conditions in the summer of 2021. That consultation set out the proposals for three conditions related to the quality of provision around academic experience; resources, support and student engagement; and assessment and awards.

The OfS has now circulated three separate consultations on proposed revisions to condition B3 on Student Outcomes, proposals for the Teaching Excellence Framework and on constructing student outcomes and experience indicators for use on OfS regulation.

(i) Consultation on a new approach to regulating student outcomes

The proposals set out minimum requirements for ‘positive student outcomes’ against three measures on continuation, completion and progression to managerial or professional employment or further study, which would focus on performance in absolute terms rather than benchmarking across the sector. The OfS plans a risk-based approach and would use additional contextual information that they have access to, or is provided by the institution, where requested.

(ii) Consultation on the Teaching Excellence Framework

It is proposed that the TEF operates at provider level only and to be based on two criteria of student experience, which focus on a providers teaching, learning, assessment and the



‘educational environment’, and on student outcomes which focus on the extent to which students succeed in and beyond their studies and their ‘educational gains’. Evidence to be considered would be a mixture of qualitative (institution written submission and evidence from students) and quantitative (indicators produced by the OfS) data sets.

(iii) Consultation on constructing student outcome and experience indicators for use in OfS regulation

The consultation proposes continued use of indicators which currently inform assessments of condition B3 and the regulation of access and participation with some changes. The College would be drawing up a response to the consultation, led by Strategic Planning, to meet the consultation deadline of 17 March 2022.

## **14.2 In-Session Resit Opportunities for Taught Postgraduate Students**

The Committee discussed the provision of in-session resits, which were introduced as a requirement in the previous academic year as a result of the impact of Covid. Due to the increasing number of Covid-related mitigating circumstances claims, the Committee considered whether the College should continue to provide opportunities for in-session resits this academic year.

(i) The Committee supported in-year resits in principle, but some members were concerned that this would result in additional workload for staff associated with setting an extra paper during the same academic year. It was noted that re-assessment periods should be aligned, where possible, and this this would be considered as part of the review of the College’s academic calendar. However, it was felt that the College had to act now to support its students. Provision of in-session resits would also provide a timely opportunity for students unable to take assessment at the first sitting due to mitigating circumstances.

(ii) The Committee agreed that the College would provide opportunities for in-session resits in 2021-22 only.

(iii) The Committee agreed that in-session resits for 2022-23 would be added as an item on the RPRC schedule of business, before a recommendation is made to QAEC.

**Action: Secretary**

## **15. Dates of Meetings 2021-22**

**15.1** The Committee noted the dates for future QAEC meetings to be held in 2021-22 (all 10:10-12:00) as follows:

- Wednesday 2 March 2022 (also for 23 March Senate)
- Wednesday 6 April 2022 (for 18 May Senate)
- Wednesday 1 June 2022 (for 29 June Senate)