

Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC)

Minutes from the meeting held on

Wednesday 7 February 2024

Present

David Ashton, Academic Registrar – Chair

Dr Clemens Brechtelsbauer, Chair of Programmes Committee

Dr Lorraine Craig, Faculty of Engineering representative

Dr Cloda Jenkins, Business School representative

Laura Lane, Head of Strategy and Operations, Graduate School

Martin Lupton, Faculty of Medicine representative

Katharine Manley, Head of Admissions

Prof Jonathan Mestel, Senior College Consul

Rebecca Middleton, Faculty of Natural Sciences representative

Jordon Millward, ICU PGR Representation Chair

Prof Jason Riley, Faculty of Engineering representative

Claire Stapley, CLCC/CHERS representative

Dr Mike Tennant, Faculty of Natural Sciences representative

Karen Twedde, Business School representative

Dr Jeffrey Vernon, Faculty of Medicine representative

Judith Webster, Director of Academic Quality and Standards

Scott Tucker, Deputy Director (Academic Quality and Standards) – Secretary

In Attendance

Annemarie Gupta, Assistant Registrar (Academic Policy)

Chris Kerr, Education and Quality Assurance Coordinator, Faculty of Natural Sciences

Apologies

Naraana Enkhjin, ICU PGT Representation Chair

Yi Yang, ICU Deputy President (Education)

1. Welcome, apologies and announcements

1.1 The Chair welcomed attendees. Apologies for absence were noted.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

2.1 The Committee confirmed the minutes of 22 November 2023 as an accurate record.

QAEC.2023.34

3. Matters arising from the minutes

3.1 No matters arising.

4. Update on QAEC actions

4.1 The Committee noted the updated action list. QAEC.2023.35

5. QAEC Constitution and Membership

5.1 The Committee considered proposed updates to the Committee constitution and membership for 2023-24. QAEC.2023.36

5.2 Following the formation of the Admissions Subcommittee (ASC), with 'dotted line' reporting to QAEC, it was recommended to Senate that 'Chair of ASC (or nominee)' was added to the QAEC constitution.

Action: Secretary

5.3 The Committee approved the nomination of Kat Manley (Head of Admissions) to act as 'Chair of ASC (or nominee)' representative, subject to Senate approval of the updated QAEC constitution.

6. External Examiners

6.1 Summary of undergraduate external examiner reports for 2022-23 QAEC.2023.37

6.1.1 The Committee considered the report, which summarised feedback from external examiner 2022-23 reports in relation to the College's undergraduate provision. The summary was based on 91 reports received.

The Committee noted the responses to the overall confidence statements:

- 99% agreed that "The degree awarding body is maintaining the threshold academic standards set for its awards in accordance with the FHEQ and relevant Subject Benchmarks Statements."
- 97% agreed that "The assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended learning outcomes of the programme and is conducted in line with the College's policies and regulations."
- 98% agreed that "The academic standards and the achievements of students are comparable with those in other degree awarding bodies of which you have experience."

6.1.2 Three themes were identified from analysis of the recommendations put forward by external examiners. The Committee agreed that, where appropriate, these would be referred to the College's Assessment and Feedback Working Party. The QA Team would provide historical external examiner comments relating to assessment and feedback to the Group to inform discussion.

Action: Secretary

(i) Marking, moderation and feedback

- Extend/develop marking schemes to support clarity and consistency in marking processes.
- Reduce the marking burden by limiting the number of markers per script – for example use single marking and internal moderation for assessment (except final year projects). It was reported at the meeting that proportionate moderation is a challenge across the sector and that research had been undertaken in this area. The Committee were directed to an article by Professor Sue Bloxham entitled 'Marking and moderation in the UK: false assumptions and wasted resources', which argues that in developing rigorous moderation procedures, the sector has created a burden for markers which adds little to accuracy and reliability but creates additional work for staff, constrains assessment choices and slows down feedback to students.
- Ensure moderation is undertaken by suitably qualified and supported staff.
- Consider/address default scaling practices and ensure assessment is designed to provide appropriate test for achievement of learning outcomes and for stronger candidates to demonstrate extended learning.
- Ensure that students are provided timely and consistent feedback on their work, outlining areas for development and areas of strength, including examinations and final year projects.
- Ensure that the training for clinical examinations including calibration of marking/student outcomes across multiple assessment stations, where differences in approach could lead to inconsistent results.

(ii) Resources

- Ensure that sufficient staffing is maintained, particularly in areas which there is limited cover in the event of losing a particular member of staff for any length of time.
- Ensure adequate provision of teaching spaces equipped with the relevant learning technologies are available for all learning and teaching activities. The Faculty of Medicine reported that clinical examination space is sub-optimal and will unlikely improve as pressure builds on the system. There had also been an increase in the number of students that have been offered opportunities to be examined on their own in single spaces, which is becoming ever more challenging to reasonably accommodate. The work of the SLAB is reviewing the journeys of a students with disabilities with a view to improving support mechanisms.
- Consider the use of, and implementation of one/fewer Learning Support Management system(s) for the management of assessment setting, completion and marking, and for supporting learning such as VLEs. The Committee discussed that this was not a unique problem facing the College and that the current review of the LMS/VLE would need to consider the accessibility requirements of externals. In addition, it was noted that the Student Lifecycle Administration Board (SLAB) was overseeing 'Area Build' (also known as the Curriculum Advising and Programme Planning, CAPP), which would build course curriculum for staff and students, support accurate integration with VLEs and enable students to register their modules in the future.
- which will result in a more effective link the curriculum in Banner and provide further clarity to external examiners as to modules associated with programmes.

(iii) Generative AI

- Consider the use of, and development of skills in, generative AI for students as part of their programme of study including, where relevant, within their assessment.
- Ensure that systems are suitably robust to prevent where possible, and identify where necessary, academic misconduct.

6.1.3 In addition to the recommendations set out under the three identified themes, QAEC endorsed further recommendations set out in the report, which would be addressed by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team:

- Review nomination, approval and 'on-board' processes and timeline
- Develop and ensure distribution of information pack for prospective External Examiners that explains in basic detail: role and responsibilities, expected workload, terms and conditions including issues with conflicts of interest, and government mandated requirements for appointment.
- Review College processes and action to be taken where Examiners do not provide their annual report, or where responses to reports are not completed by programme teams.
- Ensure that the expectations with regards to provision of programme information is met for all examiners in line with the College's Key Information for External Examiners guidance.
- Staff in areas in which the examiners commended new teaching or assessment practices, or communication/management/software initiatives are encouraged to disseminate these with the wider College community.
- Consideration of whether the development and use of more standardised documentation and systems would provide an enhanced experience for examiners, without hindering development of new initiatives or improvements in process or increasing workload for staff.

Action: Secretary

6.1.4 The Committee enquired as to how examples of best practice were shared across the College other than in the Summary of undergraduate external examiner reports. It was noted that the Director of Academic Quality and Standards was liaising with the Education Office to develop communication mechanisms. In the interim, it was agreed that examples of best practice identified by external examiners would be explicitly attributed to Departments within the annex of the Summary external examiner reports and disseminated.

Action: Secretary / Director of Academic Quality and Standards

6.1.5 The Committee discussed how late external examiner nominations, overdue external examiner reports and outstanding department responses are managed. It was noted that the QA Team logs the details of the examiners' tenures and provide updates to departments, initially via FEC, but also directly where this fails, of examiners that are due to be replaced in the next academic year, and unfortunately those that should have been replaced already. This happens regularly through the year. The QA Team also sends chasers to examiners, to departments if the examiners haven't responded, and to departments about their actions. External examiner provision is currently managed using Excel spreadsheets. Ideally this needs to move to a CRM database which will enable this to be more easily managed. This would allow the College to be able to develop self-service reports for departments and develop workflows.

7. Module Evaluation Questionnaire

7.1 MEQ results for the Autumn Term 2023-24

QAEC.2023.38

7.1.1 The Committee considered the 2023-24 MEQ results for the Autumn Term. The MEQ was used to evaluate modules on undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes delivered by the Faculty of Engineering (including iBSc students) and the Faculty of Natural Sciences. I-Explore modules (BPES, Horizons, STEMM, Multidisciplinary Project) were also within the scope of the MEQ.

7.1.2 Committee members were signposted to the new [MEQ Dashboard](#), where all staff with an Imperial account can access quantitative data for the last three academic years. The Secretary thanked Oliver Briggs (Junior Data and Analytics Developer, ICT) for developing the dashboard. It was noted that a link had been circulated to Departments. As students do not have access to PowerBI, a solution (possibly web-based) would be explored by ICT.

7.1.3 The College's final participation rate for the Autumn term was 21% compared to 18% in Autumn 2022 and efforts are being made to increase this. Students on programmes in the Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering and in the Centre for Languages, Culture and Communication had the highest participation rate of 30%.

7.1.4 At College level, the overall satisfaction was higher than in Autumn 2022 in response to both the teaching delivery question (80%, up 2 percentage points) and the module content question (82%, up 2 percentage points). At department level, the overall satisfaction was highest in the Department of Materials and the Department of Mathematics. Assessment and feedback remained the lowest scoring area.

7.2 MEQ: update on recommendations, challenges and future developments

QAEC.2023.39

7.2.1 The Committee received an update on the MEQ as follows:

- Progress of the recommendations set out by the MEQ Review Panel
- Challenges in delivering the MEQ in its current format (ICA reports no longer fit for purpose, Banner data quality issues, manual workaround to 'Split' modules to gain individual lecturer feedback, no technical solution for the dissemination of free text comments to lecturers)
- Requests for module evaluation data for academic promotion submissions
- Future developments that could be explored to enhance the management of the MEQ.

7.2.2 It was noted that the MEQ will run in its current format for the remainder of the academic year and in 2024-25, with any significant changes made for 2025-26. The MEQ Review Panel will reconvene in the Summer Term.

A number of future developments were proposed, with the following identified as being the most urgent:

1. Registry: Resolve Banner data quality issues (including module registrations, Module Leader and Term Span in Banner)
2. ICT: Design solution to accommodate the efficient dissemination of free text comments.
3. ICT: Update the MEQ ICA report to accommodate required data or provide an alternate means of extracting this data (3.1.1 refers).

7.2.3 It was agreed that more information, including any technical issues experienced, would be provided to inform further MEQ developments.

Action: Secretary

8. Study Abroad and Student Exchange Partnerships

QAEC.2023.40

8.1 College objectives proposed by the Study Abroad Task and Finish Group

8.1.1 QAEC received an update on the progress made by the Study Abroad Task and Finish Group including a series of objectives recommended by the Group for consideration by QAEC. The proposed objectives fell under the following areas: partnerships; curriculum and credit; enrolment and progression; results and academic recognition; external examiners; monitoring and evaluation; and document retention. QAEC endorsed the objectives and agreed that the Group should remain in place. The objectives would be presented to QAEC as an action plan in due course.

Action: Secretary

8.1.2 QAEC approved proposed amendments to the procedure for the approval, reapproval and review of student exchange partnerships, and a draft guidance document for departments on language requirements for study abroad.

8.2	Student exchange partnerships 2023-24	QAEC.2023.41
8.2.1	QAEC noted the annual student exchange partnerships report. As of January 2024 there were 139 exchange partnerships active for 2023-24, involving 82 exchange partners.	
9.	Subcommittees	
9.1	Programmes Committee	QAEC.2023.42
9.1.1	Report from the Programmes Committee meeting held on 30 November 2023	
	<p>(i) The Committee considered the report from the Programmes Committee. The following new programme proposals submitted by the Dyson School of Design Engineering were approved, subject to the recommendations set out in the report:</p> <p><i>PC.2023.14 Dyson School of Design Engineering</i> MSc Design Engineering MSc Design with Behaviour Science MRes Design Engineering Research</p> <p>(ii) The Business School confirmed that successful discussions had taken place with the Dyson School regarding the proposal.</p> <p>(iii) The Chair of Programmes Committee highlighted that the 31 March deadline for major modifications was a challenging time for members due to the significant workload placed upon them. The Committee agreed that the existing College action to review the modification procedure would be an opportunity to streamline the process to ensure workload is manageable.</p>	
9.1.2	Report from the Programmes Committee meeting held on 25 January 2024	QAEC.2023.43
	<p>(i) The Committee considered the report from the Programmes Committee. The following curriculum review proposal submitted by the Department of Chemistry was approved, subject to the recommendations set out in the report:</p> <p><i>PC.2023.24 Chemistry</i> MRes Nanomedicine and Nanodiagnosics (formally MRes Bioimaging Sciences)</p>	
9.2	Regulations and Policy Review Committee	
9.2.1	<p>The Committee noted the report from the RPRC meeting held on 17 January 2024, including the following items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International students under the Student Visa Route and resit exams • Student-led registration changes procedural guidance • Outcome of Postgraduate Taught borderline consultations 	QAEC.2023.44

- Re-development/Review of Unsatisfactory Engagement Policy
- Scope for Review of Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedure
- Scope for Review of Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure

10. Sector updates relating to quality and standards in higher education

10.1 Office for Students Quality Assessment Reports

10.1.1 It was noted that the OfS had published two new Quality Assessment reports relating to Business and Management at Bucks New University and the University of Wolverhampton. QAEC.2023.45
<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/qnzdi4wm/quality-assessment-report-business-and-management-bnu.pdf>

10.2 Universities UK Statement on fair admissions

10.1.2 It was noted that Universities UK had published a statement that sets out three immediate actions which the UUK Board have agreed to undertake:

- Review the Agent Quality Framework (AQF) and make recommendations to enhance the system.
- Review of quality and comparability of International Foundation Programmes (IFPs) and Foundation Programmes for Home (UK) students.
- Update the Admissions Code of Practice to clearly state its applicability to international recruitment.

<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/latest/news/uuk-statement-fair-admissions-practice>

11. Chair's Business

11.1 Chair's actions

11.1.1 **Change the English language requirement for Home students** QAEC.2023.46

The Admissions Subcommittee (ASC) recommended the following proposal to QAEC:

Change the English language requirement to GCSE 5 for Home students (excluding Medicine) - option 2 from the attached list of options

The proposed change would effectively lower the GCSE English grade to 5 for Home students (excluding Medicine).

QAEC members considered the paper via email and provided feedback, which was responded to by the Head of Admissions.

The Chair of QAEC subsequently approved the changes by Chair's Action, which was communicated by the QAEC Secretary on 21 December 2023.

11.2 Update on the Student Lifecycle Administration Board (SLAB)

11.2.1 The Chair provided an update on the following SLAB developments:

- Area Build
- Imperial 360 (Pre-enrolment)
- My Imperial Campus
- PGR Milestones
- Power BI Reporting
- Student Case Management
- Working with Marjolo
- From idea to Imperial 360

12. Any Other Business

12.1 No other business reported.

13. Dates of QAEC Meetings 2023-24

13.1 The Committee noted the following dates of the QAEC meetings to be held in 2023-24:

- Wednesday 13 March 2024
- Wednesday 10 April 2024
- Wednesday 5 June 2024