

Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC)

Minutes from the meeting held on

Wednesday 3 June 2020

Present

David Ashton, Academic Registrar – Chair

Ashley Brooks, ICU Deputy President (Education)

Dr Lorraine Craig, Faculty of Engineering representative

Mohit Devgan, GSU President

Laura Lane, Head of Strategy and Operations, Graduate School

Martin Lupton, Faculty of Medicine representative

Rebecca Middleton, Faculty of Natural Sciences representative

Professor Peter Openshaw, Senior College Consul

Veronica Russell, Business School representative

Claire Stapley, CLCC/CHERS representative

Karen Tweddle, Business School representative

Judith Webster, Director of Academic Quality and Standards

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

In Attendance

Professor Richard Green, Professor of Sustainable Energy, Business School

Leila Guerra, Associate Dean of Programmes, Business School

Mike Horner, Education Service Line Manager, ICT [Item 8]

Professor Jonathan Mestel, College Consul

1. Welcome, apologies and announcements

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting, noting that this was the last meeting of the academic year.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

QAEC.2019.57

- 2.1 The Committee confirmed the minutes of 22 April 2020 as an accurate record.

3. Review of Committee actions

QAEC.2019.58

- 3.1 The Committee received an action list, noting that progress against each action had been reviewed and updated since the previous meeting.

3.2 Coordination of student surveys during COVID-19 (6.1 refers)

Following investigation as to whether Summer SOLE could be delivered using Qualtrics, the Education Service Line Manager confirmed that the current restructuring in ICT meant that recourse was not currently available to support this transition. As a result, Summer SOLE will be delivered as planned (26 May – 22 June) using Student Viewpoint. There was some concern that the response rate might be lower than in previous years and an acknowledgement that SOLE needs to be reviewed, in line with recommendations from the Lecturer and Module Evaluation Working Group.

4. Matters arising from the minutes

4.1 No matters arising.

5. Academic Regulations and Policy

5.1 The Committee considered a draft Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure, and a revised Authorised Interruption of Studies Procedure. QAEC.2019.59

5.2 There were a number of policies and procedures which enabled students to inform the College where circumstances meant they were unable to fully engage with their studies on a short, medium or long term basis.

5.3 The Committee noted that there had been a growing number of student casework issues where it would have been helpful for the College to have a Fitness to Study Procedure and the lack of a formal procedure was recently identified as a failing by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education. As a result, a draft Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure was presented to the Committee. In addition, it was noted that, in developing a Fitness to Study Procedure, there was a need to reconsider the role of the current Interruption of Studies Procedure.

It was proposed that the Interruption of Studies Procedure should only be used where students have *requested* to take a period of leave from their studies. The Fitness to Study Procedure should be used where a student was *required* to suspend their studies as the result of College process.

5.4 Committee members were in support of an updated Interruption of Studies Procedure and agreed that consideration needed to be given as to what support the student was entitled to during the period of interruption. Contact between the Department and student during the interruption might vary on a case by case basis but the Committee agreed that a baseline could be formalised.

Committee members were also fully in support of a Fitness to Study Procedure, with a need to take into account students who did not wish to engage with Imperial College Health Centre. The Committee agreed with the student representatives that this should be a supportive policy and one that highlighted the importance of Faculty Senior Tutors.

- 5.5 The Committee agreed that revised versions of the Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure, and Authorised Interruption of Studies Procedure should be considered at the QAEC meeting to be held in October 2020.

Action: Director of Academic Quality and Standards

6. Programme and Module Modifications Procedure

QAEC.2019.60

- 6.1 The Committee considered a revised Programme and Module Modifications Procedure. In making revisions to the process, it was noted that a balance must be achieved between providing time for programme teams and departments to make informed changes and providing applicants and existing students with sufficient information in good time to make informed decisions about their studies.
- 6.2 To inform proposed revisions, it was confirmed that the QA Team held meetings with Faculty Education Managers who had gathered feedback from Faculties. Proposed revisions were summarised as follows:
- Some types of changes not previously covered by the modification process were now included, namely the suspension and withdrawal of programmes, and changes to collaborative modules and programmes
 - A review of what counted as a minor modification and a major modification had been undertaken to ensure sufficient oversight of significant changes. These changes were reflected within the redesigned modification table
 - Greater clarity had been provided on when student consultation was needed, and the minimum requirements of student consultation had now been defined
 - An updated modification form
- 6.3 The Business School raised concerns that the proposed change to make the withdrawal of elective modules a major modification was problematic. This was because PGT summer electives had not been delivered by the point at which the following year's summer electives needed to be confirmed. The Faculty of Engineering expressed some concern over the modification procedure relating to operational issues including version control. These issues would be considered by the QA Team. In addition, the following amendments were agreed:
- 1.7 'Procedures do not cover the following types of proposals...new short course...new programme' – add link to signpost to alternate procedures
 - 2.2 – 'Cumulative changes which, although minor in themselves, result over time in major changes normally will require a higher level of approval with greater external input' – provide further clarity.
 - Modification Form - the reference to student consent to be omitted from the revised form in line with the revised policy

6.4 Subject to the agreed revisions above, the Committee approved the Programme and Module Modifications Procedure, noting that:

- The proposed procedure should be used if *permanent* programme changes are required
- The Covid-19 Modification procedure should be used where *temporary* programme changes are required to address Covid-19

7. Response to Covid-19

7.1 The Committee received a verbal update from the Chair on the College's continued response to Covid-19, noting the following:

- Communications to applicants were being sent on 3 June
- Work was being undertaken on determining the status of PGT students who could not complete studies remotely
- Work was being undertaken on determining the impact on PGR students
- Delivery of programmes for next academic year would be classed as 'mixed mode'. Every programme would have an on-campus presence; ensuring good quality whether in person or remotely
- Awaiting input from Departments on resits, progression and transcripts
- Exam Board guidance was being produced
- Student experience was being considered for the next academic year
- Student financial support was being considered for the next academic year
- Capped numbers for admissions; deferral policy; handling of deposits; impact of A levels
- ATAS reopened; remote licensing; UKVI guidance about visas for this year
- Report to OfS; enquiry and response

8. Student Attendance and Engagement Policy

QAEC.2019.62

8.1 It was intended that the policy would apply to all students enrolled on taught programmes and set out how the College would monitor student attendance and engagement. The Policy would support the College in identifying students who might be experiencing difficulties and might need additional academic or pastoral support.

At the previous QAEC held on 22 April, it was agreed that the draft Student Attendance and Engagement Policy should be circulated to Faculties for feedback. Following a wide circulation, significant feedback from Faculties was received and presented as an annex to the draft policy.

The Committee agreed that further significant work was required on the draft policy and that as a result of Covid-19, it would be poor timing to introduce a College Attendance Policy, drafted predominantly with face to face attendance in mind, at the start of an academic year with such uncertainty around face to face attendance.

9.1 The Committee noted that the procedure for students to request a thesis submission deadline extension, due to circumstances beyond their control, was currently titled 'Guidelines for Late Case Requests for PhD, MPhil, MD(Res) and EngD candidates', due in part to the perceived 'late' submission of a thesis within an agreed extension period. It had become apparent that this terminology had contributed to students and staff adopting a negative view of this process, resulting in some reluctance in referring to this route when needed.

As this procedure was in place to support students who had been affected by circumstances beyond their control, a change in terminology was proposed that more accurately reflects the process: 'Guidelines for requesting an extension to the thesis deadline for PhD, MPhil, MD(Res) an EngD candidates'.

The procedure, along with all other research degree focussed regulations and policies, were currently under review by the College, to be considered via the annual updates. However, in light of the anticipated spike in the number of candidates requiring an extension to their thesis deadline due to Covid-19, it was proposed that the title to the procedure was updated as soon as possible.

9.2 Although the Committee fully supported a change to the procedure in principle, it was felt that this should be undertaken with other annual updates to regulation and policy. In the meantime, it was agreed that a Covid-specific statement on thesis extension requests could be drafted. This was consistent with the approach taken to other policies such as Mitigating Circumstances, where a Covid-specific communication had been drafted to support the existing policy.

In addition, the following amendment was agreed to the procedure document:

- 3.3 – 'All late case requests should be submitted in advance of the thesis submission deadline. In cases where this has not been possible, the department will ~~may~~ be asked to comment on the circumstances leading to the retrospective late case extension request.'

10. Monitoring and Evaluation

10.1 Undergraduate Annual Monitoring College Summary

10.1.1 The report highlighted areas of good practice across the themes of curriculum enhancement; student support; assessment; student voice; and equality, diversity and community. In addition, a number of cross college themes were highlighted across the themes of space constraints; degree outcomes; assessment and feedback; and student support.

10.1.2 Part of the review process was to capture College level issues. Departments noted that it was unclear how such issues were taken forward and it was felt that a College level action plan should be developed, which was reported to Departments and Faculties annually. However, many of the issues raised were already under consideration by existing projects/strategies so it was felt that it was more appropriate to signpost to these initiatives rather than introduce another action plan.

10.1.3 Committee members agreed that the summary of issues with the addition of relevant links to existing projects/service provider responses (overarching responses, not to individual issues) would be useful to departments. As a result, the QA team would ask service providers to provide an overarching response to issues raised in their area. Individual issues could then be followed up with the relevant service provider, where departments required a bespoke response (outside of the annual monitoring process)

10.2 **The Committee received the Periodic Review Report for the joint MBBS programme delivered by LKCMedicine, Nanyang Technological University** QAEC.2019.65

10.3 Committee members welcomed the areas identified as features of good practice and noted recommendations for further enhancement across the following areas: organisational resilience; educational resources and systems; digital; curriculum and pedagogy; admissions; and policy.

The Committee approved unconditional re-approval for continued admission of students. The Committee agreed that that the review process allowed the LKCMedicine to demonstrate its ongoing ability to manage academic standards and develop and enhance the quality of the programme. Furthermore, the Panel agreed that the mission and vision of the LKCMedicine remain relevant despite the evolving healthcare, scientific and medical education landscape.

11 Programmes Committee

11.1 Programmes Committee Report

11.1.1 The Committee received a full report on the meeting of the Programmes Committee held on 31 February 2020. The Committee approved all recommendations. QAEC.2019.66

11.1.2 In addition, the following recommendation was agreed, which would be added to the Programmes Committee report:

A proposal from the Department of Earth Science and Engineering for a new parallel pathway to the MSc Applied Computational Science and Engineering (ACSE), leading to a proposed degree title of MSc Environmental Data Science and Machine Learning. The new pathway would share all but three modules (Cloud Computing; Environmental Data; and Big Data Analytics) with the existing degree, effective October 2021.

- With a condition that the programme team review the learning outcomes for two of the new modules: Cloud Computing; and Big Data Analytics. The learning outcomes were not presented at a FHEQ Level 7 standard and could be further reviewed.

11.2 Major programme and module modifications during COVID-19 QAEC.2019.67

11.2.1 The Committee ratified the decisions approved by Chair's action

11.2.2 The Committee considered the following in-year major modifications proposed as a result of Covid-19 submitted in May 2020:

Department of Infectious Disease
Department of Metabolism, Digestion and Reproduction
Department of Surgery and Cancer

- It was proposed that changes to start/end dates of programmes were submitted to the QA Team to coordinate approval and ensure changes were communicated to relevant parties

The Committee approved the variations in principle, subject to a full rationale.

Action: Secretary

12. Postgraduate Research Quality Committee QAEC.2019.68

12.1 The Committee considered the report on the PRQC meeting held on 13 May 2020. Following the final meeting of the PRQC PRES 2019 Task and Finish Group, the Committee approved PRQC's recommendations under the following areas:

- Research Culture and Environment
- Effective Student-Supervisor Partnerships
- Supervisor Support and Development Opportunities
- Doctoral Student Wellbeing and Poor Supervision

The Committee thanked the Head of Strategy and Operations (Graduate School).

13. Undergraduate and postgraduate academic calendars 2020-21 QAEC.2019.69

13.1 It was confirmed that the UG and PGT academic calendars presented were draft only and that no significant changes had been made from the previous academic year. The Committee agreed to the continued use of the calendars and that, following further feedback from relevant parties, specific dates should be agreed prior to publishing.

It was noted that programme specific dates would also be published, where appropriate, in line with the previous academic year, through liaison with Faculties.

Action: Secretary

14 Dates for meetings 2020/2021

14.1 Committee dates for the next academic year were confirmed as follows, all 10:00-12:00:

- Wednesday 30 September 2020
- Wednesday 18 November 2020
- Wednesday 20 January 2021
- Wednesday 24 February 2021
- Wednesday 28 April 2021
- Wednesday 26 May 2021