

Imperial College London

Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC)
Confirmed minutes from the extraordinary meeting held on
Friday 23 March 2018

Present

David Ashton, Academic Registrar, Chair
Professor Lesley Cohen, Consul for Faculty of Natural Science for Professor Peter Lindstedt
Alex Compton, President of Imperial College Union for Nicholas Burstow
Dr Lorraine Craig, Faculty of Engineering representative
Dr Anita Hall, Faculty of Natural Sciences representative
Mr Martin Lupton, Faculty of Medicine Representative
Dr Edgar Meyer, Chair of Programmes Committee
Fintan O'Connor, Deputy President: Welfare, Imperial College Union for Luke McCrone
Karen Tweddle, Business School representative
Judith Webster, Head of Academic Services
Lucy Heming, Senior Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance and Enhancement), Secretary

By Invitation

Professor Omar Matar, Vice-Dean: Education, Faculty of Engineering
Professor Emma McCoy, Vice-Dean: Education, Faculty of Natural Sciences
Professor Alan Spivey, Assistant Provost: Learning and Teaching
Kirstie Ward, Assistant Registrar (Academic Standards)

Apologies

Nicholas Burstow, Deputy President: Education, Imperial College Union
Professor Peter Lindstedt, Senior College Consul
Professor Anthony Magee, Deputy Director of the Graduate School
Luke McCrone, GSU President
Veronica Russell, Business School representative
Claire Stapley, CLCC/CHERS representative

1. Welcome, Apologies and Announcements

- 1.1** The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and apologies, as listed above, were noted. Members of the Vice-Provost's Advisory Group for Education had been invited to join the meeting.

2. Outcomes from Complaints and Appeals Task and Finish Group

QAEC.2017.47

- 2.1** The Committee received the revised procedures for Student Complaints, Academic Appeals, Mitigating Circumstances, Academic Misconduct and Disciplinary.

- 2.2** These changes were being made following a number of recommendations made by the Complaints and Appeals Task and Finish Group, feedback from consultation with a range of stakeholders across the College and external guidance, such as the Good Practice Framework by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for HE (OIA). These changes also needed to be considered in light of the regulatory changes within the sector, including the introduction of the Office for Students (OfS) and the oversight of UK HE by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA).
- 2.3** Following the feedback from colleagues across the College, there remained some outstanding questions on specific aspects of the policies which needed to be agreed. These related to the policies for Academic Appeals, Mitigating Circumstances and Academic Misconduct (formerly known as the Cheating Policy). The Student Complaints Policy was agreed as received.
- 2.4** For the Academic Appeals Policy the Committee agreed the following:
- Where an appeal was not accepted for consideration, students would be given the option to amend and resubmit the appeal within a set timescale prior to it being closed. If it was still considered not to meet the criteria for an appeal, this stage of the appeal would be rejected but students would be entitled to request a review (stage 3) of this decision
 - Where an appeal was submitted late but without suitable explanation and supporting evidence to show why it was late, after an opportunity had been provided to clarify the documentation, the appeal would be considered closed and a Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter produced
 - Further guidance would be provided on what information was included in a CoP, when this would be provided and by whom, including around the specific wording needed if a CoP was requested by a student before they had completed the internal process
 - The existing relationship between the appeals process and the process for appealing against a decision to withdraw a student in year would be retained as work was underway on the regulations and the College was considering the development of fitness to study procedures
 - The Committee would consider at a later date the question of whether a student appealing against a decision, such as withdrawal, could be allowed to continue with their studies whilst the appeal was being considered. This would need to be made on a case-by-case basis
- 2.5** For the Mitigating Circumstances (MC) Policy the Committee agreed the following:
- Mitigating Circumstances decisions made at a departmental level would be reported up to a Faculty Board so as to identify any inconsistencies and share best practice. The Faculty Board would not be formally approving or rejecting decisions but would be able to suggest changes in approach

where concerns were raised. It was further recommended that there should be opportunities for sharing best practice across Faculties. This would provide an opportunity for a review by College over a period of time on the basis of the information collected

- There would be flexibility for departments to choose whether to run joint or separate MC panels for claims relating to undergraduate and postgraduate students
- The new wording on the timelines and evidence for MC claims for bereavement was accepted

2.6 The Committee discussed in detail the need for consistency in decision-making for mitigating circumstance claims and the need to protect those involved in the decision-making process from the perception of bias. This needed to be balanced alongside the value in having a local understanding of how studies have been affected by MCs. It was also recognised that the process needed to operate practically in order to deal with an ever-increasing volume of claims in a timely fashion. Another aspect discussed was the value in having data on mitigating circumstances to enable research on the process; this information currently was not available.

2.7 For the Academic Misconduct Policy the Committee agreed the following:

- At all stages of the process, students should be notified of the allegation being made against them
- The Academic Misconduct Panel should draw on a defined group of people to ensure flexibility and expertise
- The appeals process should be based on the operation of the procedure and not a re-run of the original academic misconduct case

2.8 It was recommended that allegations of academic misconduct against research students would be best dealt with under the existing Research Misconduct process. This would be explored with the relevant parties and agreed subject to their support.

ACTION: Assistant Registrar (Academic Standards)

2.9 The Committee supported the recommendation that decisions on whether an appeal against an academic misconduct decision met the eligibility criteria could be made by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement team. However, a further check was needed with the Vice-Provost (Education) given this would affect her role in the process before this could be confirmed.

ACTION: Assistant Registrar (Academic Standards)

2.10 It was agreed that a follow-up meeting would take place between the Assistant Registrar (Academic Standards) and the Senior Faculty Tutor for Engineering to understand better how and the extent to which the feedback from the Faculty of Engineering had been reflected in the revised policies.

ACTION: Assistant Registrar (Academic Standards)

2.11 The Committee agreed the implementation plan whereby the Student Complaints and Appeals policies would be implemented with immediate effect and the Mitigating Circumstances and Academic Misconduct policies would be implemented for 2018/19. Students would benefit from the earlier implementation of the complaints and appeals procedures and clarification would be provided to students on the changes to which policies.

2.12 The Disciplinary Policy had been revised last year and the proposed changes reflected feedback on its first year of operation. These included the re-introduction of Residence Tribunals and two types of penalty; clarification on the role of Wardens; and issuing a Completion of Procedures letter at the end of internal process.

2.13 It was confirmed that there were checks in place to ensure penalties applied through the Disciplinary process were carried out.

2.14 The Committee endorsed the proposed changes to the Complaints policy, Academic Appeals policy, Mitigating Circumstances Policy, Academic Misconduct Policy and Disciplinary policy and recommended them for approval to Senate.

ACTION: Secretary

2.15 The Committee endorsed a proposal that all the procedures are reviewed after their first year of operation, with particular reference to looking at the work being carried out by different parties named within the procedures.

ACTION: Assistant Registrar (Academic Standards)

2.16 Members of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement team would review the guidance provided to staff and students on the policies in the light of the amendments being proposed.

ACTION: Secretary

3. Academic Regulations

QAEC.2017.48

3.1 The Committee considered the proposed single set of regulations for 2019/20; these had been considered by the Vice-Provost's Advisory Group for Education and had gone to the faculties for consultation.

3.2 The Assistant Provost for Learning and Teaching outlined the context in which the single set of regulations was being developed and tabled two documents: firstly, a paper highlighting the key questions that still needed to be resolved (QAEC.2017.48a) and secondly, the student data timeline (QAEC.2017.48b). The drafting and approval of the new regulations needed to support the development of new curricula through the curriculum review process and

ensure that the rules and regulations could inform the SIMP development work, and in particular the new student record system. October 2018 had been identified as the final deadline for approving the new regulations in order to facilitate these two areas. It was confirmed that existing students would remain under the existing regulations.

3.3 Given the new regulatory framework governing the HE sector, it would be necessary for the College to be able to articulate and justify any regulations which significantly differed from sector practice. This was not intended to restrict the autonomy of the regulations but it was useful to bear in mind as the College worked towards agreeing the regulations.

3.4 Concerns were raised about the time-frame for further developing and approving the regulations and the short turnaround expected for responding to different documents and prompts for feedback. While the time-frame was acknowledged to be less than ideal, the Committee accepted that the College's current position meant that progress would be needed within the next few months in order to meet the projected time-scales.

3.5 The Committee considered a number of key questions set out in paper 48a and agreed the following:

- The requirement for a year of academic study for a full-time undergraduate student would be 60 ECTS and for a full-time postgraduate taught student would be 90 ECTS
- However, flexibility would be built in i) to allow students to exceed this amount where retrieving failure and ii) to take be allowed to increase to 62.5 ECTS per year where a student chose to follow a 7.5 ECTS Horizons module
- Exceptional arrangements would be made for programmes which did not fit the regulations but it was expected that the majority of programmes would follow the regulations as is
- Modules would be based on a basic building block of 5 and 7.5 ECTS and multiples thereof
- Students other than those in the Faculty of Medicine would not be required to retake previously passed modules
- All modules on a programme would be classified as either compulsory or optional/elective

3.6 The Committee discussed the following items but was unable to reach agreement:

- The extent to which there would be latitude for programmes to include the ability for students to take credit below the expected FHEQ level
- The extent to which teaching and related activities (e.g. project work, placements) would take place outside standard term dates

- Whether level 4 modules (year one) of an undergraduate degree would be included in the final classification outcome. It was noted that the College steer was to remove weighting of level 4 modules from classification outcomes
- Whether the level weightings for classification outcomes needed to be the same across all faculties
- Co-curricular provision
- Module pass/fail criteria and arrangements for progression
- 'Bundling' of elective modules
- Treatment of level 6 versus level 7 modules in integrated Masters programmes
- Degree classifications for postgraduate taught programmes

3.7 In order to reach a decision on the outstanding items, it was agreed that an away day should be arranged for mid- June. It was suggested that this be facilitated and that a revised version of paper 48a be presented to outline the key questions and possible outcomes, with clear reference to the regulations. It was anticipated the away day would need to take place over 1.5 days to ensure enough time to consider regulations affecting both undergraduate and postgraduate taught provision.

ACTION: Secretary

4. Academic Calendar

QAEC.2017.49

4.1 The Committee considered and agreed with the proposal to have a College academic calendar.

4.2 Members were asked to submit comments on what should be included in the calendar to the Chair.

ACTION: Members

5. Any Other Business

5.1 The University and College Union was planning on arranging further strikes for summer term, which would affect assessments. The College was considering various ways in which to mitigate the impact on students from any further strikes or action short of a strike while respecting the right of colleagues to engage in industrial action. It was possible the College might need to make pragmatic changes to its regulations to ensure students are not overly affected. The Committee agreed for the Chair to be able to take Chair's Action if this was required.

6. Dates for Meetings 2017-18

6.1 Tuesday 17th April 2018, 10:00 – 12:00, Ballroom, 58 Prince's Gate
 Tuesday 22nd May 2018, 10:00 – 12:00, Ballroom, 58 Prince's Gate