

# FLTQC 18 October 2023

Wednesday, 18th October 2023 2:15 pm

Teams | Faculty of Science Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee

## Attendees

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### Attended

Liz Beaven

Zoe Burke

Andrew Burrows (Chair)

Susan Crennell

Marguerite Hallett (Secretary)

Zack Lyons

Sarah Paine

Tony Shardlow

Gan Shermer

Paul Snow

Stephen Ward

### Did Not Attend

Florin Bisset

Ffion Gould

Philip Rogers

Miranda Yafi

## 1.0 Welcome and Quorum (3222)

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The Chair welcomed members, noted apologies and observed that the meeting was quorate. In particular the Chair welcomed the undergraduate student reps Miss Ffion Gould and Miss Miranda Yafi, both of whom are MPharm (Hons) Pharmacy, Year 2 students, and Dr Zoe Burke and Dr Zack Lyons as new Directors of Teaching (DoTs). The Chair reported that the recently appointed new PGT student rep, Ms Sarah Upendra Chandratreya, MSc Data Science, would attend from the next FLTQC meeting.

## 2.0 Declaration of Interest (3223)

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There were no declarations of any potential conflicts of interest.

### **3.0 Minutes of the Previous Meeting (3224)**

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The Committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 June 2023 (Paper 1).

### **4.0 Matters Arising (3225)**

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There were no matters arising from the previous minutes.

### **5.0 Chair's Business (3226)**

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The Chair thanked the DoTs for sending through information to use in the claim for funds to support Curriculum Transformation (CT), the result of which will not be known for another couple of months.

The Chair thanked the affected departments for the efficient way in which the extraordinary BEU/Ps for the MAB affected finalists were held. The Committee noted that the MAB affected continuing and PGT students would be dealt with shortly.

The Chair flagged that that there had been more issues than normal with timetabling this year, e.g. late notification of clashes. The Chair reported that he would raise this matter with the Education and Student Experience Leadership Team when he meets with them tomorrow.

The Committee noted the following Chair's actions:

- Approval of replacement, in MSc Mathematics with Data Science for Industry, of Semester 1 compulsory unit CM50264 Machine Learning 1 (6 credits), with MA50290 Applied Machine Learning (6 credits) for 2023/24 (approved 14 June 2023) (Paper 2).
- Approval of an intermediate change to the Certificate / Diploma / MSc in Clinical Pharmacy Practice (Secondary Care) from 2023/24 to remove SL500143 Foundation Knowledge and SL500144 Foundation Skills as compulsory units (approved 8 August 2023): Case for change (Paper 3A) and amended Programme Specification (Paper 3B).
- GPhC Step 2 accreditation submission for MPharm (Hons) Pharmacy at the University of Plymouth (approved 22 August 2023, following circulation to FLTQC for review via email) (Paper 4).

### **6.0 Examination Paper Scrutiny Process (3227)**

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The Committee considered a draft Faculty policy on examination paper scrutiny (Paper 5). The Chair explained that errors in examination papers are reported to the Board of Studies 3 times a year (S1, S2 and supplementary) and after the S2 examinations this year, FLTQC was tasked with working towards a more uniformed protocol for examination paper scrutiny and sign off.

The number of errors in examination papers had decreased to approx. 20 last year. It was acknowledged that it would not be possible to eradicate all errors, due to the technical nature of many of the Faculty's examinations (e.g. containing equations and data) and compressed timescales for turning around examination papers, however it was important to minimise errors to reduce the impact on students and time taken before and during BEUs to deal with these.

Dr T Shardlow commented that the difficulty lies with the implementation of scrutiny, i.e. ensuring that every checker is thorough.

The Chair acknowledged that all departments already have their own examination paper checking processes in place, some of more depth than others (e.g. group vs individual scrutiny). The draft Faculty policy is designed to serve as a minimum to be added to as departments see fit and embedded in departmental culture.

Mrs S Paine highlighted the need in point 10 to include sign off of the list of any additional resources, e.g. correct graph paper and formula sheets. Dr Z Lyons added that marking

schemes should also be checked to ensure that a) the marking scheme is reasonable in relation to the questions being asked and b) if the Unit Convenor is unexpectedly unavailable a clear marking scheme exists that can be used by another marker. Dr Z Lyons commented that checking processes may not have caught up with doing checking digitally, e.g. copying in a mailing list of key personnel to verify that something has been checked, which is not a particularly robust way of keeping track of checking. Dr Z Lyons reported that he had trialed using Power Automate to keep track of checking, but with limited success, and requested greater institutional support with technology. It was suggested that the need to ensure a final sign off of examination papers in advance of the deadline for submission to the print unit could be made more explicit in point 10, despite the time pressures.

Dr T Shardlow highlighted the need to ensure that a) new lecturers are made aware of the importance of examination paper scrutiny processes and b) current staff continue to adhere to these processes. The Chair suggested that DoTs ask their HoDs to re-emphasise at staff meetings how important it is to make sure that checking happens effectively because the consequences of when it goes wrong can be significant.

Dr P Snow reported that he had been tasked with writing a paper for new staff in the Department of Physics on how to write an examination paper. The Chair requested that this paper, and other similar/related papers in other departments, be shared among the Committee. In relation to point 3, Dr S Crennell stated that it could be difficult to write an outline answer for essay-based examination questions in sufficient detail for another member of staff to mark the scripts if needed. The Chair agreed to rephrase this so that it applies more to problem-based questions.

**Action:** Chair to amend the draft policy in line with the comments above and to circulate for approval.

## 7.0 Final Year Projects / Dissertations (3228)

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The Committee shared practice in the different departments regarding supervisor contributions to projects and dissertation marking.

The Chair explained that the MAB had highlighted that individual members of staff can have a significant effect on a student's mark, in particular supervisor marks for projects (often of high credit weighting) which cannot be double marked.

The Chair highlighted the important of ensuring that the breakdown of how a project/dissertation will be assessed, and the associated marking criteria, is communicated clearly to students, particularly where the breakdown is not published in the online unit catalogue.

Dr T Shardlow reported that in Maths, the supervisor and an independent 2<sup>nd</sup> marker mark the project report. The supervisor also assesses the student's independence, worth 10-20% of the mark. Dr T Shardlow reported that the Maths Department at Durham used to normalise across all projects in different areas to ensure consistency in marking, but this was time consuming and difficult to record.

Dr P Snow reported that in Physics the standard Final Year project units are 12 credits and include a 10% weighted oral presentation; for the remaining 90% of the marks, half (45%) comes from the report (marked equally by both the supervisor and 2<sup>nd</sup> assessor), and half is for general performance in the project (22.5% supervisor mark) and viva (22.5% 2<sup>nd</sup> assessor mark). For the MPhys version, 70% of the marks come from the report. The MPhys project, which spans all of Semester 1, comprising 30 credits of the Final Year and contributing 25% to the degree classification, has a 20% supervisor mark (equal to a 6 credit unit). Dr P Snow commented that it is difficult to assess any variation between supervisor marking via a longitudinal analysis of averages due to the various factors involved, e.g. subject area, lab vs theory-based projects, closeness of supervision, size of research group.

Dr G Shermer reported that the accrediting body for chemistry programmes requires that the supervisor mark does not contribute more than 25% of the project mark. For MChem projects, the supervisor only marks lab performance and engagement; they do not mark the report. The same applies to BSc projects, except for dissertations which are assessed by both the supervisor and a 2<sup>nd</sup> assessor. The Department would like to move to a model in which, for all

projects/dissertations, the supervisor only marks performance and engagement, not output (i.e. the report). This is partly because it is difficult for the supervisor (who knows more about the project, so marks with a different threshold in mind) and 2nd assessor to mark within 4% of each other, in accordance with QA16 (thereby avoiding the need to appoint a 3rd marker where the supervisor and 2nd marker cannot agree a mark).

Dr Z Burke reported that the Final Year project is marked by the supervisor and 2nd assessor (each contributing 40% of the marks), with 20% of the marks coming from the supervisor's assessment of project performance. B&B tried not letting supervisors mark their own students' reports but this was not well received because it took staff longer to mark reports about which they knew little, than reports with which they were familiar.

Professor S Ward reported that 90% of the MPharmacol project comprises the moderated average mark for the project and 10% comprises the supervisor's assessment of performance. Dr Z Lyons report that in Computer Science, BSc dissertations are worth 24 credits (so 27% of the degree); 10% comprises the 2nd assessor's mark for demonstration of progress halfway through the year, and 90% comprises the joint supervisor and 2nd assessor's mark for the dissertation. The MComp has 18 credit and 30 credit Final Year projects for which there is no demonstration of progress assessment. The Department plans to review how frequently the supervisor and 2nd assessor marks differ, and to what extent.

The Committee noted that in Physics and Chemistry the supervisor is only permitted to review 1 draft of the project report to reduce student reliance on feedback to improve their report. B&B supervisors do not look at any drafts. The Committee noted, however, that students can always seek feedback from PhD students.

## 8.0 NSS 2023 Results (3229)

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Directors of Teaching were invited to share good practice on how their department had dealt with particular topics where they had scored highly in associated questions.

The Chair reported that questions relating to teaching on my course and academic support scored highly. Questions relating to assessment and feedback scored less well across the Faculty and University as a whole.

Life Sciences scored highly on the clarity of the marking criteria and the fairness of the marking of assessment. Dr Burke reported that when assessments were set, time was set aside in lectures to talk through marking criteria, and for students to give practice seminar presentations to each other using the marking criteria.

Maths scored highly on the timeliness and usefulness of feedback. Dr T Shardlow reported that Year 1 students are given the opportunity to have homework marked on a weekly basis; this opportunity is taken up less so in Year 2. Every student, in all years, is provided with detailed examination feedback, i.e. full solutions. Feedback is also provided shortly after the examination results are released, via a web-page containing a summary of common issues identified by the examiner.

Dr P Snow reported that students are provided with a step-by-step guide to reach numerical answers, together with a list of common errors.

Computer Science scored highly on the clarity that student feedback has been acted on. Dr Z Lyons reported that a rapport is built with students from Year 1 all the way through to Final Year. This is achieved by meeting with student reps regularly, having an open-door policy and reinforcing that no issue is too small and the Department also wishes to know when things are going well so it knows to continue these. There have been a series of Academic Reps, over consecutive years, who have been invested in the concept of student voice, for which they have won awards. Their enthusiasm has been passed down to subsequent years. This has been reinforced with working groups on issues raised by students, such as a netiquette policy created during online learning, guidance on group-work and flowcharts on who in the Department students can talk to about particular matters. During the year, mini stand-up SSLCs were held with the Academic Reps between the main SSLC meetings, frequent pulse surveys were run and follow-up emails were sent to close the loop. Towards the end of year, when students are due to complete the NSS, slides were shown of 'you said, we did' at both a University and

Department level, e.g. having a 24 hour lab or a water cooler. There is also an active student society which the Department supports frequently with events; students feedback that they would like particular events run and suggest different companies and the Department acts upon that feedback.

Dr S Crennell reported that the Nat Sci student society has not recovered fully since Covid, because expertise has been lost from one year passing onto the next. Dr P Snow reported that last year students tried to revivify PhySoc and were active on SSLC. The Department tried to reintroduce the Year 1 welcome dinner, and BBQ at the end of the year for students going on placement or on to Final Year. There also used to be an MPhys dinner at the end of the MPhys conference but there is not money in the budget to pay for that this year.

Chemistry scored highly on how changes to teaching were communicated to students. Dr G Shermer explained that students were emailed regularly about changes mainly to examination arrangements, e.g. 24 hour vs fixed time vs in person. Decisions about in person examination arrangements, e.g. extra 30 mins, 1 page of notes, were made early on so students could be informed of these during induction. The Department also has a DoS structure in which there is 1 DoS per year group (or couple of year groups) so they can send out targeted emails.

Results for Physics had improved across the board. Dr P Snow reported that students were provided with weekly DoT updates mainly about examination arrangements, e.g. open sheets for in-person examinations and University calculators. The DoT also sent a 'start of unit checklist' to students and a request to all lecturers to complete particular actions at the start of a unit; the HoD chased lecturers who did not respond.

Results for Nat Sci had been strong this year. Dr S Crennell reported that the DoS had been proactive last year, e.g. running open SSLCs.

**Action:** Chair to seek clarification as to whether provisional examination marks can be released before they have been approved.

## 9.0 Unit and Programme Changes (3230)

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### Department of Mathematical Sciences:

The Committee approved the following programme changes for 2023/24 only:

- Addition of MA20216 Algebra 2A (Semester 1, 6 credits) as an optional unit to Year 3 of BSc (Hons) Mathematical Sciences (inc. Placement and SYA variants): Course change (Paper 6A) and structure (Paper 6B).
- Removal of MA30280 Applied Data Science (Semester 2, 6 credits) as an optional unit from Final Year of BSc (Hons) Mathematics (inc. Placement and SYA variants): Course change (Paper 7A) and structure (Paper 7B).

The Committee approved the following new units for 2024/25 only (to fit with Year 3 of the non CT UG programmes for students returning from placement):

- New unit: Probability 2 (Year-Long 12 credits) (Paper 8).
- New unit: Statistics 2 (Year-Long 12 credits) (Paper 9).

Dr T Shardlow reported that teaching that is already happening is being repackaged so that it is suitable for the transition year, i.e. students in Year 3 taking Year 2 options.

Dr P Snow observed that for the new Statistics 2 unit, assessment is split 65% Semester 1 and 35% Semester 2. Dr T Shardlow reported that the 12 credit unit is based on a 10 credit and a 5 credit unit, which the proportions reflect.

## 10.0 Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC) Reaccreditation (3231)

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The Committee noted the RSC reaccreditation report for the undergraduate programmes in the Department of Chemistry (Paper 10). The Chair congratulated the DoT for securing the reaccreditation and commented that RSC feedback had been positive.

## 11.0 Feedback from Committees (3232)

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### **Education Advisory Board (EAB):**

The Committee noted the minutes of the meetings held on 25 May (Paper 11A), 3 July (Paper 11B) and 18 September (Paper 11C) 2023.

### **Student Experience Advisory Board (SEAB):**

The Committee noted the minutes of the meetings held on 19 June (Paper 12A) and 6 September (Paper 12B) 2023.

### **Courses and Partnerships Approval Committee (CPAC):**

The Committee noted the minutes of the meetings held on:

a) 28 June 2023 (Paper 13A), in particular approval of:

- NHS England accreditation submission for the MSc Advanced Clinical Pharmacy Practice programme (approved 6 June 2023).
- MSc Drug Discovery exemption from the Academic Framework parameter that there should be no shared teaching between undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses from 2024/25.

b) 19 September 2023 (Paper 13B), in particular approval of:

- GPhC Step 2 accreditation submission for MPharm (Hons) Pharmacy at the University of Plymouth (approved 23 August 2023).

### **Academic Programmes Committee (APC):**

The Committee noted the minutes of the meeting held on 21 August 2023 (Paper 14).

## 12.0 Department Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee (DLTQC) Minutes (3233)

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The Committee noted the minutes of the meetings held on:

**Department of Chemistry:** 28 September 2023 (Paper 15).

**Department of Computer Science:** 27 September 2023 (Paper 16).

**Learning Partnerships Office:** 9 May 2023 (Programme and Partner Management Committee minutes, Bath College) (Paper 17).

**Department of Physics:** 22 September 2023 (Paper 18).

## 13.0 Any Other Business (3234)

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Dr P Snow enquired about the Faculty scanner for MCQ examinations. The Secretary reported that the Programmes Manager was in the process of getting the scanner fixed. Dr Z Lyons reported that a member of staff in Computer Science had written software for handling MCQs which was trialed with Pharmacy last year. Dr Z Lyons agreed to circulate details.