

FLTQC 12 March 2025

Wednesday, 12th March 2025 2:15pm

Teams | Faculty of Science Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee

Attendees

Attended

Sascha Athey (SA)
Andrew Burrows (Chair)
Susan Crennell (SC)
James Foadi (JF)
Marguerite Hallett (Secretary)
Liz Haynes
Momna Hejmadi
Imogen Le Patourel (IP)
Zack Lyons (ZL)
Ioana Mocanu (IM)
Sarah Paine
Charareh Pourzand
Tony Shardlow (TS)
Gan Shermer (GS)
Paul Snow (PS)
Gitte Sparding (GSp)

Did Not Attend

Robbie Altham
Florin Bisset
Zoe Burke
Plato Ng
Philip Rogers

1.0 Welcome and Quorum (3393)

The Chair welcomed members, noted apologies and observed that the meeting was quorate.

2.0 Declaration of Interest (3394)

There were no declarations of any potential conflicts of interest.

3.0 QA Code of Practice consultation (3395)

The Committee considered the following QA Code of Practice changes:

- QA3 Annex H Individual Schemes of Study (Paper 82):

SA reported that there is an ongoing project about the Equality Act, and a wider issue around suspension vs IMC with little in between except Individual Schemes of Study and Assessment which require greater clarification and regulation. SA presented a first draft of the Paper, that had been informed by feedback from the Faculty Assistant Registrars, which describes what Individual Schemes of Study and Assessment do and do not do, when they should be used and how they will be monitored. SA invited DoTs to consult their departments and provide feedback on the Paper, following which, together with input from the Equality Task and Finish Group, an updated version would be presented to the Committee. SA highlighted the need to comply with the Equality Act and for consistency across the University. It was suggested that caring responsibilities be included in the categories of exceptional circumstances under which an Individual Schemes of Study and Assessment might be approved. SA clarified that Individual Schemes of Study and Assessment would not be used to enable students to transfer programme but may be required where students have not taken the required diet of units for their new programme. SA agreed to liaise with Governance, who are reviewing regulations on student transfer, regarding this. SA also clarified that Unit Convenors can make adjustments within the assessment type but cannot change the assessment type without an Individual Scheme of Study and Assessment. SA added that departments should support students in completing successfully a set assessment type, e.g. a presentation, as far as possible, e.g. without an audience, recorded, with breaks, while also maintaining compliance with the CMA. The Committee noted that work was ongoing regarding responsibilities for making anticipatory adjustments.

- QA3 New Course Approval Templates (Paper 83):

IP explained a proposal to update the current template for mapping CILOs to units so that it also maps the CILOs to the qualification descriptor in the sector recognised standards. It was noted that for BSc CILOs are 'fully demonstrated' at Level 6 whereas for Integrated Masters CILOs are 'consolidated' at Level 6 and 'fully demonstrated' at Level 7. The Committee noted that Unit Descriptions would need to align with both CILOs and qualification descriptors.

IP also highlighted a template for CPAC to collate comments on proposals in advance of meetings which may require earlier submission of proposals. The Committee agreed that an audit trail of feedback and responses would prove beneficial. It was suggested that a checklist of documentation for each stage of approval / committee be included in QA3 to aid proposers, particularly given the mixed economy between Curriculum Planner and paper-based documentation requirements. IP highlighted that a checklist is included in the CPAC Stage 2 New Course Proposal Cover Template and explained that, once approved, all QA3 templates would be renumbered to aid understanding of Stage 1 vs Stage 2 documentation requirements. IP commented that additional CPAC meetings may be scheduled to help reduce deadline pressures. It was suggested that earlier submission to CPAC may be unrealistic given recently increased documentation requirements and the requirement to seek feedback and respond to feedback from an External Reviewer(s) on proposals post FLTQC and pre CPAC. It was suggested that a CPAC / Registry member sit on FLTQC meetings where new course proposals are being considered (as was the case with CT) to enable earlier intervention regarding issues relating to Assessment Regulations, Academic Framework, exemptions, placement timings. While such earlier intervention would be ideal at Stage 1, this is not always possible as course

proposals do not always have long lead-in times and/or develop in a linear fashion. IP commented that it is expected that an informal dialogue will be maintained between Registry / CLT and course teams at an earlier stage going forward.

- QA20: separating out Progression and Articulation Agreement approval policy & procedures (Paper 84):

GSp explained that Progression and Articulation Agreements are recruitment tools, rather than collaborative provision, so are being moved from QA20 into a separate policy and procedure. Definitions have been developed, in collaboration with the IRO and Student Recruitment and Admissions, to differentiate between Progression and Articulation Agreements. Responsibilities have also been clarified in consultation with Associate Deans (International) and will be discussed next week with the International Education Partnerships Working Group. The Chair reported feedback from the Head of Learning Partnerships Office (LPO) that the scope of the definitions do not include Progression Agreements with UK based/registered educational companies/institutions which are managed through the LPO. GSp explained that the proposed policy relates to arrangements with HEIs internationally so would not cover LPO arrangements. GSp highlighted that under QA20 strategic decisions about entering into an arrangement with an international partner were taken by BoS, then APC. Stage 2 approval would then take place at FLTQC, e.g. of curriculum mapping / student experience arrangements such as induction. Now Stage 2 approval will instead be completed by a specific person / role to expedite approvals, reduce load on committees and enable greater consistency across the University.

4.0 Minutes of the Previous Meeting (3396)

The Committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting held on 4 March 2025 (Paper 85).

5.0 Matters Arising (3397)

M3386 Matters Arising:

The Committee noted that NH is yet to report back on whether Registry will provide explanatory text for students taking different credit weighted pre-CT and CT units concurrently. **Action:** NH.

M3388 EARE reports 2024/25:

The Committee noted that the Chair is yet to report back on possible alternative options to publishing anonymised student assessment performance within a cohort. **Action:** Chair.

6.0 Chair's Business (3398)

- Departments to provide a brief update / share good practice on their promotion activities for NSS, Course Level Survey (CLS) and PTES:

The Chair commented that Chemistry and Computer Science NSS response rates are over 50%, Life Sciences is at 48.8%, Physics at 44.8% and Maths at 40%. The institutional response rate for the CLS (which is only open for 1 month) was very low, at 3.6%, after 1 week, against a target of 40%, so requires greater promotion.

GS reported that for NSS Chemistry held a Final Year forum in the first week of Semester 2 to close the feedback loop on actions from last year, and provide students with doughnuts and the opportunity to ask questions / raise concerns. The NSS was explained, what it involved and why it was important and students were asked to complete it. This resulted in a good response rate in the first couple of weeks. Since then, the DoS has been using the UniHub system, via Kate Evans, to send weekly emails to eligible students; Kate Evans was then able to inform the

Department how many students had opened the email and clicked through. The emails told students about the Faculty prizes and how the Department does not want Computer Science to win it again. All Final Year lecturers have been emailed slides to show at the beginning of their lectures to encourage participation. For the CLS, forums were held with Year 1 and 2 students in advance of its launch, again to close the feedback loop, provide opportunities for questions / concerns and explain the importance of the survey; next year these forums will be held once the CLS has been launched so students can be asked to complete it in the forum. Email reminders were sent afterwards by the DoS and GS will email reminders next week. Slides will also be sent to lecturers on the Years 1 and 2 core units to show in their lectures.

TS reported that Maths had displayed a slide at the entrance of 4 West giving examples of closing the feedback loop. 4-5 of the lecturers of the large Final Year units were asked to display the slide. A similar approach will be adopted for the CLS with Year 1 and 2 lecturers.

SC reported that for Natural Sciences the DoS for Years 3-5 had been sending out weekly emails. Natural Sciences does not have its own lectures in which NSS can be promoted, but Natural Sciences students will be attending lectures in other departments in which NSS will be promoted. For CLS, a catch-up session has been arranged for peer mentors and mentees in week 3 of the CLS which worked well in the pilot in increasing engagement with the survey.

PS reported that for NSS he and the Physics DoS for Years 3-5 had given a talk last week at a timetabled, advertised session, which had a good turnout, on how UGAR gives degree classifications, NSS and Careers. The session was recorded on Panopto. An email, related to the talk, from the HoD, encouraging Final Year students to complete the NSS will be sent by MailMerge or UniHub this week. GS confirmed that UniHub can be set up so that it is sent from a specified person, rather than just as a central email. A more informal email will be sent by the DoS next week and slides may be sent to Final Year lecturers for them display. For the CLS, slides will be sent to Year 1 and 2 lecturers, given that these years comprise a small number of large units that cover all students.

ZL reported that for NSS Computer Science ran a timetabled event with finalists introducing them to Semester 2, and covering topics such as graduation, how Assessment Regulations work, and NSS, including closing the feedback loop ('you said, we did'). The DoS has also been sending weekly emails telling finalists that the Department does not want Chemistry to win the Faculty prize. The DoT may send some Taylor Swift themed emails towards the end of the survey, as he did last year. Some Academic Reps have offered to hold a session encouraging their peers to complete the NSS. For CLS the DoS for Years 1 and 2 attended 1 lecture for each of the cohorts and encouraged them to complete it, he also put up some posters around 1 West and asked Academic Reps to promote the survey. For PTES the DoS ran a session for the on-campus MSc cohort last week and the DoS for the Degree Apprenticeship (DA) has promoted the survey to the DAs on the Slack channel and at a DA campus visit day. The DoS for online MScs has also encouraged online students to complete the PTES.

The Chair welcomed the initiatives taking place around the Faculty and encouraged DoTs to keep the momentum going.

- OfS 2023/24 continuation, completion and progression amber list (Paper 86A):

The Chair highlighted that for 'Pharmacology, Toxicology and Pharmacy', PGT was below the sector average by -4 for continuation, and first degree was below the sector average by -3.2 for progression and by -3 for completion. The Committee agreed that it would be more useful if the data was reported in terms of course; 'Pharmacology, Toxicology and Pharmacy' covers a number of courses in the Department of Life Sciences so it is unclear from the data in which course(s) any issues lie.

Chair's actions:

The Committee noted the following Chair's actions:

Approval of the suspension for 2025/26 of optional units CM32026/52039 Computer Algebra and CM32031/52043 Parallel Computing (Paper 86) (approved 29 January 2025).

Approval of the withdrawal for 2025/26 of optional unit SL32054 Advanced Developmental Genetics and Developmental Neurobiology (Paper 87) (approved 31 January 2025).

Approval of the suspension for 2025/26 of optional units CM32033/52049 Robotics (Paper 88)

(approved 5 February 2025).

Approval of MMath transition year course change for 2025/26 (Paper 89) (approved 24 February 2025).

Approval of the removal of PH32045 as an optional unit from all BSc (Hons) Mathematics and Physics courses for 2025/26 (no paper) (approved 24 February 2025).

Approval of the suspension for 2025/26 of optional unit SL32064 Conservation and Global Change Biology (no paper) (approved 26 February 2025).

7.0 Students' Business (3399)

The Committee noted an update from the SU Education Team (Paper 89.1) and discussed an update from the UG Faculty Reps (Paper 89.2). The Secretary reported that the FARs had met with the Director of Student Leadership and Support and SU Education Manager and agreed that the SU would provide an annual update to the Boards of Studies (BoS). Meanwhile, the SU will work to address the requirement for an SU member to attend BoS meetings, which has not been fulfilled over the past year due to the high volume of meetings across the University requiring SU attendance.

The Chair reported that he had already relayed to the Examinations Office concerns with using CB1.10-11 as examination venues. The Examinations Office had agreed to minimise their use as much as possible. Where use of these venues was necessary, seating arrangements would be improved by spacing candidates out (e.g. leaving empty rows between them) to facilitate library cards checks and paper collection, thereby reducing distractions.

IM reported that there had been an instance, outside the Faculty, of an invigilator arriving late to an examination (possibly involving DAP candidates with extra time) and then not giving the candidates the full time for the examination. The student body would like improved training for invigilators.

With regard to students perceiving examinations to be too difficult, PS commented that if this had resulted in marks not being within the typical range, the Board of Examiners for Units could scale the marks. BEUs also review scatterplots in which marks for a unit are plotted against marks for all other units students have taken. PS suggested sharing historic BEU paperwork with students to explain the process BEUs go through of deciding whether an examination was too difficult. The Chair suggested explaining moderation procedures and how a BEU works, in the meetings departments hold with students at the start of semesters. GS reported that Chemistry had shared a flowchart with Year 3 and 4 students explaining how examination papers are set, who scrutinises them, how many checks there are in place, and then the process at Examination Boards. GS reported that she had compiled a set of Exam FAQ on moderation and scaling, etc, which she agreed to share with the other DoTs once agreed by the SSLC.

IM suggested that departments create anonymous feedback forms for the reporting of examination issues. JF reported that this exists in Maths for some units, with feedback sent direct to Unit Convenors. The Committee agreed that Academic Reps should compile such feedback for reporting at SSLC meetings, ensuring it is constructive and considers appropriately sample size.

The Committee requested that Department Student Voice Updates be sent to DoTs & Staff SSLC Chairs before they are sent direct to students so that any factual / technical inaccuracies can be corrected. IM agreed this was appropriate so long as the updates remain a student-led initiative.

8.0 Unit and Programme Changes for 2025/26 (3400)

The Committee approved the following unit and programme changes for 2025/26 from the Department of Computer Science: Changes to MSc Artificial Intelligence (MSc AI) and MSc Computer Science (MSc CS) (online):

- Withdrawal of unit CM500338 Research Project Preparation (from MSc AI) and replacement with unit CM500299 Research Project Preparation (from MSc CS) (Paper 90A).
- Withdrawal of unit CM500339 Dissertation (from MSc AI) and replacement with unit CM500300 Dissertation (from MSc CS) (Paper 90B).
- Withdrawal of core unit CM500294 Artificial Intelligence (from MSc CS) and replacement with core unit CM500326 Foundations of Artificial Intelligence (from MSc AI) (Paper 90C).
- Withdrawal of unit CM500332 Machine Learning (from MSc AI) (being merged with CM500298 Intelligent Control & Cognitive Systems to create new unit Deep Learning) (Paper 90D).
- Withdrawal of core unit CM500298 Intelligent Control & Cognitive Systems (from MSc CS) (being merged with CM500332 Machine Learning to create new unit Deep Learning) (Paper 90E).
- New optional unit Deep Learning (Paper 90F).
- MSc Artificial Intelligence course change (Paper 90G): Addition of optional unit CM500295 Entrepreneurship (from MSc CS). CM500331 Further Artificial Intelligence has been changed from a core to an optional unit. CM500335 Foundations & Frontiers of Machine Learning has been renamed Advanced Deep Learning.
- MSc Computer Science course change (Paper 90H): Addition of optional units CM500333 Artificial Intelligence as a Social and Political Practice & CM500334 Robotics (both from MSc AI). Change of CM500295 Entrepreneurship, CM500296 Theory of Human Computer Interaction and CM500323 Cybersecurity from core to optional units.

ZL explained that the changes were part of a 3-year plan for the online MSc courses aimed at streamlining the curriculum, e.g. by merging units and making optional units available to one course available to both. The Committee noted that the changes did not restrict student choice. The Chair enquired as to the extent to which the changes reduced differentiation between the two courses. ZL explained that students come onto the courses from different backgrounds, e.g. MSc CS is more of a conversion course. The first 7 units in each course are different, with the exception of 1 unit (CM500326 Foundations of Artificial Intelligence). MSc AI then has 4 bespoke optional units and MSc CS has 2. ZL explained that the general track and technical track on the MSc AI have been merged since an uneven distribution of students between the two had made it unviable to offer both. The Chair asked whether the changes made the MSc CS online course more different from the on-campus MSc CS course and, if so, whether that was of any consequence. ZL explained that the changes in fact increased alignment between the online MSc CS course and the CT version of the on-campus MSc CS course that would be rolled out next year, e.g. the new Deep Learning unit would overlap and share material with an in-person version of the unit on the CT on-campus MSc CS course.

9.0 Student access to examination scripts (3401)

The Committee discussed a report (Paper 92A) on approaches adopted by 140 members of UUK to student access to marked examination scripts, and noted a generic exam feedback template used by the School of Management (Paper 92B).

JF suggested that use of Crowdmark could facilitate the sharing of marked examination scripts with students. The Chair flagged that this would come with an associated cost of converting scripts into an electronic format. TS commented that giving students access to marked examination scripts would mean that markers would need to provide comments on scripts that are helpful and appropriate to students. SC reported that marking Inspira examination scripts for a student audience took longer but saved time in the long run because students could then understand their allocation of marks. The Committee noted that some departments held sessions in which students could view their marked examination scripts, but uptake had been generally low. GS commented that approx. half of students seeking access do so because they wish to have their papers 're-marked' which may be possible at A Level but not at university. PS commented that it is easier to give students access to marked examination scripts at GCSE and A Level because marking is much more prescriptive. The Committee noted that students cannot be allowed to take marked examination scripts away for any Year groups, without copies having been made, given the University's retention policy. The Committee agreed that while releasing

model answers after examinations is a mechanism by which students can gain an understanding of the marks they received, this is not always feasible for questions for which a range of solutions may be possible.

10.0 Degree Apprenticeship Quarterly Monitoring Report (3402)

The Committee noted the MSc Computer Science Degree Apprenticeship Quarterly Monitoring Report (November 2024 - January 2025) (Paper 93).

11.0 Feedback from Committees (3403)

Academic Programmes Committee (APC):

The Committee noted the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2024 (Paper 94), in particular approval of suspension of MSc Mathematics with Data Science for Industry (& placement version) and MSc Statistics and Data Science (Health) (& placement version) from 2025/26 (approved following the meeting under Chair's action on 16 December 2024).

Courses and Partnerships Approval Committee (CPAC):

The Committee noted the minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2025 (Paper 95), in particular approval of:

- Institute of Physics (IoP) reaccreditation submission documentation (by correspondence in October 2024).
- MPharm at Plymouth + Preparatory Year GPhC Step 2 monitoring submission.

Student Experience Advisory Board (SEAB):

The Committee noted the minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2025 (Paper 96).

Education Advisory Board (EAB):

The Committee noted the minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2025 (Paper 97).

12.0 Department Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee (DLTQC) Minutes (3404)

The Committee noted the minutes of the meetings held on:

Department of Life Sciences: 18 December 2024 (Paper 98).

Department of Physics: 6 February 2025 (Paper 100).

13.0 Any Other Business (3405)

There was none.