

# FLTQC 4 June 2025

Wednesday, 4th June 2025 10:15am

Teams | Faculty of Science Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee

## Attendees

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### Attended

Zoe Burke

Andy Burrows (Chair)

Susan Crennell (SC)

James Foadi (JF)

Marguerite Hallett (Secretary)

Nikki Hodgson (NH) (for minute 3432)

Zack Lyons (ZL)

Ioana Mocanu (IM)

Charareh Pourzand

Philip Rogers

Tony Shardlow (TS)

Gan Shermer (GS)

Paul Snow (PS)

### Did Not Attend

Robbie Altham

Florin Bisset

Momna Hejmadi

Plato Ng

### Observers

Liz Haynes

Sarah Paine

## 1.0 Welcome and Quorum (3427)

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

## 2.0 Declaration of Interest (3428)

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There were no declarations of any potential conflicts of interest.

## 3.0 Minutes of the Previous Meeting (3429)

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The Committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 April 2025 (Paper 124).

## 4.0 Matters Arising (3430)

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The Committee noted the following matters arising from the previous minutes:

### **M3414 Matters Arising:**

Updated explanatory text for students taking different credit weighted units (Paper 125A) in which the following statement has been removed "More, or less, credit would create an imbalance and unfairness in the calculation of degree outcomes".

A Faculty proposal for publishing anonymised cohort assessment performance data would be considered under agenda item 8.

## 5.0 Chair's Business (3431)

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The Chair brought the following matters to the Committee's attention:

### Chair's actions:

- Approval of addition of the following optional units to BSc & MBIol (Hons) Biology with Professional Placement for 2025/26 only: SL32083 Drug Targets in the Immune System, SL32086 Molecular Biology of Cancer, SL32088 Trends in Molecular Signalling & SL32056 Advanced Molecular and Medical Neuroscience (approved 15 May 2025) (no paper).
- Approval of addition of the following new units to the Final Year of MSci (Hons) Natural Sciences for 2025/26 only: SL4 equivalents of SL32075 Micro and Macroevolution, SL32055 Advanced Developmental Genetics and Stem Cells, SL32076 Science Communication & SL50200 Beer and Biofuels and a Semester 2 equivalent of SL40119 Pharmacology Minor Dissertation (approved 16 May 2025) (Paper 125).
- Approval of suspension of optional unit MA40255 Viscous Fluid Dynamics for 2025/26 (approved 21 May 2025) (no paper).
- Withdrawal of optional unit SL50201 Bioprocess and Water Engineering from 2025/26 (approved 27 May 2025) (no paper).

## 6.0 Top 3 quality priorities and QA Code of Practice consultation (3432)

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The Chair asked the Committee to send him any suggestions for what EQSC's top 3 quality priorities should be for 2025/26.

The Committee considered changes to the following QA Codes of Practice:

- QA53 Code of Practice Examination and Assessment Offences (Paper 126):  
JF, as a QA53 working group member, presented this item. JF explained that EQSC had established a QA53 working group last summer, the Chair of which was Dr Lucy Noble (Dept for Health) to improve the clarity and structure of QA53, the ability to apply it consistently, and to update it in relation to generative AI, practice among other universities, and ensure compliance with the OfS, OIA and legal requirements.

JF explained that QA53 had been split into a staff facing document (a substantially revised QA53), a new Regulation for Students on Academic Misconduct, and an updated Regulation 15 for Students so that it covers academic integrity.

JF highlighted the following issues that are yet to be resolved:

- i) The increasing involvement of lawyers in academic misconduct investigations.
- ii) Recording academic misconduct in SAMIS.
- iii) The number of, and conflict between, the responsibilities of DoSs. There is a conflict between their supporting role and the need to investigate academic misconduct. The Committee noted that the School of Management had recently appointed Directors of Integrity and Ethics to carry out academic misconduct responsibilities and that these roles would be piloted in 2025/26. JF reported that 'minor / technical' misconduct had been renamed 'poor academic practice' and could be addressed directly by Unit Convenors; no penalties are applied but students are required to retake the AITT. Vivas Voce, to confirm authorship of work, had been renamed 'presentations of learning'.

GS suggested that 'formative' should read 'summative' in paragraph 3.18 and expressed concern that Unit Convenors might forget to inform Programme Administrators of cases of poor academic practice, resulting in DoSs not being able to take an overview of students. PS flagged the need for a clear list of Unit Convenor responsibilities. SC added that Unit Convenors may require academic misconduct training. The Chair questioned how Unit Convenors would be enabled to 'ensure students retake a [AITT] test' and whether this was an appropriate responsibility for them.

PS suggested that the AITT be re-run centrally more regularly, e.g. every year. SC suggested that a Faculty level AITT be devised. With regard to a departmental member of staff being given responsibility for investigating all cases of academic misconduct, PS flagged the conflict of interest this could cause with their supporting role, e.g. regarding Personal Tutees. Instead, PS suggested that a Faculty level academic officer take on the role, which would also enable greater consistency between departments. This was supported by TS, e.g. to ensure impartiality.

TS enquired as to whether the penalties would be reviewed as they appear quite light for particular offences. JF stated that these would be reviewed further in July.

The Chair questioned the appropriateness of not investigating anonymous reports of academic misconduct.

JF agreed to take the feedback from the Committee, including the notes in Decision Time from the Secretary and written comments from SC, back to the working group for discussion at its next meeting in July.

- EARE/EAP process improvements (Paper 127):

NH explained that the prescriptive boxes had been removed from the EARE template. Improvements had also been made to the guidance (to be released over the summer) on how to complete EARE/EAP and to the communications about their purpose. The EAP template had been changed to enable UG and PGT actions to be distinguished. NH invited feedback on the proposed changes. The Chair commented that the schedule of when data will become available throughout the year (Table 3) to inform / update EAPs was helpful. NH sought feedback on the suggested process improvement that EAPs form a standing agenda item at DLTQCs for review. PS commented that, rather than DLTQCs being mandated to review particular business by a specified date, a more general framework for DLTQC business throughout the year would be helpful.

- Degree Scheme Review (DSR) (Paper 128):

NH explained that, in response to an online consultation in January, the principles of DSR remained largely unchanged, but the process would be streamlined to make it less onerous for course teams, in particular to avoid duplication with accrediting body requirements, e.g. taking (re)accreditation submissions in place of a DSR Course Evaluation Document. NH explained that DSR documentation requirements would be determined for courses on the basis of what was needed that had not already required by the PSRB. A pilot would take place in 2025/26 involving the Depts for Health and Chemical Engineering (since their vanguard courses are due for review), the latter of which has accrediting body requirements. NH sought feedback on the DSR principles. The Chair enquired as to whether department level review (e.g. to include teaching and research, departmental culture), as opposed to course level review, had been considered. NH explained that feedback had indicated a desire for course level review, which is also required for compliance purposes. Departments could choose to review all their

programmes in one DSR, thereby making it a department level review. The Secretary suggested that a revalidation component be incorporated in DSRs to avoid course teams having to undertake a separate approval exercise for any unit/course changes arising from the DSR process. NH agreed to take this forward for consideration and commented that if DSRs did not include a revalidation element they would need to take place in the Autumn to enable timely approval of any arising unit/course changes. PS enquired as to what course teams could be exempt from during a DSR year in order to provide them with the extra time needed to complete the DSR. PS highlighted the need to ensure departments are given sufficient notice of DSRs so they can allocate workloads appropriately. NH agreed to consult DoTs on DSR cognate programme groupings to enable the drafting of a 5 year cyclical DSR schedule (although within 7-8 years from CT to avoid bumper years) that aligns with PSRB (re)accreditations as appropriate (e.g. DSR before, after or concurrent with (re)accreditation) and/or DSRs of other joint provision (e.g. SoM).

Members were asked to complete the online consultation form.

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## **7.0 Compliance with the Equality Act and Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) advice on supporting students with disabilities (3433)**

The Committee received a presentation from the Chair on the work of the Inclusive Education Steering Group (Paper 129) and noted the guidance: [Supporting our students: updated advice from the Equality & Human Rights Commission](#). The Committee noted that a draft inclusive approach for the University would be considered for approval by Senate later today. The Chair explained that one of the aims for the University is to move towards a more inclusive education that meets the needs of most DAPs, so that all students are provided with a way to catch-up with their studies if they miss a session. This could be through lecture recordings and/or notes in advance but other means would be allowable as there was not a plan to make lecture recording compulsory. Practical guidance will be provided over the summer on groupwork and oral presentations in terms of anticipatory adjustments for disabled students. Next academic year processes for inclusive education and assessment will be reviewed in consultation with staff.

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## **8.0 Faculty proposal for publishing anonymised cohort assessment performance data (3434)**

The Committee considered a Faculty proposal for publishing anonymised cohort assessment performance data (Paper 130). TS explained the 2 approaches proposed:

- i) to publish some simple unit statistics together with feedback from Unit Convenors.
- ii) to publish, on a limited timeframe, a spreadsheet of simple statistics across all units for the past year, e.g. mean and standard deviation.

The Committee agreed to adopt option ii) as the consistent Faculty approach, to be reviewed going forward. Option ii) avoided reliance being placed on Unit Convenors and option i) could affect student wellbeing if unit statistics had to be viewed in order to access feedback. The Committee agreed that the spreadsheet should be collated and published at the start of the academic year (showing statistics from the year before) and after the BEUs (noting that the marks are provisional until ratified by BoS), separate from unit level feedback, e.g. on a central Moodle department page, accessible to Natural Sciences students. The Committee acknowledged that this approach would enable students to view means for optional units they had not taken. PS suggested reviewing long-term unit averages to identify reasons why these might be lower / higher than comparable units. The Chair agreed that this should be reviewed by DLTQCs.

## 9.0 Use of Crowdmark for in-person exams (3435)

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The Committee considered a document on the use of Crowdmark for marking in-person examination scripts (Paper 131). JF explained that Crowdmark allows marking to be done electronically. For examinations marked by Crowdmark, bespoke answer booklets need to be prepared by the Unit Convenor. A drawback to this is that some students do not write in the allocated spaces and the space / number of pages for each answer has to be pre-set. Each answer sheet is QR coded to ensure any sheets missed during scanning are easily traceable. Last year, 2 Maths in-person exams were marked using Crowdmark as a pilot. The examination scripts were scanned by the Print Unit; this did not take long as the answer booklets are stapled at one corner which is then cut off for scanning. The Unit Convenor then uploaded a single PDF of the scripts to the online Crowdmark system for marking. This enabled marking to be done remotely and using a comment library, that can be amended. As the University has not committed to Crowdmark, the Faculty has funded it for 3 years (currently nearing the end of Year 1). The Committee agreed that a trial for Semester 1 next year could be explored, for review by FLTQC before implementation. Trialling Crowdmark during the upcoming supplementary period was deemed inappropriate given the need to provide like-for-like reassessment and considering the additional stress that re-sit students already face, without introducing new answer booklets. DoTs agreed to send JF a list of units that could form part of the trial, e.g. bigger units involving multiple markers. The Committee noted that agreement from the Print Unit to support scanning on a larger scale would be necessary in advance.

## 10.0 Feedback from Committees (3436)

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### Academic Programmes Committee (APC):

The Committee noted the minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2025 (Paper 134), in particular approval of:

- Suspension of MSc Mathematics with Data Science for Industry and MSc Statistics and Data Science (Health), and their placement variants, for 2025/26 (Chair's action 16 December 2024).
- New course MSc Cybersecurity for 2026/27 entry, in principle. ZL reported that the Department is no longer planning to develop this new course for 2026/27 entry.

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

The Committee noted the minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2025 (Paper 135), in particular approval of:

- MPharm at Plymouth + Preparatory Year GPhC Step 2 monitoring submission.
- An Academic Framework exemption to allow 2.5 credit units on Natural Sciences courses.

### Education, Quality and Standards Committee (EQSC):

The Committee noted the minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2025 (Paper 136).

### Student Experience Advisory Board (SEAB):

The Committee noted the minutes of the meeting held on 7 May 2025 (Paper 137).

### Education Advisory Board (EAB):

The Committee noted the minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2025 (Paper 138A).

## 11.0 Good Practice identified through the 2024-25 EARE exercise (3437)

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The Committee noted good practice identified by EQSC through the 2024/25 EARE exercise (Paper 138).

## 12.0 Papers from EAB: PGT Review and Course Level Survey 2025 (3438)

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The Committee noted a PGT Strategic Review Phase 3 Project Update (Paper 139A) and Course Level Survey 2025 Highlights (Paper 139B). The Chair agreed to request disaggregated data for the Natural Sciences courses, excluding Chemistry.

## 13.0 Department Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee (DLTQC) Minutes (3439)

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The Committee noted the minutes of the meetings held on:

**Department of Life Sciences:** 9 April 2025 (Paper 140).

**Department of Chemistry:** 7 May 2025 (Paper 141).

**Department of Mathematical Sciences:** 2 April 2025 (Paper 143).

## 14.0 Any Other Business (3440)

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- IM enquired as to action taken by the Department of Physics in response to the error in examination length for unit PH12002. PS explained that communications had been sent to the students affected. PS expects that it will be possible to assess adequately students' ability based on the 3 other unit assessments (weighted at 60%) & by scaling the affected examination marks (40% weighted), rather than applying structural IMC or requiring a repeat first attempt for the whole cohort. However, such decisions are yet to be determined by the Boards of Examiners and BoS. Any IMC requests submitted in relation to the error would need to demonstrate that a student was individually disproportionately affected, noting that IMC never result in mark changes. The Chair added that no student would be disadvantaged by the error.
- The Chair thanked all DoTs for their contributions to the Committee, particularly those for whom this was their final FLTQC meeting.