FLTQC 3 June 2026

Wednesday, 3rd June 2026 10:15am

Teams | Faculty of Science Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee

Attendees

Attended

John Benardis (JB)
Yarden Brody (YB)
Andy Burrows (Chair)
Susan Crennell (SC)
Ian Eggleston (IE)
Paula Gabriel (Programmes Manager) (Observer)
Marguerite Hallett (Secretary)
Liz Haynes (CLT) (Observer)
Nikki Hodgson (NH)
Barrie Marsh (BM)
Sarah Paine (Education Manager) (Observer)
Charareh Pourzand
Philip Rogers (PR)
Tony Shardlow (TS)
Gan Shermer (GS)
Arya Wood (AW)

Did Not Attend

Florin Bisset
Zoe Burke
Sumukh Chaluvaraju
James Foadi
Momna Hejmadi
Penn Mackintosh (PM)

1.0 Welcome and quorum (3528)

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

2.0 Declaration of interest (3529)

There were no declarations of any potential conflicts of interest.

3.0 Minutes of the previous meeting (3530)

The Committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting held on 29 April 2026 (Paper 113).

4.0 Matters arising (3531)

There were no matters arising from the previous minutes.
AW noted that the previous minutes recorded that students would be informed of the new University-approved calculators for use in Semester 2 examinations via the weekly student email. However, this communication was not received by all students due to a critical failure affecting the Student 'News in Ten' email distribution, which resulted in undergraduate Master's students not receiving these emails throughout the academic year. Upon becoming aware of the issue, AW and PM communicated the information to students through alternative channels, ensuring that students were informed within a few days of the original email being issued. The issue has since been resolved.

5.0 Chair's business (3532)

- QA16 revision for 2026/27 (Paper 114): At its meeting on 15 April, Senate approved that a 15 working day period (with working days defined as per the Academic Year Chart) for feedback on summative coursework is a firm requirement rather than guidance.

The Committee noted that for final year project/dissertation summative assessment tasks, markers must provide feedback to students no later than 25 days (rather than 15 days) after the submission deadline. Following a query, it had been confirmed with the incoming interim PVC that feedback does not need to be provided after students have completely finished assessments. So, if students have completed all their assessments, feedback on final year projects carried out in Semester 2 or as part of an All Year unit is not necessary, though feedback on Semester 1 projects is, as it would likely help students improve their performance in future assessments. The current PVC earlier stated it would be reasonable to delay giving feedback if it were due whilst students were undertaking examinations, so long as this is well communicated to students, though this may need confirming with their successor.
QA16 requires a number of departmental policies to be approved by FLTQC. Specifically, departmental feedback policies, moderation policies (if they differ from those outlined in QA16) and departmental generic grade descriptors. The departmental grade descriptors are planned to be superseded by the Faculty ones, but these have not yet been finalised.
Action: JF to submit final draft Faculty grade descriptors for approval by the Committee at its October meeting.
Action: Members to submit departmental feedback policies, and moderation policies (where these differ from QA16) for confirmation by the Committee at its October meeting.
QA44 requires departments ensure Course Handbooks are up-to-date and available to students.
Action: Members to submit finalised Course Handbooks to the Education Manager for uploading to the education section of the new Faculty SharePoint site.

Chair's actions:

- Society for Natural Sciences reaccreditation submission (Paper 115A) (approved 29 May 2026).
- Replacement of optional unit MA52092 Stochastic Analysis (S1, 10 credits) (to be suspended) with MA52132 Numerical Linear Algebra (S1, 10 credits) (a SAMBa unit) in Year 4 of the MMath (Hons) Mathematics course for 2026/27 only (Paper 115B) (approved 2 June 2026).
- Changed Semester 2 assessments for All Year unit PH32041 for 2025/26 (no paper) (approved 3 June 2026).

6.0 Education Action Plans (EAPs): Faculty level concerns (standing agenda item) (3533)

NH advised that, over the coming months, EAPs will be reviewed to make them more user-friendly and streamlined. As part of this process, NH will be contacting DoTs in the coming weeks to gather feedback and suggestions.
The Chair reported that a Faculty overview of the Course Level Survey results would be circulated to DoTs shortly. The results indicate that the Faculty performs above the University average in overall satisfaction, intellectual stimulation, and the development of skills and knowledge likely to be useful in the future. However, the Faculty scores below the University average in relation to the clarity of marking criteria and the manageability of student workload. There is also notable variation between departments, which will be highlighted in the report.
PR noted that students on the MPharm programme at Plymouth and Bath complete the same course, yet approximately 80% of Plymouth students reported that their workload was manageable compared to around 50% of Bath students. PR suggested that caution should be exercised when interpreting such differences, as relatively low response rates may skew the results. The Chair agreed, noting that response rates are generally low and become increasingly problematic when data is broken down by individual course or year group. TS added that, even in surveys with higher response rates, there can be considerable variation in responses between cohorts. The Chair concluded that, while the data should be considered carefully, it should not necessarily be used as the sole driver for change.
PR and TS highlighted the difficulty of exporting department-level data from the Power BI report into a format suitable for consideration at meetings such as SSLC, DLTQC, and Department Executive. The Education Manager offered to produce a summary table showing headline departmental results for the main survey questions, alongside Faculty and University averages, as an appendix to the Faculty overview report. SC reported that, for this year's survey, data for Natural Sciences has been separated from that of the other departments.

7.0 Monitoring of timeliness of feedback (standing agenda item) (3534)

The Committee noted that, from 2026/27, Directors of Teaching are required to make an annual report to FLTQC on feedback deadlines which have not been met, including the revised feedback deadline, the reason the deadline was not met, and actions which will be taken to ensure feedback deadlines are met in future. FLTQCs will review these reports and agree/recommend appropriate mitigating actions.
TS reported that the timeliness of feedback within the Department of Mathematical Sciences has generally been positive, with only a small number of exceptions where staff have requested extensions. It is not always clear why extensions are required; however, staff are followed up where necessary. TS noted that providing detailed feedback can be a significant undertaking and may contribute to delays is some cases.
JB reported that the majority of feedback within the Department of Computer Science had been

provided on time. A small number of cases involved feedback being released a few days after the deadline, and there were also a limited number of approved extension requests from colleagues.
JB noted that, compared with previous years, communications with both the DoS and students had improved significantly. Where delays occurred, students were kept informed of the reasons and the expected release date for feedback. In addition, cohort-wide feedback was made available on the scheduled release date where individual marks were not yet available, ensuring that students received some form of feedback at the expected time.
Looking ahead to next year, the Department plans to revise its monitoring process. Currently, checking compliance requires the DoS to review each assessment individually on Moodle, which is a time-consuming process. To streamline this, a centralised document has been introduced in which colleagues record proposed feedback deadlines for approval by the DoS. Once approved, feedback and marks will be expected to comply with these deadlines, and colleagues will be responsible for updating the document to confirm that feedback has been released on time.
BM noted that the majority of feedback within the Department of Chemistry had been provided on time, with delays generally limited to a small number of repeat cases where colleagues required reminders about agreed deadlines. Where feedback was delayed, students were informed in advance of the revised timescales for receiving feedback. BM added that some delays may reflect the challenges associated with marking large cohorts. In particular, certain Year 2 assessments involve substantial marking loads, with individual staff members responsible for marking in excess of 100 submissions. The Department is therefore considering whether changes to marking processes may be required to help ensure feedback deadlines can continue to be met.
GS added that the Department's feedback monitoring process had worked well during the year. A centralised monitoring spreadsheet enabled the Department to review compliance with feedback deadlines and identify any instances where deadlines had not been met. Approximately 72% of feedback had been released on time. In most cases where deadlines were not met, Unit Convenors had recorded that alternative arrangements had been agreed with students in advance, such as delaying the release of feedback until after the examination period. Consequently, only a small number of cases represented genuine missed deadlines.
PR noted that monitoring of feedback timeliness within Pharmacy had continued since its introduction in Semester 2 of the previous academic year. This had enabled the Department to identify areas of concern and monitor progress. PR reported that overall performance had improved compared with the previous year, with a higher proportion of feedback being returned on time and better oversight of instances where deadlines had not been met. However, further improvement was still required. Ongoing challenges included reliance on part-time clinical staff, whose limited availability could create bottlenecks in the marking process. In addition, increasing student numbers had placed further pressure on existing resources, with staffing levels remaining unchanged from the previous year.
AW highlighted that the most important aspect of managing feedback delays is keeping students informed. Where delays are anticipated, students generally respond positively provided they are given advance notice and clear explanations prior to the deadline, rather than being informed retrospectively. Overall, students appeared to be satisfied with feedback timeliness, with only a small number of isolated issues identified, as previously noted.
YB reported that no instances of late feedback had been identified within the Department of Physics, except where delays had been agreed in advance and communicated to students, for example to avoid releasing feedback during the examination period.
YB highlighted one issue relating to a unit with multiple markers, where feedback was released by individual markers as they completed their marking. Although all feedback was released within the agreed deadline and only a few days apart, students expressed dissatisfaction that some had received their feedback before others. YB noted that, in future, clearer guidance would be provided to Unit Convenors to ensure that feedback is released simultaneously to all students, even where multiple markers are involved. YB added that most student concerns relating to feedback appeared to focus on the usefulness and quality of feedback, rather than its timeliness, which is more difficult to measure.

8.0 New student exchange proposal between the Faculty of Science and Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) (3535)

The Committee approved a new student exchange proposal between the Faculty of Science and CUHK from 2027/28 for 5 years (Paper 116).
SC requested that section 8.2 be amended to clarify that incoming students will have access to Environment units only for Natural Sciences.
Secretary's note: This was actioned immediately after the meeting.
The Chair reported that he would liaise with the Maths HoD regarding the MMath SYA 34% contribution, given previous EQSC discussions relating to this.

9.0 Higher OSA requirements for coexistent undergraduate Masters courses (3536)

The Committee noted a proposal from the Department of Mathematical Sciences to reduce the Year 2 Overall Stage Average (OSA) progression requirement for its Integrated Master's courses from 60% to 55%, bringing it in line with the Departments of Chemistry and Computer Science.
TS explained that final-year MMath cohort sizes have fallen significantly, from approximately 60 students five years ago to around 30 students currently. This has resulted in some optional units attracting very small numbers, and one unit had to be suspended this year after only two students registered. Reducing the Year 2 OSA threshold was therefore intended to support progression and help maintain viable cohort sizes.
The Chair asked whether Biosciences, Physics and MSci Natural Sciences might also wish to consider reducing their Year 2 OSA progression requirement from 60% to 55%. It was noted that the proposed change for Mathematical Sciences would require Senate approval, as it would involve an amendment to UGAR Appendix 2 rather than an exemption that could be approved by EQSC. Should other departments wish to make a similar change, it would be preferable to submit a single Senate paper covering all proposals.
YB reported that the issue had already been considered by the Physics DLTQC, which had agreed to retain the current 60% threshold. SC advised that Biosciences had not experienced the same progression issues as Maths, with Integrated Master's cohort sizes remaining healthy.
JB explained that Computer Science had retained its 55% Year 2 OSA progression threshold during Curriculum Transformation, not because of cohort size considerations, but because of the breadth of the discipline. The lower threshold was intended to enable a wider range of students to access specialist pathways in later years of the courses.
The Committee also noted that, following the introduction of a 50% pass mark for Level 7 units, the progression thresholds for Integrated Master's courses would be: Year 1 - 50%; Year 2 - 55 or 60%; Year 3 - 40%; and Year 4 - 50%. Members observed that this appeared somewhat inconsistent and suggested that the Year 3 OSA progression threshold might warrant review, e.g. increasing it to 50%. However, it was noted that the revised Level 7 pass mark was not intended to represent a substantive change in academic standards.
The Chair requested that DoTs discuss both Year 2 and Year 3 Integrated Master's progression thresholds with their respective DLTQCs. The Secretary noted that the University would likely favour greater consistency in OSA progression thresholds across Integrated Master's programmes. Common thresholds would simplify the regulatory framework, make progression requirements easier for students to understand, and align more closely with the credit-based principles underpinning the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE).
Action: Following consultation with their DLTQCs, DoTs to confirm their department's preferred position to the Chair to inform preparation of the Senate paper.

10.0 Unit and programme changes for 2027/28 (3537)

The Committee approved proposed changes to Year 1 of Department of Mathematical Sciences undergraduate courses for 2027/28, i.e. BSc (Hons) Mathematics, MMath (Hons) Mathematics, BSc (Hons) Mathematics and Statistics, BSc (Hons) Mathematics, Statistics and Data Science (MSDS), BSc (Hons) Computer Science and Mathematics, MComp (Hons) Computer Science and Mathematics, BSc (Hons) Mathematics and Physics & MSci (Hons) Mathematics and Physics:

- Cover paper (Paper 117A).
- New Unit Descriptions (Paper 117B).
- Course changes (Paper 117C).
- Updated CILO mapping (for Department of Mathematical Sciences courses) (Paper 117D).
- Example assessment mapping (Paper 117E).

The Committee noted that a related BSc (Hons) Economics and Mathematics course change would be considered by H&SS FLTQC.

TS explained that the Department had convened a working group for 4 months earlier in the year in response to concerns arising from the Curriculum Transformed first year. Key issues identified included the use of umbrella units, students being able to progress on the basis of average performance across units, and lower progression rates from Year 2 than from Year 1, resulting in more students failing in Year 2 than in Year 1. It was also noted that student workload in Year 1 had become disproportionately high because it had not been transformed to the same extent as Years 2-4.

A range of options for reforming Year 1 was considered by the working group. The Department ultimately agreed to adopt the proposal presented to the Committee, which restructures the curriculum from a model of longer, narrower units to one comprising shorter, broader units. Subject areas are now separated into distinct units of either 5 or 10 credits, replacing the previous arrangement of overlapping 15-credit units. The revised structure also reduces both contact hours and the number of examinations. In addition, adjustments have been made to better support students on the MSDS course who have not studied Further Mathematics.

TS noted that 3 of the proposed new units would be assessed on a Pass/Fail basis: Connections - Problem Solving, Foundations - Reasoning and Proof, and Foundations - Reasoning and Computation. TS expressed concern that Curriculum Planner does not contain a dedicated field to identify Pass/Fail units, meaning that this information could only be recorded within the proposal description and might therefore be overlooked during deployment.

Action: Secretary to highlight the Pass/Fail units to the deployment team upon approval. *Secretary's note: This was actioned immediately after the meeting*.

TS noted that there could be some knock-on effects for Year 2 of joint degree courses as a result of the reduction in classical mechanics content, although these were expected to be manageable.

TS confirmed that there were no changes to the CILOs. It was noted that the existing CT Year 1 units would be withdrawn once all students required to retake them had progressed.

The Chair noted that the assessment mapping (Paper 117E) indicated that the Calculus unit was assessed by 90% examination; however, the assessment weighting should be amended to 100% examination. AY sought clarification on the number of tutorial hours associated with the Connections - Problem Solving unit. TS confirmed that students would receive 2 hours of tutorials per week.

11.0 Stage 2 Full Approval of the addition of a placement year variant to MSc Drug Discovery for 2027/28 (3538)

IE presented this item. The Committee considered for Stage 2 Full Approval, and recommendation to CPAC, the addition of a placement year variant to MSc Drug Discovery for

2027/28:

- Cover note (Paper 118A).
- Amended Course Specification (Paper 118B).
- New Placement Unit Description (Paper 118C).
- Unit Summaries (Paper 118D).
- Updated CILO mapping (Paper 118E).

IE explained that full approval is being sought for the introduction of a placement-year variant to the existing MSc Drug Discovery course from 2027/28. The course has been running since 2018/19 and is delivered jointly by the Departments of Chemistry and Life Sciences, typically recruiting up to 20 students annually. A key strength of the course is its strong collaboration with industry, which the departments wish to build upon. The addition of a placement year is expected to enhance students' employability significantly, while also increasing the programme's appeal to prospective students, particularly in international markets. The proposal would align the course with other PGT offerings within the Faculty, notably the Biosciences Master's courses, and reflect wider sector trends.

During the year, the departments undertook a broader review of the course in collaboration with the Faculty Marketing and Business Development team, from which the proposed placement-year variant emerged. Extensive consultation has taken place with industry representatives, who expressed strong support for the proposal and highlighted the value of industrial placement experience in improving graduate employability. Positive feedback was also received from current and prospective students, including international applicants. In addition, the departments consulted closely with the Placements team, who confirmed both the feasibility and desirability of introducing the placement variant.

Drawing on feedback from industry partners, the departments also intend to refresh aspects of the curriculum over the coming years. These changes will not alter the course learning outcomes but will increase the visibility of industry collaboration and ensure continued relevance to the sector. Planned developments include greater emphasis on emerging Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence techniques in early-stage drug discovery, as well as the introduction of additional optional units from the School of Management. These developments will also be reflected in course marketing materials.

The Committee noted that Unit Summaries (Paper 118D) were not required for CPAC consideration, as no changes had been made to existing units; the new Placement Unit Description (Paper 118C) would suffice. The Committee further noted that a supportive statement from the External Examiner would be helpful for CPAC consideration, if available. It was also agreed that a list of placement providers would not be required, on the basis that the viability of placement opportunities had been established during Stage 1 approval.

The Chair queried whether like-for-like reassessment would be appropriate for the placement unit in cases where a student failed to complete the placement. It was suggested that 'where placement has been completed' be inserted after 'like-for-like reassessment' and that a statement be added explaining that any student who fails to complete the placement will be transferred to the non-placement variant, i.e. the Designated Alternative Course (DAC).

The Committee agreed Stage 2 Full Approval and recommended the proposal to CPAC (excluding Paper 118D) for the introduction of a placement-year variant to the MSc Drug Discovery programme from 2027/28. This recommendation was subject to the provision of a supportive statement from the External Examiner, if available, and insertion in the Placement Unit Description (Paper 118C) of 'where placement has been completed' after 'like-for-like reassessment' and addition of a statement explaining that any student who fails to complete the placement will be transferred to the non-placement variant, i.e. the DAC. The Committee also recommended reviewing whether 'period in which the module will run' in the Placement Unit Description (Paper 118C) should be amended from DIS (Dissertation period) to AY (All Year).

12.0 Higher Education sector developments (3539)

The Committee noted the EQSC paper on Higher Education sector developments (Paper 119).

13.0 Feedback from committees (3540)

Education, Quality and Standards Committee (EQSC):
The Committee noted the minutes of the meetings held on 17 (Paper 120A) and 23 (Paper 120B) February 2026.

Academic Programmes Committee (APC):
The Committee noted the minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2026 (Paper 121), in particular approval of Stage 1 Initial Approval of the proposal to introduce PGCert and PGDip entry awards as part of a major programme change to the online MSc Computer Science and MSc Artificial Intelligence courses, for 2026/27, subject to the following conditions:
1. Proposals not to be progressed until timing for implementation is confirmed by APC following a review of online and non-traditional education provision operations by the Deputy VC and University Secretary.
2. Following implementation timing confirmation and any further related development requirements, proposals to be updated and approved by APC Chair's action and forwarded for Stage 2 academic approval.

Courses and Partnerships Approval Committee (CPAC):
The Committee noted the minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2026 (Paper 122), in particular Stage 2 Full Approval of the proposal to introduce PGCert and PGDip entry awards as part of a major programme change to the Online MSc Computer Science and MSc Artificial Intelligence for 2026/27.

Student Experience Advisory Board (SEAB):
The Committee noted the minutes of the meeting held on 30 April 2026 (Paper 123).

Education Advisory Board (EAB):
The Committee noted the minutes of the meeting held on 18 May 2026 (Paper 124A) and Graduate Outcomes slides (Paper 124B).

14.0 Department Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee (DLTQC) minutes (3541)

The Committee noted the minutes of the meetings held on:
Department of Life Sciences: 23 April 2026 (Paper 125):
The Chair reported that he was currently engaged in discussions with the Department and Registry regarding the MSc Biosciences examinations.
The Chair drew attention to a suggestion in the minutes that the Faculty should adopt a common position on the use of reference notes in examinations. The Committee did not support the development of a Faculty-wide approach, noting that the value of a single page of notes varies considerably by discipline, e.g. SC reported that it would be difficult to capture all relevant Biosciences material on one side of paper.
YB reported that, following several years of permitting students to bring a single page of notes into examinations, the Department had moved to providing formula sheets instead. These are supplied to students in advance of the examination and have been well received by both staff and students. The previous approach had given rise to a number of challenges. Students had raised concerns about its potential unfairness, as some lecturers found it more difficult than others to adapt their assessment design to an open-notes format. Students were also concerned that the arrangement resulted in differential access to information during examinations. In addition, some students found preparing the notes burdensome, particularly as the process of compiling them may benefit certain revision styles but be less helpful for others.
BM reported that the majority of Chemistry students wished to retain the option of bringing one

page of notes into examinations. However, feedback from some Year 2 students indicated that they did not find the notes particularly useful in practice, especially when taking into account the time required to prepare them.
Department of Chemistry: 7 May 2026 (Paper 126).
Department of Mathematical Sciences: 15 April 2026 (Paper 128).

15.0 Any Other Business (3542)

The Chair noted that this was TS's final FLTQC meeting and thanked him for his contributions to the Committee in his role as DoT over the past 7 years. TS reported that he would be succeeded by Simon Shaw as DoT.
The Chair also thanked the Student Reps for their contributions to the Committee, noting that student input over the year had been particularly rich and valuable.
Finally, the Chair announced that he had been reappointed as AD(E) for a further 3-year term.

PR reported that an exemption from UGAR had been approved by EQSC for 6 MPharm students, arising from the structure of Years 2 and 3 of the programme. In these years, only 10 credits can be fully completed in Semester 1, with the remaining credits delivered through All Year units assessed by examinations in May. The affected students had been unable to sit the May examinations due to IMC and had therefore only passed 10 credits, rather than the 20 credits normally required to be eligible for reassessment. Without the exemption, these students would have been required to repeat the year.
The Chair reported that a broader exemption would be sought for future cohorts on any potentially affected years of the MPharm programme. He invited members to consider whether any of their programmes might be similarly affected, i.e. include years in which only 10 or 15 credits can be fully completed in Semester 1, so that these could be included in the exemption request. The Committee noted that this issue would primarily affect examination-based units, as extensions could be granted for project-based units.
It was noted that this scenario would be mitigated if the percentage of credit obtained through assessment within units could be counted towards the total number of credits passed, for the purposes of determining reassessment eligibility.