

# FLTQC 4 March 2026 (extraordinary - EAREs)

Wednesday, 4th March 2026 10:15 am

Teams | Faculty of Science Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee

## Attendees

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### Attended

John Benardis (JB)

Zoe Burke (ZB)

Andy Burrows (Chair)

Sumukh Chaluvaraju

James Foadi (JF)

Penn Mackintosh (PM)

Sarah Paine (Secretary)

Charareh Pourzand

Gan Shermer (GS)

### Did Not Attend

Florin Bisset

Susan Crennell

Momna Hejmadi

Barrie Marsh

Arya Wood

### Partial Attendance

Yarden Brody (YB)

Nikki Hodgson (NH)

Philip Rogers (PR)

Tony Shardlow (TS)

Greig Shearer (GrS)

## 1.0 Welcome and Quorum (3503)

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

## 2.0 Declaration of Interest (3504)

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There were no declarations of any potential conflicts of interest.

## 3.0 Minutes of the Previous Meeting (3505)

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The Committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting held on 28 January 2026 (Paper 70i).

## 4.0 Matters Arising (3506)

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There were no matters arising.

## 5.0 Chair's Business (3507)

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There was no Chair's Business.

## 6.0 Education Annual Review and Enhancement (EARE) reports 2025/26 (3508)

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The Chair reminded members that the EAREs were a chance for strategic reflection and to feed into the institutional picture of education challenges and progress made against targets.

The Committee approved for recommendation to EQSC EARE reports 2025/26 for the following Departments:

### **Department of Mathematical Sciences (Paper 71):**

TS described the launch of a new compulsory project unit for final-year BSc students, designed to address NSS concerns and potentially evolve into a vertically integrated project involving multiple year groups.

TS reported the Degree Outcomes data showed a significant gap in the proportion of firsts and upper seconds awarded in Maths compared to other departments in the university and peer institutions. This has prompted a review of exam difficulty, engagement and a broader first-year curriculum review with intermediary assessment changes planned.

On GenAI, there is a department working group on this topic, which reviews coursework for AI

robustness, encourages all coursework setters to participate, and coordinates with teaching leadership to redesign assessments and address ethical concerns. This group was led initially by Ben Adams, now chaired by JF. GS enquired if there was desire for this across the Faculty, noting some discipline-specific nuances would exist.

**Action:** *The Chair & JF to coordinate with the Centre of Excellence in Science Education to create a Faculty-group on GenAI.*

TS described a new final-year careers workshop involving Alumni and the Careers Office, including recent Maths alumni. This was organised in response to NSS feedback and had been well received by students. JB confirmed Computer Science run events for each of their years. GS noted that Chemistry run sessions with Careers Service in final year, including applying for PhDs, although not necessarily with Alumni. TS noted Careers and Alumni Offices were very helpful. PR stated that as Pharmacy was specialised, they run a Careers Day with employers, industry representatives and professional stakeholders in, with talks and drop-in session – he is happy to share this model with other departments. YB noted they also run sessions with the Careers Service, as well as a Moodle Page for any student studying Physics, for DoS to post PhD opportunities and events, which is seen favourably by students.

### **Department of Physics (Paper 72):**

YB stated that key changes Physics have made is moving open book to closed book exams, with a standard formula sheet, which has received positive feedback from staff and students. Students have more clarity on what is expected.

The Department have been focusing on community and student wellbeing, such as the introduction of the Physics Café and other schemes to foster student community and wellbeing, noting increased inter-year mingling and a stronger sense of departmental identity.

Physics degree outcomes data is also low compared to peers. The Department have set out clearer expectations for exam setting, including allowance of partial marks and full use of range of mark scheme.

Third year of CT is rolled out which has mixed feedback. In final year, the exams for the optional units are half the length they used to be, which means students and staff mean they cannot cover as much content well. The Department are weighing up options including exam question choice or adapting the exam length.

The Department have put in schemes aimed at lecturers to make their content more engaging, in response to previous poor feedback on NSS about the engaging teaching. This includes sharing best practice, better frameworks and increasing lecture variety. Anecdotal evidence is that student attendance is increasing, as well as impacting positively on the recruitment of staff who see the value on teaching. There has also been an increase in teaching award nominations.

Staff availability is an ongoing challenge, due to secondments, temporary contracts, reduction in hours and retirements. Robustness to change is a future concern.

JB noted that Computer Science had had similar staffing challenges previously, resulting in a move to more teaching teams of 2 or 3, rather than relying on individuals. This is reinforced at staff induction, building the Department's resilience.

GS stated that Chemistry have similar issues of big units in final year being challenging. They have increased the length of exams and await further student feedback. YB noted students do already have extra time, but staff are concerned about covering the learning outcomes sufficiently in the assessment time allowed. The Chair noted that CT did aim to reduce

assessment, but that didn't prohibit changes if on reflection this was felt to be the best thing for the course, as long as this is considered holistically.

GS enquired whether LOILs are going to continue to be a timetabling requirement, if they're not actually used as such. YB noted Physics also do not like LOILs, and that it is possible to request to convert LOILs to in-person events once the timetable is set.

**Action:** *The Chair to raise LOILs with Timetabling.*

### **Department of Life Sciences (Paper 73):**

PR stated on the Pharmacy side of the Department, CT is being fully-delivered after earlier migration, including final year units being under 50% pass mark. The biggest challenge was organisation and management in NSS scores, which is understood to chime with the change in pre-CT to post-CT version of the course, largely mandated by changes in GPhC accreditation requirements. This involved students having to complete a virtual unit over the summer in preparation, which perhaps led to students feeling the department was under-prepared. PR noted that equity of placements continues to be a problem across the south-west peninsula, in relation to travel time and cost. NHS are covering accommodation and travel expenses, although students do have to claim the expenses themselves. There is a loan system in place while waiting for NHS expense reimbursement. InPlace software will help manage equity of placement allocation over a student's whole degree.

Good practice is establishment of Pharmacy Data Group to look at student outcomes data. While this is a requirement of GPhC, it will look at bias in admission, graduation outcomes, Bath/Plymouth locations, as well as predictors for success in the postgraduate programmes.

A new approach for standard setting on MCQ exams is in hand.

The Chair noted that Data Group and standardisation of reporting, while requirements of GPhC, may be useful good practice across the board and requested the Department to share any good practice forthcoming.

PM asked about communication of student placement allocation and equity. PR stated that students are told on the course and at Open Day but noted that 2021 intake have undergone GPhC-mandated changes in the course meaning placement volumes have increased.

ZB stated Biosciences and Pharmacology are in the final year of CT. There was some discontent from biology students returning from placement year with apparent restricted optional unit choice. This was resolved temporarily for this year with increased optional units, but in the future the course would return to the originally planned options.

TBL approach to teaching has been introduced to replace seminar units, which includes giving students pre-learning before class and a test in class applying that knowledge. This has been well received by students, with attendance continuing to be good.

The BSU closure will have an impact on teaching and unit descriptions have been adjusted for Pharmacology to allow students to continue to meet the learning outcomes.

ZB noted that the Department also have lots of individual teaching and that team-based approach to convening may help.

The new management system in the Department is working well, with Cressida Lyon as Head of the Education division bringing people together to share expertise and idea.

In terms of challenges, the outcomes of Department merger are still being felt, with efforts to

consolidate content and co-teach as much as possible. Options for revising Pharmacology, possibly changing to a Therapeutics stream in the Biomedical Sciences course, to provide streamlined route through teaching are being explored over the year ahead and in the upcoming Degree Scheme Review in 2026/7.

PM noted the student voice section of the report ends in a partial sentence.

**Action:** ZB to fix grammatical error in the sentence.

JB was keen to discuss team-based learning and the improvements made to seminar units. ZB stated the standardised approach and the engagement with the research article exercise, was very well received by staff and students.

### **Department of Chemistry (Paper 74):**

GS stated that she had added notes to the end of the document to cover the missing Student Voice section.

Actions from the last EARE were to do with assessment and feedback and student voice. The Department have been engaging with SSLC, to share and discuss NSS and CLS data, as well as a big push on 'You said, we did' communications via email, induction, year-wide forums. Using mid-semester feedback helped action things very quickly.

On assessment and feedback, the Department introduced a spreadsheet of deadlines, to help staff plan and adjust as needed. A standardised coursework template is still being rolled out, as well as rubric-style marking criteria, in response to student feedback. In response to comments from the Dean, GS noted that lab assessment has been reduced over the course as part of CT, with more plans to reduce that further and include vivas and presentations, although this will take a mindset shift from some staff. RSC accreditation requires certain lab hours.

On community and inclusion, workload in year 1 and 2 is perceived as high, partly exacerbated by year-long units. In response, exam structure and communication of this has been adjusted, as well as re-introduction of some summative assessment back into Semester 1.

The Chair enquired about the coursework templates. GS noted it does cover lab reports in Year 1, but not yet Year 2. Student feedback was being sought in the hope the templates could be rolled out to every coursework assessment.

JF enquired about the rubric for marking criteria. GS stated that students wanted the rubric grids with descriptors for various criteria associated with assessment, referencing Faculty grade descriptors.

### **Natural Sciences (Paper 75):**

GrS noted that CT roll-out to year 3. Year fora had been introduced to encourage student feedback with the whole year invited and has been well received.

An assessment mapping exercise is planned over the summer, similar to Chemistry although it would be a much more complicated map for Natural Sciences.

NSS scores for organisation and management had seen an improvement, despite ongoing timetabling challenges.

Introduction of Portfolio units has improved cohesion and sense of cohort identity. The re-establishment of Natural Sciences Society has also helped this.

Timetabling is slightly improved this year, although clashes of practicals still exist. This has been mitigated as much as possible, but support from other Departments is needed to avoid this as much as possible.

GrS thanked Sara Foster for her administrative support of the course.

Plans for next year include focusing on assessment and feedback, noting differing requirements between departments continues to be a challenge for Natural Sciences students.

Longer-term, strengthening the cohort identity will continue to be a focus, including the portfolio units. Noted that environmental science staff resource is a challenge, potentially impacting the renewable energy unit. Also stated that external competition for students is challenging with falling applications, though registered numbers of students have so far held up well.

The Chair enquired about attendance of the Year Fora. GrS noted that attendance is about 20% of the cohort, which is a positive start.

GS enquired whether Natural Sciences meet with Timetabling, as other departments do.

**Action:** GS/GrS to follow up on representation of Natural Sciences at Timetabling meeting.

### **Department of Computer Sciences (Paper 76):**

JB stated that staff resource has been an ongoing challenge, with new posts of Student Support Officer and Deputy Head of Department (Education) having been helpful. It was noted that the Department Bulletin for staff and students had been well received.

Year 3 of CT and new MSc courses mean majority of provision in Computer Science is new. Optional choices had previously been a problem for the Department, mostly mitigated by DoS approved units, which was well-received. These will now become a formal part of the courses.

In response to ADE and Dean comments, JB noted the complexity of delivery with distance learning, PGT, UG, co-taught units. The culture shift is moving from more proactive, rather than reactive, but this takes time to bed in. Further efficiencies on co-teaching of UG and PGT are being looked at.

Student community and experience have been noted as good practice and this has been deliberate effort by the Department. This includes empowering students with student-led events and activities such as Hackathons and Women in Tech Cafe, which have become integral to the course and are improving student resilience and employability. On the PGT level, ice-breakers, workshops and community building events have been very well received, as well as consolidation week.

Effort has been put into consolidating good practice, policies and procedures, particularly to manage changes in staff. This is reinforced in new staff induction.

On group work, the Department are looking further with CLT and students. The focus has been on examining group sizes, EDI considerations and reporting.

The Department will continue to focus on GenAI, ensuring robustness of assessment. JB noted that although the Department are moving more towards exams, they are keeping coursework as formative to protect the practical skills covered in these.

JB noted the newly-formed Computer Science Education Group will focus on the innovation with away days and workshops planned.

JB noted that funding had been provided by Ministry of Defence to support development of Computer Science courses, so this is being explored by the Department.

JF enquired about the move to more exam summative assessment, with coursework more formative and whether student engagement with the formative practical elements had been considered. In Maths, there had been decreasing engagement with a similar move on homework. This could be countered by a question on the coursework topic in an exam. JB noted that the value of practical element of coursework is very important for the Department, and these will remain for the programming and software engineering. The focus for this area of work is more around the foundation discrete mathematics and databases.

NH stated that a DSR for a course in a different Faculty which has very high group work, was praised for their group-work approach and there might be some wider learnings.

**Action:** *NH to pass on good practice on group work to Faculty.*

PM noted that the degree classification references around placement/non-placement student profiles could be confusing with regards to correlation and causation. In addition, students may not want TBL if it increases workload. JB noted this will only be recommended for the final year MComp reading units.

ZB stated that TBL workload wasn't a concern once students started the unit. On DoS approved units, ZB noted that these were originally removed to protect DoS workload and also retain the identity of the course. JB stated that the Department also removed DoS approved units as part of CT but after reintroducing them for new PGT courses, the benefit in terms of variety and flexibility was noted. This relies on DoS' understanding potential fit of DoS-approved options and protecting the identity of the courses, while still allowing some student flexibility. The Chair noted that DoS-approved units can only ever been chosen if they fit the existing Timetable.

JF noted as a general point, that there is an assessment and feedback community on MS Teams, where it would be very helpful to share some this good practice on the site. DoTs were encouraged to do so.

SP stated the Faculty SharePoint was being launched shortly with a set of Education pages included. These would link out to existing resources and pages like the Faculty A&F Team where they exist.

The Chair thanked DoTs for their hard work in compiling the EAREs. The next step was reporting at EQSC.

## **7.0 Any Other Business (3509)**

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NH noted that Degree Scheme Review open consultation was due to be released imminently. DoTs are requested to encourage all staff to engage with this opportunity.