**Education Committee – summary of meeting held on 16.12.21**

1. **Assessment**

The Committee discussed a report from the In-Person Exam Group (IPEG). The report detailed some of the challenges and considerations for running safe, in-person exams beyond January 2022, should departments choose to return to these or do so alongside Timed Remote Assessments (TRAs). This included an outline of safety measures which would have to be in place during the exam (e.g. wearing face coverings until seated) and resource requirements within departments.

It was agreed that the existing room layout guidance for exams would remain suitable as desks would be spaced out and exams would not require students to interact. However, further consideration would be required around the risk of crowding when students leave or enter the room. This would require further risk assessment, but an early estimation is that the loss in exam room capacity would be around 10% from ‘normal’ due to safety measures.

The report recommended that exam timetablers should ensure that excessive strain is not put on campus study spaces by avoiding TRAs/in-person exams back-to-back, and requested support from Faculty Operating Officers and Departmental Safety Officers to carry out risk assessments of exam spaces as required. It was agreed that the communication of a decision around March and Summer 2022 assessment formats was a priority matter.

The Committee approved all the recommendations outlined in the report and it was agreed that further guidance would be put together for timetablers and other staff in departments on the next steps in preparing for assessment beyond January 2022.

1. **Timetabling and shared space**

The Committee received an update from the Timetabling User Group (TUG), noting that the majority of departments had published their Spring timetables and that the group was working increasingly closely with Imperial College Union and student societies.

Key considerations going forward for the central timetabling team include how space is used and categorised at College, whether the timetabling and room booking operations currently in place support College strategies, and whether teaching and learning requirements are being supported. There are also plans to ascertain what might be learned from the wider HE community with regards to space and timetabling.

1. **Covid-19 and education update**

It was noted that the CCT Hub had acquired additional resource to help deal with the increasing number of positive cases and close contacts being identified within the College community. The committee was also informed that emergency COG meetings have been taking place to discuss how students will be supported over the break and the arrangements for the start of the Spring Term.

There was a discussion about the importance of ensuring that departmental staff are not overworked over the Christmas period due to the need to support students. The work being done at a College level to support students was highlighted, which should hopefully mitigate the impact on staff within departments.

The current plan is for students to return in the new year as they did at the start of Autumn Term, with a hope that teaching can continue in the same manner as before. However, there is recognition that this might not be possible as the situation is constantly changing. Students will be updated on the situation before Christmas and in the period between Christmas and New Year.

It was confirmed that the workplace arrangements for lab-based students were similar to the arrangements in place for staff – i.e. they are permitted to be on campus to work if necessary, but should work from home where possible.

1. **Teaching and Learning (Product) Board update**

The Committee approved a proposal from the Teaching and Learning Product Board to support the ‘switch on’ of Blackboard Ally with an extensive communications and training campaign. Blackboard Ally is a software designed to aid content providers on Blackboard to maximise inclusivity and accessibility, and the Teaching and Learning (Product) Board will now work with ICT on rolling it out across College.

Members also discussed the final report of the Guild Strategy Operations Group (GSOG), and agreed that work should be progressed in the following areas of policy:

* Evolution of the College’s QA process for new programmes.
* IPR associated with the creation of digital learning experiences.
* Accounting for staff workload for the creation of digital learning experiences.
* Building towards a learner centric digital education future, ensuring that partner institutions are aligned with College principles on delivering education to students.
1. **Lifelong learning prospects**

The Committee discussed how the College can best engage with lifelong learning going forward, noting that the Skills White Paper published by the UK Government had identified a significant skills gap across several critical areas including health and social care, technical and engineering roles, and a severe shortage of digital skills across the workforce.

Members agreed that this would be a key area for the College in the future, and noted the importance of Imperial having a strong identity and market position within the educational landscape, as well as ensuring that there is a financial vision to match this position.

1. **Differential outcomes**

An update on differential outcomes data was delivered to the Committee. It was noted that mature students had a higher good degree rate and first-class degree rate than their younger peers, but there was little difference in continuation rate between the two groups.

Those with other disabilities (i.e. not a specific learning disability) continued to have the lowest good degree rate but saw an increase in their first-class degree rate this year to equal those with no known disability. Those from the most deprived EIMD quintiles, Q1 and Q2, had a lower good degree rate and lower first-class degree rate than those from Q4 and Q5, and those from Q1 also had the lowest continuation rate. Looking at ethnicity, Black students continued to have the lowest first-class degree rate, and the second lowest continuation rate after “Other” ethnicities, although there was less variation in good degree rate by ethnicity.

The group noted the importance of ensuring that students from all backgrounds are fully supported throughout their university journey rather than just during the application process.

1. **QAEC and Senate updates**

It was noted that a wider membership for QAEC had been proposed and approved by Senate, with two representatives from each Faculty to ensure better representation of Postgraduate matters, and wider latitude for ICU/Consul representation.

Senate approved the establishment of a Working Group to have examine the Student Disciplinary Procedure.

The next meeting of the Education Committee will be held on **20 January 2022**.