

## POSTGRADUATE EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT 2019-20

### Introduction

This report summarises feedback from reports relating to postgraduate provision in academic year 2019/2020 by External Examiners appointed to MSc, MBA, MRes, PG Cert and PG Dip programmes in the Faculties of Engineering, Natural Sciences, and Medicine, Imperial College Business School and the Centres for Languages, Culture and Communication and for Higher Education Research and Scholarship.

This report is based on the 173 reports which have been received. Details of outstanding reports have been referred to the respective Departments, who have been asked to send further reminders. For reference, reports are due within one month of the Board of Examiners.

The report template asks a series of questions with the available responses of:

- Yes/always
- Most/usually
- No/never

Except where a simple yes/no/not applicable is required. In addition for the confidence statements at the end of the report an additional option of 'somewhat/in part' is provided. Each section then provides a free comments section for further information or justification of the response given.

### 2019-20

The academic year to which this report relates saw the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is reassuring to note that the vast majority of externals, where they made specific reference to the College's response to the pandemic were very supportive of the measures that had been put in place.

### Appointment and Induction processes

Of the 35 external examiners who were appointed during 2019-20, 30 reported that they considered with the appointment process had been effective with one examiner reporting that their appointment was rather late in the year, after the induction sessions had taken place. Two induction sessions were held in January and February 2020 as usual and just over half of the new external examiners were able to attend. It is noted that some of the departmental induction processes had to be amended in the light of the pandemic and the move to remote working.

Departments should be reminded that all new External Examiners should receive the documents outlined in the guidance produced by QAEC, details of which are available on the External Examiner webpages.

Of those returning external examiners, 22 reported that they did not receive a formal response to their 2018-19 external examiner report. The Quality Assurance team will review these instances to ensure the departmental responses are shared, where they have been received.

### Programme and Module information

The majority of externals (91%) reported that they had received all the programme and module information they needed to carry out their role. Two external examiners reported that

they had to specifically request the syllabus and programme specifications. Externals were generally very positive about the provision of documentation.

In terms of the content and structure of the degree programmes, 94% of externals considered that the core/compulsory modules in the programmes delivered the stated learning outcomes and 97% considered that the programme design was aligned with relevant subject benchmark statements. Comments were on the whole very positive and any concerns raised were relating to specific modules, often due to the broad or rather generic nature of these modules.

## **Assessment**

External examiners were very supportive of the changes that were made to the normal assessment processes in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic. Many examiners commented on the good balance and mix of assessment methods and their confidence in the rigorous nature and marking of the assessments. Four examiners commented that they felt there was some imbalance in assessment loads between modules.

97% of examiners received the necessary draft assessments for comment/approval but 10 examiners reported that they did not receive any feedback on their comments. Four examiners reported that they did not see evidence that assessed work had been moderated internally, although most commented that they were aware it happened, and two reported that they did not receive a sufficient number of exam scripts and other assessed work.

## **Exam Boards**

All examiners were invited to attend the exam board meeting and 98% were able to attend the board meeting. 98% reported that the meetings were conducted appropriately; one examiner expressed concern about the assessment of borderline dissertations during the Board. Many externals complemented the smooth running and professionalism of the Boards in the circumstances and commented that they had worked very efficiently when conducted remotely.

99% of examiners considered that the College procedures governing mitigating circumstances and academic misconduct had been appropriately applied.

## **Overall Confidence Statements**

External Examiners were asked whether they agreed with three overall confidence statements based on the requirements of the QAA's Quality Code.

100% agreed that "The degree awarding body is maintaining the threshold academic standards set for its awards in accordance with the FHEQ and relevant Subject Benchmarks Statements."

97% agreed that "The assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended learning outcomes of the programme and is conducted in line with the College's policies and regulations."

98% agreed that "The academic standards and the achievements of students are comparable with those in other degree awarding bodies of which you have experience."

For the small number of examiners who did not fully agree that their programmes met the above statements, they did find that these were mostly/usually met and none of these examiners chose to provide any further comments to these statements.