

## UNDERGRADUATE EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT 2019-20

### Introduction

This report summarises feedback from reports relating to undergraduate provision in academic year 2019/2020 by External Examiners appointed to BSc, MSci, BEng, MEng, and MBBS programmes in the Faculties of Engineering, Natural Sciences, and Medicine, Horizons modules offered by the Centre for Languages, Culture and Communication, BPES modules in the Imperial College Business School, as well as any relevant undergraduate Intercolated degrees. Postgraduate taught provision will be reported on later in the academic year, due to the timing of Board of Examiners for these programmes.

This report is based on the 92 reports which had been received. 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, and so would normally be expected by the end of August for undergraduate programmes.

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

All external examiners (30) who reported and who were appointed during 2019-20 reported that they considered with the appointment and induction process had been effective. Two induction sessions were held in January and February 2020 as usual. 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. One external examiner commented that they had received their induction late and one other commented that they had needed to request information more than once in order to receive it.

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.

### Programme and Module information

The majority of externals (90%) reported that they had received all the programme and module information they needed to carry out their role. One external reported that they had received no information but they were a year 2 examiner who had reported that they had received all the documentation last year. There were also a couple of comments about

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documentation where modules from old curriculum were being discontinued and new modules were being introduced. Externals were generally very positive about the provision of documentation in particular where a dedicated online space had been established for ease of access.

In terms of the content and structure of the degree programmes, 100% of externals considered that the core/compulsory modules in the programmes delivered the stated learning outcomes and that the programme design was aligned with relevant subject benchmark statements.

## **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. Comments include being impressed with the trialling of the timed remote assessments, that alternative assessments had been suitable replacements and that outcomes had not been negatively affected.

It is planned to undertake a more detailed analysis of the external examiner comments on assessment and look at these alongside the Imperial College Union's recommendations following the 2020 National Student Survey which includes a recommendation to Develop and implement a policy on marking transparency in departments. The comments from the external examiners about marking and moderation are consistent with those reported in previous year's summary reports. QAEC will therefore receive a fuller report once we have been able to look at the PGT external examiner comments alongside the UG reports.

## **Exam Boards**

99% of Examiners were invited to attend the exam board meeting and 92% were able to attend the board meeting. One external reported that they were only invited a week before so were unable to attend. All externals (88) reported that the meetings were conducted appropriately and many externals complemented the smooth running of the Boards in the circumstances and commented that they had worked very efficiently when conducted remotely. 95% of examiners considered that the College procedures governing mitigating circumstances and academic misconduct had been appropriately applied.

Other comments relating to the exam boards and recommendations made by external examiners in terms of overall recommendations will be taken forward by the Regulations and Policy Review Group as part of their work this year and as part of the response to the NSS as mentioned earlier.

## **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.

99% 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."

96% 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."

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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 one or two examiners who did not fully agree that their programmes met the above statements, they did find that these were mostly/usually met. One external responded no to the last statement but contextualised this by reporting that they considered that the standards are clearly better than elsewhere.

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