

FLTQC 16 October 2024

Wednesday, 16th October 2024 2:15pm

Teams | Faculty of Science Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee

Attendees

Attended

Robbie Altham

Sascha Athey (SA)

Andrew Burrows (Chair)

Susan Crennell (SC)

James Foadi (JF)

Paula Gabriel

Marguerite Hallett (Secretary)

Liz Haynes

Momna Hejmadi (MH)

Zack Lyons (ZL)

Ioana Mocanu

Charareh Pourzand

Philip Rogers (PR)

Tony Shardlow (TS)

Gan Shermer (GS)

Paul Snow (PS)

Did Not Attend

Florin Bisset

Zoe Burke

1.0 Welcome and Quorum (3329)

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

2.0 Office for Students (OfS) B Conditions (3330)

The Committee received a 15 min presentation (Paper 1A) from Sascha Athey, Head of Academic Quality and Standards, on OfS B Conditions, in particular B5 compliance (Paper 1B).

SA explained that EQSC had asked him to give each FLTQC a brief overview of the University's main compliance requirements regarding academic quality and standards. Since 2018, the University has been regulated by the Office for Students (OfS). In order to remain on the OfS register, the University must comply with the OfS conditions of registration (minimum standards for the whole sector) in all areas, e.g. finance, complaints, marketing, access and participation plan and education, i.e. academic quality and standards. The conditions covering academic quality and standards are B1-6 (the 'B conditions'). If an institution fails to comply with the B conditions, there are a wide range of penalties ranging from a fine to deregistration, which would mean an institution could no longer be a university and offer degrees. The University has some work to do on building an audit trail / evidence base to demonstrate / prove compliance to the regulator, ready for possible inspection, e.g. a governance structure and the correct policies and procedures in place to support compliance.

B6 simply requires institutions to participate in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), which Bath does so is compliant. B3 relates to student outcomes, i.e. continuation, completion and progression rates, and is currently being reviewed by EQSC. The OfS produces a dashboard of this data, collated from other data returns the University completes. On every metric Bath is far above the minimum and sector average. B1 covers academic experience, i.e. how students experience Bath courses, whether the courses are coherent and well designed, balance between contact and self-study and between lectures and other types of delivery, etc. B2 covers the extent to which courses are adequately resourced, e.g. whether there are sufficient, appropriately trained staff, and enough labs, computers, software. This involves HR, Finance, Procurement and Registry, so is relatively complex and is yet to be reviewed.

B5 relates to the 'sector recognised standards' which set out the mandatory academic standards for different qualifications across the sector. See Paper 1B report on the University's compliance with B5. The University is largely compliant but there are a couple of key areas for improvement. The OfS has introduced standards of achievement for different degree classifications, but these are yet to be embraced by the sector.

B4 is currently being reviewed by the University and covers a) assessment and feedback, i.e. whether assessment is effective in assessing, and enabling achievement of, the learning outcomes, and b) degree outcomes. Since 2010 there has been degree inflation, i.e. an increase in the number of upper second and first class degrees. Up until 2018, Bath had not increased the number of upper second and first class degrees it was awarding. Then student attainment increased during the pandemic due to no detriment measures. The trend is starting to reverse but Bath differs from other peer institutions in that the proportion of 1sts, compared to 2.1s, has risen across the University. This may be because support for students has improved, so they are achieving higher, but the OfS has categorised it as an 'unexplained increase', i.e. due to some other factors. The University is required to publish a degree outcome statement for the UK Standing Committee on Quality Assessment, which explains any changes in degree outcomes; this will be reviewed by the OfS.

PR highlighted the need for University-level documents that describe assessment standard setting approaches, e.g. to help departments explain to PSRBs that an assessment that gives a student a mark of 40 demonstrates that the student has met the learning outcomes and is minimally competent, whereas a student with a mark of 39 has not. JF reported that he will be circulating to members soon draft Faculty grade descriptors. With regard to staff training, SA offered to run a session on compliance requirements as part of the Bath course for new staff.

3.0 Declaration of Interest (3331)

There were no declarations of any potential conflicts of interest.

4.0 Minutes of the Previous Meeting (3332)

The Committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting held on 5 June 2024 (Paper 2).

5.0 Matters Arising (3333)

M3319 Integrated PhD Sustainable Chemical Technologies (SCT) CDT major change proposal: The Committee noted that information on how some units would make use of teaching on other existing MSc courses in Life Sciences and Chemical Engineering had been supplied (Paper 3).

6.0 Chair's Business (3334)

Chair's business:

- The Chair highlighted that it is good practice to provide mock examination papers for new units. It may be possible to construct papers for CT units by collating previous questions from parts of old units.
- Nomination for University-wide Scaling Working Group: The Chair reported that Professor Christopher Jennison, Department of Mathematical Sciences, had agreed to sit on this Group. The Committee noted that Professor Jennison had helped produce current University guidance on scaling (Annex 1 of QA35 Appendix 4).
- Education Action Plans: 3 new things departments are doing this year to improve NSS results:

Mathematical Sciences:

1. Running a 1 hour Maths café this semester, with games, to which students are invited to improve sense of community.
2. Reallocating teaching to increase the number of female lecturers in Years 1 and 2.
3. Reviewing the format of tutorials to increase attendance in Year 2.

Chemistry:

1. Providing outline answers for 1 exam paper for every unit that is assessed by exams.
2. Making assessment criteria clearer, by linking to these from assessment maps provided to students.
3. Engaging with students via SSLC to understand how a) students interact with marking criteria and how they prefer feedback to be given, b) to better support BSc students, as compared to MChem/MSci students, e.g. regarding projects and tutorials.

Natural Sciences:

1. Encouraging Final Years to attend SSLC meetings so they hear how the student voice is being acted upon.
- SC is currently analysing the data to work out a) if Natural Sciences is better or worse than the average of the component science units, and b) if 'Organisation and Management' has improved as a result of measures put in place over the last two years.

Physics:

1. Ensuring Unit Convenors make clearer to MPhys students how their Semester 2 units are a culmination of their studies.
2. Ensuring marking criteria are published on every Moodle page, particularly for essays & theory papers.

3. Holding an Open SSLC meeting for all students to give feedback on their course and to foster greater cohort identity and involvement.
4. Teaching staff making it clear when they are available and how they will feedback to students.
5. Helping placement students appreciate what they have learnt from their placement, e.g. professional skills.

Computer Science:

1. Running a focus group with finalists on both placement and non-placement courses to gather feedback / ideas on how to consolidate the taught concepts in Years 1 and 2 and help students reflect on how different units have come together.
2. Gathering feedback from students returning from placement, employers and recent alumni on industry relevant skills provision to ensure courses meets industry expectations. DoSs will work with the Skills Centre to run skills provision sessions over the year, e.g. in the reading/consolidation week.
3. Implementing routine monitoring of marking turnaround time, to identify any issues early and enable intervention to support markers.

Pharmacy:

1. Reviewing all coursework submission deadlines and publishing feedback due by times. These feedback times will then be audited to ensure compliance with QA16 requirements. Support for staff will be identified as needed, e.g. for part-time staff with clinical commitments. The Department will also ensure that staff are not holding back coursework marks until they have been ratified by a BEU.
2. Instigating a monthly check-in with the academic advisor of the single post-CT project unit to ensure that students completing their Final Year Semester 1 project at an overseas university receive the same support as Bath based students. This may involve being more proactive in identifying Bath based assessors for overseas projects and engaging those assessors with the students earlier on.

The Chair thanked members for sharing their plans and asked that any feedback gathered from students on the success of these initiatives be shared with the Committee.

- How to improve Curriculum Planner (CP) user experience: casual PG worker support at peak times. In recognition of the development work yet to be completed for CP, and some of the issues reported back about CP usability, each Faculty will be given £10,837 (0.25FTE at Grade 6) to fund activities associated with CP support for 2024/25. The Committee agreed that it would not be beneficial to employ a casual worker for inputting changes into CP since academic staff generally need to do this themselves. Members were asked to let the Secretary know of any curriculum-related activities the funding could be used for instead.

MH reported that the budget for CP runs out in July 2025 and that there are limited funds left for enhancements to the system. A workshop will take place on 11 November to agree priorities for improvements. MH invited members to email her with any suggestions.

- Accreditations: the Chair requested that DoTs keep the spreadsheet on Teams updated so it is possible to plan ahead for FLTQC and CPAC approvals. Submissions need to be approved by these committees before they are submitted to accrediting bodies because the University needs to approve these partnerships and for CMA reasons.

Chair's actions:

- Withdrawal of units MA40042 (Paper 4A) and MA40048 (Paper 4B) from 2025/26 (approved 2 July 2024).
- MSc Advanced Machine Learning and MSc Artificial Intelligence final unit descriptions (approved 9 July 2024).
- Suspension of unit MA32042 (Paper 5A) and withdrawal of unit MA40198 (Paper 5B) from 2025/26 (approved 11 July 2024).
- Institute of Mathematics and its Applications (IMA) accreditation submission (approved 31 July 2024).
- Bath MPharm Part 2 reaccreditation, and Year 0 Step 2 accreditation, submissions to the

GPhC (approved 29 August 2024).

- Withdraw of Capstone Project (15 credit) units SL32059 (S1 non-lab), SL32060 (S2 non-lab), SL32061 (S1 lab-based) & SL32062 (S2 lab-based) (Paper 6A) and introduction of a new BSc Capstone Project unit in S1 and S2 (15 credits each) which do not specify whether non-lab or lab-based (Paper 6B) in B&B and Nat Sci UG programmes for 2025/26 (Paper 6C) (approved 7 October 2024).

7.0 Institute of Physics (IoP) reaccreditation submission documentation (3335)

The Committee approved the IoP reaccreditation submission documentation (Paper 8). PS reported that the IoP's focus had shifted from teaching core physics more towards graduate attributes. Some of the IoP requirements were published after CT implementation so the Department is still adjusting to these. JF enquired as to the advantages of IoP accreditation for the Department. PS reported that IoP accreditation is an expectation of a high-quality physics department. The Chair reported that he would email PS with a few minor technical queries following the meeting. The Chair noted that the CT courses had been referred to in the submission as 'new' courses. PS explained that the IoP had advised that the submission should focus on the accreditation of the CT courses. However, data had still needed to be included for the 'old' courses, e.g. on progression rates and admissions, hence the need to distinguish between 'old' and 'new'. It was noted that SC had highlighted some minor typos in the submission document.

8.0 Degree Apprenticeship Quarterly Monitoring Report and Annual Report 2023-24 (3336)

The Committee noted the MSc Computer Science Degree Apprenticeship Quarterly Monitoring Report (May - July 2024) (Paper 9A) and Annual Report 2023-24 (Paper 9B). ZL highlighted that the Quarterly Report reported on a bespoke DA PTES-inspired survey that was new for this year, to replace PTES which includes questions about in-person provision that do not apply to remote learners. The survey showed 100% overall satisfaction. The lowest score was on community, so efforts will be made to improve how the Department engages remote learners and helps them feel part of a community of learners, when they are spread geographically across the country. The main highlight in the Annual Report was the Ofsted inspection.

9.0 Feedback from Committees (3337)

Education, Quality and Standards Committee (EQSC):

The Committee noted the minutes of the meetings held on:

- a) 9 April 2024 (Paper 10A), in particular approval of Education Annual Review and Enhancement (EARE) reports 2023/24.
- b) 15 May 2024 (Paper 10B).
- c) 2 July 2024 (Paper 10C), in particular approval of:
 - Assessment Regulations for MPharm Year 0 Preparatory Year at the University of Plymouth.
 - Exemption from the Rule 2 requirement that Chief Invigilators will be members of academic staff.

Education Advisory Board (EAB):

The Committee noted the minutes of the meetings held on 13 May (Paper 11A) and 8 July (Paper 11B) 2024.

Courses and Partnerships Approval Committee (CPAC):

The Committee noted the minute extract of the meeting held on 26 June 2024 (Paper 13), in particular approval of:

- Integrated PhD Sustainable Chemical Technologies exemption request for shared UG/PGT teaching.
- Application of NFAAR-PGT regulations to Integrated PhD Statistical Applied Mathematics for 2024/25 entrants.

Student Experience Advisory Board (SEAB):

The Committee noted the minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2024 (Paper 14).

The Committee noted that no APC minutes had been made available and that only an extract of the CPAC minutes had been provided, rather than the full set of minutes. MH reported that an 'education digest' (a newsletter from the Comms team) would shortly be rolled out giving a short summary of everything relating to education and Student Services, including the various committees. The Committee agreed that it would like to be able to review full sets of minutes and that this was important for openness / transparency, to enable colleagues to know what is going on across the University, and to avoid a disconnect between the University and faculties and a perception of secrecy. The Chair commented that he does not sit on all the committees so cannot report back on everything and he may well forget some of the detail of discussions at meetings he had attended. The Committee agreed that for new programmes it was important to know what issues had been raised by previous committees so that, for example, Programme Teams are not asked the same questions by each committee.

10.0 Education Advisory Board (EAB) 23 Sept 2024 papers for cascading to FLTQCs (3338)

The Committee noted the following EAB papers:

- PTES 2024 performance (Paper 15A).
- Education Strategic Implementation Plan (ESIP) 2024/25 (Paper 15B).
- Report from Curriculum Transformation Project Team (Paper 15C).

11.0 Department Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee (DLTQC) Minutes (3339)

The Committee noted the minutes of the meetings held on:

Department of Chemistry: 2 October 2024 (Paper 16).

Department of Computer Science: 29 May 2024 (Paper 17A) and 2 October 2024 (Paper 17B). The Committee noted that the Department of Computer Science planned to introduce formative checking and reflective tasks for students to analyse their study skills and progression on Year 1 year-long units.

Department of Mathematical Sciences: 24 July 2024 (Paper 18).

12.0 Any Other Business (3340)

There was none.