

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Friday 23 April 2010

DPTLA and University Restructuring

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This paper notes the implications of the University restructuring for the system for Departmental Programmes of Learning, Teaching & Assessment (DPTLA). It provides recommendations to ASC and, subject to ASC endorsement, EdPSC on how internal review might be undertaken in future.

School-based –v- Subject-based Approaches

In satisfying its own requirements and those of the Scottish Funding Council for internal review of its academic provision, the University has hitherto been able to benefit from the coincidence in all but a few cases (see below) between departmental and subject boundaries. The formation of Schools that in most instances comprise several disciplines raises the question of the best fit between academic structures and the review method.

Specifically, the establishment of the new Schools begs the question whether we should review Learning & Teaching provision grouped by School. The main alternative would appear to be to retain the current disciplinary parameters, albeit we would lose the conjunction between the subject covered and organisational boundaries.

The appended note lists pros and cons staff in the Senate Office have identified in switching to a school-based approach and in retaining a subject-based approach.

The Senate Office conclusion is that considerable practical factors greatly limit the feasibility of moving to a school-based system. A subject-based approach is therefore recommended. This would retain all relevant aspects of DPTLA. (It is noted that revised guidance for subject areas will be required.)

This is in some ways disappointing; it would be helpful if the process made a positive contribution to the establishment of a school-based culture. That said, an explicitly subject-based approach would not be quite the same as retaining the status quo: the name would have to change, and the exercise would be undergone in a new structural context. This will inevitably alter the experience also.

A further factor not listed on the attached is that we would need to pilot a school-based system, with no more than a couple of reviews in the first year. This would have consequences for later years of the cycle, in that more reviews would have to be scheduled then.

We may be able to take other, pragmatic steps that would help inculcate the new structure. In some areas, it might be feasible to combine closely related subjects reviewed in a School. If ASC and EdPSC approve the adoption of a subject-based approach, Senate Office will prepare a revised schedule of reviews to be conducted in the remainder of the six-year cycle. (The SFC require us to review all taught provision at least every six years. We are presently in the second year of the second such cycle.) In compiling a revised schedule, discussions will be held with staff in the subjects potentially concerned to see whether amalgamation might be possible. Due consideration would also be given to how to proceed in areas where

such amalgamation would include a subject recently reviewed as well as one still to be reviewed in the current cycle.

Discussion will also be held in the areas where the current departmental and DPTLA areas do not coincide -

- We have previously separated out three subjects in Education - ITE, Education Studies and DACE.
- In Medicine, undergraduate and PGT provision have previously been separately considered. Further rationalisation in the Medical School (we treat Nursing and Dentistry separately) is not likely to be easily achievable.

New name for the process

It is proposed that the process should be renamed '**Periodic Subject Review**'.

Institution-led Subject Review & University Restructuring: Subject-level & School-level review Pros & Cons

Senate Office

School-level Review	
<p>Pros</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Promotes school identity and cohesion ○ Aids dissemination of good practice ○ Contributes to school strategy development ○ Lower overall number of reviews may produce savings ○ Augmented admin resource in schools will assist preparation (especially where there are few disciplines in the school) 	<p>Cons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increased volume of documentation for multidisciplinary schools – more to prepare and more to read ○ Increased panel size in multidisciplinary schools - can reduce panel effectiveness and change balance between internal and external numbers ○ Reviews will be longer – 3 days - or longer? – likely to be unrealistic to recruit panel members for that extent of commitment ○ New system would require to be piloted, with consequent compression of later years of cycle ○ Effectiveness of individual subject scrutiny may be reduced; related danger of discussion being overly devoted to one subject ○ Heterogeneity of some schools might necessitate a variety of approaches- could be complicated to operate for all concerned ○ May be related professional body concerns re intensiveness of scrutiny ○ Current cycle reflects prof body review cycles ○ Multidisciplinary reviews might involve parallel discussions and thus multiple Senate Office staff – difficult to resource & would have implications for the coherence of the report ○ Revised guideline documentation required ○ Transitional task of creating new cycle – complex matter, where some subjects have been reviewed more recently than others ○ Level of aggregation potentially at odds with national expectations re subject review

Subject-level Review

Pros

- Familiar model – some continuity in midst of v extensive change
- No new cycle to construct
- Documentation, complexity and scale of events manageable
- Good fit with student involvement dimension
- Compatible with subject-level basis of annual monitoring of courses and programmes
- Fits with professional body requirements
- Would provide insight into progress of restructuring
- Senate Office resource largely in place
- Tried & tested model; externally benchmarked and reviewed and strongly endorsed, meeting national expectations re subject-level review

Cons

- Would not contribute to promotion of new structure (albeit the cycle could be adapted to fit school compositions)
- Less direct contribution to dissemination of good practice across school
- Multiple reviews per cycle for multidisciplinary schools
- Fit between subject-level and school resource planning may be less direct
- Fit between administrative structure of schools and disciplines may be less direct than with current dept-based structure