

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Friday 23 April 2010

Report from the Programme Approval Group for the Faculties of
Science and Engineering

Ms H Clegg, Senate Office

April 2010

Present:

Professor N Evans (Convener), Dr V Bissell, Dr M Carroll

In attendance:

Ms H Clegg

FACULTY OF ENGINEERING

1. UNDERGRADUATE PROPOSALS

1.1 BEng Biomedical Engineering (New Programme)

Rationale: The programme has been developed to fill a gap in the market, as there is currently no undergraduate degree in biomedical engineering offered in Scotland. The programme will build on existing expertise and research activity within the Faculty and the University as a whole.

Regulations: The programme will be governed by the regulations set out in the University Calendar at Eng 6. It will also be added to the grid on Eng 8-9.

Programme Specification: The Group considered the programme specification for this award, and raised several points requiring to be addressed.

Points for discussion: The Group raised the following issues with regard the proposed new programme:

- The information contained in Section 7 should be moved to Section 15 until such time as accreditation is confirmed.
- In Section 9, bullet points 5, 6, 8 and 9 should be removed, as these are covered by the Intended Learning Outcomes in Section 10
- In Section 10, for consistency, the text before each of the sub-headings should read "...graduates will be able to...". Additionally, the words 'in biomedical engineering' should be deleted from the first bullet point under the heading 'Transferable/Key Skills'. The second bullet point should also be removed as it is subject specific
- In Section 11, the first paragraph should be removed, as the information is given in the bullet points under the text

Conclusion:

The Group recommends the proposal to ASC, subject to the conditions identified above being met.

1.2 MEng Biomedical Engineering (New Programme)

Rationale: As above, the programme has been developed to fill a gap in the market, as there is currently no undergraduate degree in biomedical engineering offered in Scotland. The programme will build on existing expertise and research activity within the Faculty and the University as a whole.

Regulations: The programme will be governed by the regulations set out in the University Calendar at Eng 6. It will also be added to the grid on Eng 8-9.

Programme Specification: The Group considered the programme specification for this award, and raised several points requiring to be addressed.

Points for discussion: The Group raised the following issues with regard the proposed new programme:

- The information contained in Section 7 should be moved to Section 15 until such time as accreditation is confirmed.
- In Section 9, bullet points 5, 6, 8 and 9 should be removed, as these are covered by the Intended Learning Outcomes in Section 10
- In Section 10, for consistency, the text before each of the sub-headings should read "...graduates will be able to...". Additionally, the words 'in biomedical engineering' should be deleted from the first bullet point under the heading 'Transferable/Key Skills'
- In Section 11, the first paragraph should be removed, as the information is given in the bullet points under the text

The Group noted that there appeared to be very little distinction between this MEng programme and the related BEng programme. This point had been raised during Faculty scrutiny, but it remained unclear from reading the Programme Specifications what the distinctions were. The Faculty is asked to confirm that it is satisfied there is sufficient difference between the two awards.

Conclusion:

The Group recommends the proposal to ASC, subject to the conditions identified above being met.

FACULTIES OF SCIENCE

2. UNDERGRADUATE PROPOSALS

2.1 BSc (Hons) Theoretical Physics (New Programme)

Rationale: The programme has been developed to provide students with the opportunity to pursue the study of the more theoretical aspects of physics. It is also expected to make some laboratory teaching more efficient, as MSci and BSc students would take the same level 3 courses. Finally, it is hoped that the addition of the BSc will boost recruitment to the MSci Theoretical Physics programme by changing the perception that Theoretical Physics is too great a challenge.

Regulations: The programme will be governed by the regulations set out in the University Calendar at Sci 2. It will also be added to the list on Sci 10-11.

Programme Specification: The Group considered the programme specification for this award, and raised several points requiring to be addressed.

Points for discussion:

The Group raised the following issues with regard the proposed new programme:

- The information contained in Section 7 should be moved to Section 15 until such time as accreditation is confirmed
- In Section 10, the information under the sub-heading 'Knowledge and Understanding' did not constitute Intended Learning Outcomes. This part of Section 10 should be rewritten with reference to the available guidelines.
(<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/gae/progdesignapproval/progdesign/ilosguidelines/>)
- In Section 13, the second paragraph should be removed.
- In Section 14, references to 'classes' should be replaced with 'courses'. Additionally, the available courses should be listed, or a link to their location provided, for Years 1 and 2. The information under the sub-heading 'Assessment' should be moved to Section 11. The information under the sub-heading 'Exit Awards and Programme Changes' required clarification in particular the first paragraph. The information in the second paragraph is not normally included in the Programme Specification, so proposers should consider whether it might be better placed elsewhere (e.g. a course handbook).

Conclusion:

The Group recommends the proposal to ASC, subject to the conditions identified above being met.

3. POSTGRADUATE PROPOSALS

3.1 MSc Applied Population & Statistical Mapping (New Programme)

Rationale: The programme has been developed to exploit a gap in the market, as no other MSc programme focusing on this subject is available. It was anticipated that it would attract international interest, as many countries lack people with specialist expertise in this area.

Regulations: The programme will be governed by the regulations for taught masters degrees set out in the University Calendar at Gr 14. It will also be added to the list on Gr 20.

Programme Specification: The Group considered the programme specification for this award, and raised several points requiring to be addressed.

Points for discussion:

The Group raised the following issues with regard the proposed new programme:

- It was unclear whether the Postgraduate Diploma was a stand-alone award to which applications could be made directly. If not, the PgD title should be removed from Section 1.
- The information contained in Section 7 should be moved to Section 15 until such time as accreditation is confirmed.
- The last sentence in Section 9 may need to be revised depending on the status of the Postgraduate Diploma as an award in its own right. If the Diploma is a stand-alone award, its aims should be clarified. Otherwise, the sentence should be deleted.
- In Section 11, the word 'progress' should be avoided as this could cause confusion with honours progression.

- In Section 14, exit awards should be detailed. It is not clear, for example, how the Postgraduate Diploma and or certificate is achieved.

Of some concern to the Group was the fact that the Faculty scrutiny did not appear to have included consideration of the necessary consultation documents. This is an essential element of the Faculty scrutiny process, and documentation requires to be considered at the time of scrutiny, not after the event. The Group considered this an indicator that the scrutiny process was not being taken as seriously as it should, and constituted a concern in terms of quality assurance.

The Faculty is asked to provide evidence that the consultation materials received were given full consideration by the Faculty prior to their agreement to recommend the programme for approval.

Conclusion:

Given the concerns raised above, the Group did not consider that the proposal could be recommended to ASC at this stage. The Group will reconsider the proposal when the conditions identified above have been met.

3.2 MSc Chemistry (New Programme)

Rationale: The programme has been developed to offer chemistry graduates the opportunity to gain an MSc qualification necessary to pursue a research career.

Regulations: The programme will be governed by the regulations for taught masters degrees set out in the University Calendar at Gr 14. It will also be added to the list on Gr 20.

Programme Specification: The Group considered the programme specification for this award, and raised several points requiring to be addressed.

Points for discussion:

The Group raised the following issue with regard the proposed new programme:

- In Section 14, the Group noted that, although there was a 60 credit research project, there did not appear to be any research skills course offered, either as an optional or compulsory course. The Faculty is asked to confirm whether this is correct, and offer an explanation for this, particularly as most of the other MSc programmes being proposed contained a research skills course.

Conclusion:

The Group recommends the proposal to ASC, subject to the condition identified above being met.

3.3 MSc Chemistry with Medicinal Chemistry (New Programme)

Rationale: The programme has been developed to offer chemistry graduates the opportunity to gain an MSc qualification necessary to pursue a research career in medicinal chemistry.

Regulations: The programme will be governed by the regulations for taught masters degrees set out in the University Calendar at Gr 14. It will also be added to the list on Gr 20.

Programme Specification: The Group considered the programme specification for this award, and raised several points requiring to be addressed.

Points for discussion:

The Group raised the following issue with regard the proposed new programme:

- In Section 14, the Group noted that, although there was a 60 credit research project, there did not appear to be any research skills course offered, either as an optional or compulsory course. The Faculty is asked to confirm whether this is correct, and offer an explanation for this, particularly as most of the other MSc programmes being proposed contained a research skills course.

Conclusion:

The Group recommends the proposal to ASC, subject to the condition identified above being met.

3.4 MSc Landscape Monitoring & Mapping (New Programme)

Rationale: The programme has been developed to offer students a thorough knowledge of technical methods and issues surrounding the capture and processing of data to monitor and map landscape change.

Regulations: The programme will be governed by the regulations for taught masters degrees set out in the University Calendar at Gr 14. It will also be added to the list on Gr 20.

Programme Specification: The Group considered the programme specification for this award, and raised several points requiring to be addressed.

Points for discussion:

The Group raised the following issues with regard the proposed new programme:

- It was unclear whether the Postgraduate Diploma was a stand-alone award to which applications could be made directly. If not, the PgD title should be removed from Section 1.
- The information contained in Section 7 should be moved to Section 15 until such time as accreditation is confirmed.
- The last sentence in Section 9 may need to be revised depending on the status of the Postgraduate Diploma as an award in its own right. If the Diploma is a stand-alone award, its aims should be clarified. Otherwise, the sentence should be deleted.
- In Section 11, the word 'progress' should be avoided as this could cause confusion with honours progression.
- In Section 14, exit awards should be detailed. It is not clear, for example, how the Postgraduate Diploma and or certificate is achieved.

Of some concern to the Group was the fact that the Faculty scrutiny did not appear to have included consideration of the necessary consultation documents. This is an essential element of the Faculty scrutiny process, and documentation requires to be considered at the time of scrutiny, not after the event. The Group considered this an indicator that the scrutiny process was not being taken as seriously as it should, and constituted a concern in terms of quality assurance.

The Faculty is asked to provide evidence that the consultation materials received were given full consideration by the Faculty prior to their agreement to recommend the programme for approval.

Conclusion:

Given the concerns raised above, the Group did not consider that the proposal could be recommended to ASC at this stage. The Group will reconsider the proposal when the conditions identified above have been met.

3.5 MSc Astrophysics (New Programme)

Rationale: The programme has been developed to utilise the Faculty's strengths in masters level provision and to offer students the chance to undertake an advanced project in the subject.

Regulations: The programme will be governed by the regulations for taught masters degrees set out in the University Calendar at Gr 14. It will also be added to the list on Gr 20.

Programme Specification: The Group considered the programme specification for this award, and raised several points requiring to be addressed.

Points for discussion:

The Group raised the following issues with regard the proposed new programme:

- In Section 10, the tense used should be revised to be consistent with the sub-headings
- In Section 13, the second paragraph should be removed.
- In Section 14, if the programme is to be offered on a full and part time basis the faculty is asked to check the information provided in the first paragraph, to ensure that the information is accurate for both study options. In section 14, reference to 'existing' or 'new' courses should be removed. Further information should be given related to the fact that not all courses run every session (e.g., are courses run on alternate years, would different courses be available instead?). The section headed 'Examinations, Assessment and Progression' should be removed, with some being relocated to Section 11 if necessary. The section headed 'Awards' should also be removed.
- In Section 15, reference to the University Health Service should be removed.

Of concern to the Group was the fact that appropriate Faculty scrutiny did not appear to have taken place. The Board of Studies minute suggests that, due to time constraints, there was no discussion of this proposal and that members were asked to return comments within one day. As noted above, the careful consideration of the documentation, including consultation evidence, is key to the scrutiny process. The Group considered this an indicator that the scrutiny process was not being taken as seriously as it should, and constituted a concern in terms of quality assurance.

The Faculty is asked to provide evidence that the full paperwork, including consultation materials received, had been given full consideration by the Faculty prior to their agreement to recommend the programme for approval, and that a decision had not been made simply on the basis of a lack of comment (particularly given that members of the Committee were given only one day to comment).

Conclusion:

Given the concerns raised above, the Group did not consider that the proposal could be recommended to ASC at this stage. The Group will reconsider the proposal when the conditions identified above have been met.

3.6 MSc Physics: Advanced Materials (New Programme)

Rationale: The programme has been developed to utilise the Faculty's strengths in masters level provision and to offer students the chance to undertake an advanced project in the subject.

Regulations: The programme will be governed by the regulations for taught masters degrees set out in the University Calendar at Gr 14. It will also be added to the list on Gr 20.

Programme Specification: The Group considered the programme specification for this award, and raised several points requiring to be addressed.

Points for discussion:

The Group raised the following issues with regard the proposed new programme:

- In Section 13, the second paragraph should be removed.
- In Section 14, if the programme is to be offered on a full and part time basis the faculty is asked to check the information provided in the first paragraph, to ensure that the information is accurate, for both study options. In section 14, reference to 'existing' or 'new' courses should be removed. Further information should be given related to the fact that not all courses run every session (e.g., are courses run on alternate years, would different courses be available instead?). The section headed 'Examinations, Assessment and Progression' should be removed, with some being relocated to Section 11 if necessary. The section headed 'Awards' should also be removed.
- In Section 15, reference to the University Health Service should be removed.

Of concern to the Group was the fact that appropriate Faculty scrutiny did not appear to have taken place. The Board of Studies minute suggests that, due to time constraints, there was no discussion of this proposal and that members were asked to return comments within one day. As noted above, the careful consideration of the documentation, including consultation evidence, is key to the scrutiny process. The Group considered this an indicator that the scrutiny process was not being taken as seriously as it should, and constituted a concern in terms of quality assurance.

The Faculty is asked to provide evidence that the full paperwork, including consultation materials received, had been given full consideration by the Faculty prior to their agreement to recommend the programme for approval, and that a decision had not been made simply on the basis of a lack of comment (particularly given that members of the Committee were given only one day to comment).

Conclusion:

Given the concerns raised above, the Group did not consider that the proposal could be recommended to ASC at this stage. The Group will reconsider the proposal when the conditions identified above have been met.

3.7 MSc Physics:Energy & Environment (New Programme)

Rationale: The programme has been developed to utilise the Faculty's strengths in masters level provision and to offer students the chance to undertake an advanced project in the subject.

Regulations: The programme will be governed by the regulations for taught masters degrees set out in the University Calendar at Gr 14. It will also be added to the list on Gr 20.

Programme Specification: The Group considered the programme specification for this award, and raised several points requiring to be addressed.

Points for discussion:

The Group raised the following issues with regard the proposed new programme:

- In Section 13, the second paragraph should be removed.
- In Section 14, if the programme is to be offered on a full and part time basis the faculty is asked to check the information provided in the first paragraph, to ensure that the information is accurate, for both study options. In Section 14,

reference to 'existing' or 'new' courses should be removed. Further information should be given related to the fact that not all courses run every session (e.g., are courses run on alternate years, would different courses be available instead?). The section headed 'Examinations, Assessment and Progression' should be removed, with some being relocated to Section 11 if necessary. The section headed 'Awards' should also be removed.

- In Section 15, reference to the University Health Service should be removed.

Of some concern to the Group was the fact that the Faculty scrutiny did not appear to have included consideration of the necessary consultation documents, and that this appeared to have been done by the Convener after the meeting. This is an essential element of the Faculty scrutiny process, and documentation requires to be considered at the time of scrutiny, not after the event. The Group considered this an indicator that the scrutiny process was not being taken as seriously as it should, and constituted a concern in terms of quality assurance.

The Faculty is asked to provide evidence that the consultation materials received were given full consideration by the Faculty prior to their agreement to recommend the programme for approval.

Conclusion:

Given the concerns raised above, the Group did not consider that the proposal could be recommended to ASC at this stage. The Group will reconsider the proposal when the conditions identified above have been met.

3.8 MSc Physics:Life Sciences (New Programme)

Rationale: The programme has been developed to utilise the Faculty's strengths in masters level provision and to offer students the chance to undertake an advanced project in the subject.

Regulations: The programme will be governed by the regulations for taught masters degrees set out in the University Calendar at Gr 14. It will also be added to the list on Gr 20.

Programme Specification: The Group considered the programme specification for this award, and raised several points requiring to be addressed.

Points for discussion:

The Group raised the following issues with regard the proposed new programme:

- In Section 13, the second paragraph should be removed.
- In Section 14, if the programme is to be offered on a full and part time basis the faculty is asked to check the information provided in the first paragraph, to ensure that the information is accurate, for both study options. In Section 14, reference to 'existing' or 'new' courses should be removed. Further information should be given related to the fact that not all courses run every session (e.g., are courses run on alternate years, would different courses be available instead?). The section headed 'Examinations, Assessment and Progression' should be removed, with some being relocated to Section 11 if necessary. The section headed 'Awards' should also be removed.
- In Section 15, reference to the University Health Service should be removed.

Of concern to the Group was the fact that appropriate Faculty scrutiny did not appear to have taken place. The Board of Studies minute suggests that, due to time constraints, there was no discussion of this proposal and that members were asked to return comments within one day. As noted above, the careful consideration of the

documentation, including consultation evidence, is key to the scrutiny process. The Group considered this an indicator that the scrutiny process was not being taken as seriously as it should, and constituted a concern in terms of quality assurance.

The Faculty is asked to provide evidence that the full paperwork, including consultation materials received, had been given full consideration by the Faculty prior to their agreement to recommend the programme for approval, and that a decision had not been made simply on the basis of a lack of comment (particularly given that members of the Committee were given only one day to comment).

Conclusion:

Given the concerns raised above, the Group did not consider that the proposal could be recommended to ASC at this stage. The Group will reconsider the proposal when the conditions identified above have been met.

3.9 MSc Physics:Global Security (New Programme)

Rationale: The programme has been developed to utilise the Faculty's strengths in masters level provision and to offer students the chance to undertake an advanced project in the subject.

Regulations: The programme will be governed by the regulations for taught masters degrees set out in the University Calendar at Gr 14. It will also be added to the list on Gr 20.

Programme Specification: The Group considered the programme specification for this award, and raised several points requiring to be addressed.

Points for discussion:

The Group raised the following issues with regard the proposed new programme:

- In Section 13, the second paragraph should be removed.
- In Section 14, if the programme is to be offered on a full and part time basis the faculty is asked to check the information provided in the first paragraph, to ensure that the information is accurate, for both study options. In Section 14, reference to 'existing' or 'new' courses should be removed. Further information should be given related to the fact that not all courses run every session (e.g., are courses run on alternate years, would different courses be available instead?). The section headed 'Examinations, Assessment and Progression' should be removed, with some being relocated to Section 11 if necessary. The section headed 'Awards' should also be removed.
- In Section 15, reference to the University Health Service should be removed.

Of concern to the Group was the fact that appropriate Faculty scrutiny did not appear to have taken place. The Board of Studies minute suggests that, due to time constraints, there was no discussion of this proposal and that members were asked to return comments within one day. As noted above, the careful consideration of the documentation, including consultation evidence, is key to the scrutiny process. The Group considered this an indicator that the scrutiny process was not being taken as seriously as it should, and constituted a concern in terms of quality assurance.

The Faculty is asked to provide evidence that the full paperwork, including consultation materials received, had been given full consideration by the Faculty prior to their agreement to recommend the programme for approval, and that a decision had not been made simply on the basis of a lack of comment (particularly given that members of the Committee were given only one day to comment).

Conclusion:

Given the concerns raised above, the Group did not consider that the proposal could be recommended to ASC at this stage. The Group will reconsider the proposal when the conditions identified above have been met.

3.10 MSc Theoretical Physics (New Programme)

Rationale: The programme has been developed to utilise the Faculty's strengths in masters level provision and to offer students the chance to undertake an advanced project in the subject.

Regulations: The programme will be governed by the regulations for taught masters degrees set out in the University Calendar at Gr 14. It will also be added to the list on Gr 20.

Programme Specification: The Group considered the programme specification for this award, and raised several points requiring to be addressed.

Points for discussion:

The Group raised the following issues with regard the proposed new programme:

- In Section 13, the second paragraph should be removed.
- In Section 14, if the programme is to be offered on a full and part time basis the faculty is asked to check the information provided in the first paragraph, to ensure that the information is accurate, for both study options. In Section 14, reference to 'existing' or 'new' courses should be removed. Further information should be given related to the fact that not all courses run every session (e.g., are courses run on alternate years, would different courses be available instead?). The section headed 'Examinations, Assessment and Progression' should be removed, with some being relocated to Section 11 if necessary. The section headed 'Awards' should also be removed.
- In Section 15, reference to the University Health Service should be removed.

Of some concern to the Group was the fact that the Faculty scrutiny did not appear to have included consideration of the necessary consultation documents, and that this appeared to have been done by the Convener after the meeting. This is an essential element of the Faculty scrutiny process, and documentation requires to be considered at the time of scrutiny, not after the event. The Group considered this an indicator that the scrutiny process was not being taken as seriously as it should, and constituted a concern in terms of quality assurance.

The Faculty is asked to provide evidence that the consultation materials received were given full consideration by the Faculty prior to their agreement to recommend the programme for approval.

Conclusion:

Given the concerns raised above, the Group did not consider that the proposal could be recommended to ASC at this stage. The Group will reconsider the proposal when the conditions identified above have been met.

4. SPOT-CHECKING OF PROPOSALS

Under the current process, Programme Approval Groups examine only the programme specification and support document for programme proposals. However, PAGs reserve the right to ask for full documentation if desired. It was recommended in the recent Deloitte report that occasional 'spot checks' be undertaken on proposal documentation.

In line with this recommendation, the Clerk reported a sample of proposals had been selected for spot-checking, and that the full documentation for the proposal shown below had been examined:

- MEng Biomedical Engineering
- BSc (Hons) Theoretical Physics
- MSc Chemistry with Medicinal Chemistry