University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee - Friday 28 May 2010

Report from Programme and Course Approval Working Group

Ms Helen Butcher, Clerk to the Committee

At its recent meeting the Working Group agreed to report the following items to ASC.

1. Review of Faculty Scrutiny for Programme Approval 2010

Members noted that the Programme Approval Groups had reported some concerns to ASC regarding the lack of evidence of sufficient scrutiny by faculties in the recent programme approval activity. It was confirmed that there had been cases where inadequate information had been available on the consultation process (including responses to issues raised by consultees) and also the Faculty scrutiny itself. Further investigation had revealed that in some cases there was more Faculty activity than was being reported onwards to PAGs and ASC.

The Working Group considered that agreed procedures for programme approval were robust and that detailed guidance on these was available to assist faculties and departments; however it was unclear whether the guidance was used extensively and therefore there was a risk that procedures were not being fully implemented. The Group agreed that once the new College structures were in place, it would be useful for the Convener and colleagues from the Senate Office to meet with Deans of Learning & Teaching to draw their attention to the guidance and the need to ensure that it was sufficiently disseminated to colleagues involved in the approval process. **ASC is invited to approve** this proposed action.

2. Approval Process

The Working Group noted that recent activity had sought clarification of the programme approval process for certain categories of programme.

2.1 MRes Degrees

The programme approval process embedded in PIP, and approved by ASC, covers all taught programmes with separate procedures being in place for degrees offered entirely by research which are approved by Faculty Higher Degrees Committees or equivalent Graduate School committees. Questions have recently arisen over the approval process for MRes degrees which include elements of both taught courses and research.

The Working Group agreed that it was necessary to draw a clear definition between taught and research degrees for the purposes of programme approval to ensure that appropriate scrutiny was employed for new proposals. It was therefore **recommended to ASC** that degrees which:

1. included an award, including an exit award (e.g. Pg Certificate) comprised of taught credits; and/or
2. included taught credit for courses which would be delivered to cohorts of students, rather than by individual research supervision;

should be counted as taught degrees for programme approval and therefore submitted from Faculties to to PAGs for approval. It was acknowledged that many research degrees included a small amount of research skill training which might be credit rated. It was agreed that this, on its own, would not class a degree as 'taught'.

2.2   CPD programmes

It was agreed that approval of individual CPD courses would rest at Faculty (College) level, but that any CPD provision which led to a University award would require approval at ASC level and submission via PIP. It was suggested that non-standard awards, such as named diplomas, might be considered through a modified lighter touch procedure. The Convener agreed to give this matter consideration and bring forward proposals for an alternative approval process to the Working Group.

2.3   Review of College-level Procedures

The Working Group noted that College Boards of Studies would be responsible for the approval of both courses and programmes, and it was recognised that there could be some variation in the methods used by various Boards of Studies in granting approval to both courses and programmes. Members were reminded of the recommendation from the Deloite internal audit report which had sought a review of Faculty-level implementation of scrutiny procedures to identify areas of good practice and any possible standardisation of practice across the University. Due to the forthcoming restructuring, implementation of this recommendation had been deferred. It was agreed that an equivalent review should take place once procedures were being implemented at College level. The Working Group would therefore undertake this once the College Boards of Studies had been engaged in approval activity.

3.   Review of Course and Programme Specification Documents

The Working Group reviewed these documents to ensure that they would reflect the new University structures to be in place in August. References to Faculty and Department were therefore replaced to reflect the revised responsibilities for Colleges and Schools.

There was also a detailed review of Course Specification documents to ensure that the data collected in these could be mapped across to Campus Solutions, as PIP data would need to be integrated into the new system. Various amendments were agreed by the Working Group.

The Working Group noted that Course Specification documents would soon be published as they would be available as links in the new PIP Course Catalogue which would go online in July. The Working Group agreed that the Text field could be deleted from the document as it contained information which would be published elsewhere (e.g. on Moodle and in course handbooks). Members also confirmed that this information was not necessary for approval as sufficient information on the level of the course should be available from the course intended learning outcomes and assessment information.