

University of Glasgow**Academic Standards Committee – Friday 27 May 2011****Review of Programme Approval during 2010-11: Report of Meeting of College Deans of Learning & Teaching, and PAG Conveners – 13 May 2011****Dr Arthur Whittaker, Convener of Meeting**

ASC had agreed that the College Deans of Learning & Teaching, and PAG Conveners should meet after the Semester 2 Programme Approval Groups to review the approval process during 2010-11. This was in follow-up to the meeting of College Deans of Learning & Teaching in November 2010 which had reviewed approval procedures under the University's new academic structures with a view to identifying areas of good practice and possible standardisation of approach.

The following matters were discussed.

Operation of College Scrutiny

As in previous years the PAGs had identified issues in most proposals which required correction before they could be approved. In a smaller number of cases, proposals had been referred back to Colleges in order that specific matters could be reviewed and reported back to the PAGs. PAG conveners did not find any change in the level of correction or referrals compared to previous years and therefore it appeared that restructuring had not had any effect on the process. In some cases – such as MVLS - it was felt that College scrutiny had improved but that information on how issues raised in the consultation process had been resolved had not been easily available.¹

The operation of College Boards of Studies (CBoS) was reported to have run effectively and no concerns were reported regarding any significant increase in the volume of business. For MVLS it was reported that a large number of proposals had required approval in a short time (following detailed scrutiny at a lower level) and that many of these had been reviewed by the CBoS convener out of committee. Planning would be improved in future sessions to avoid this. The Group agreed with the MVLS College Dean of Learning & Teaching's view that a College-level oversight beyond the detailed scrutiny at School level was appropriate for MVLS given its size and complexity.

Documentation

As reported previously to ASC, there had been an issue in many areas with single programme specifications being generated to cover multiple programmes involving a set of core courses and separate specialisms. Each of the PAGs had concurred with ASC's view that separate programme specifications were required in many cases as there was significant variation in the programme aims and ILOs for the different specialisms/streams.

¹ It was noted that in the case of consultation with external academics, the documentation would be revised for 2011-12 to ensure that a) consultations were conducted early enough and b) responses to issues raised by consultees were documented.

The process relating to document amendments and further scrutiny of these was highlighted. It was reported that in Science & Engineering staff were experiencing difficulty in picking up whether required changes had been made, and this was particularly difficult when whole blocks of text were replaced which only contained small amendments. It was also reported that the PIP forms did not accept tables which was found to be limiting. It was suggested that this may be related to recent developments associated with the transfer of data from PIP to Campus Solutions.

The Group agreed that documentation could be improved if Colleges could agree internally to standardize certain sections of documentation, and experienced administrative staff could check proposals at an early stage in the process, well in advance of submission to CBoS. It was also suggested that the summary information provided to PAG members would be useful for colleagues developing programme specifications. A 'Quick Tips' information document had been developed in the current session; this could be reviewed and further disseminated to assist staff with proposals in 2011-12.

A level of uncertainty was reported regarding the need for the CBoS minute to provide full detail of the scrutiny process, particularly in cases where detailed scrutiny took place at a lower level. It was confirmed that the CBoS minute did not have to reiterate detail from earlier records, although the original record should be available with CBoS documentation (e.g. as an appendix). The need to include information on how issues raised at consultation had been resolved was also stressed.

PAG attendance

It was suggested that it may be useful for College representatives to attend PAG meetings in order to respond to queries and also to be able to respond to feedback more quickly. It was noted that this had been practice in previously but had stopped more recently.²

Conclusion

The Group was satisfied with the operation of the programme and course approval process in the current session and recommended that current arrangements should be continued in 2011-12.

The following actions were agreed to enhance the process:

1. Ensure Guidance on Programme and Course Approval and/or Programme Specifications is updated to:
 - provide clear information on when to prepare single and multiple programme specifications;
 - review the Quick Tips information for Programme Specification developers and ensure that users are aware of this information;
 - clarify that the detailed record of scrutiny does not have to be the CBoS minute itself but that the original record of scrutiny should be made available;

² In October 2007, PCAWG had recommended to ASC that a member of Faculty (now College) should be invited to attend each PAG. It had been agreed that the previous practice of individual representatives attending for each proposal should not be continued.

- clarify that follow up to consultation needs to be recorded.

Senate Office – annual update of Guidance

2. Advise the PIP team of the reported difficulties in reviewing changes and inserting tables in order to explore solutions/improvements.

Senate Office to refer to MIS

3. Invite Colleges to send a representative to attend scheduled PAG meetings.

Senate Office