

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Friday 5 October 2012

Review of Programme Approval during 2011-12: Report of Meeting of College Deans of Learning & Teaching – 18 May 2012

Professor Alice Jenkins, Convener of Meeting

ASC had agreed that the College Deans of Learning & Teaching should meet after the Semester 2 Programme Approval Groups, to review the approval process during 2011-12 with a view to identifying problem areas, 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. There did not appear to be any discernible change in the level of correction or referrals compared to previous years.

The operation of College Boards of Studies (CBoS) was reported to have run effectively and no concerns were reported. In Science & Engineering, a small group comprising the Dean of Learning & Teaching and two Chief Advisers had been set up to consider course changes in order to avoid sending these to the full CBoS. The Group had the option of referring proposals to the CBoS if necessary, but this system left more time for the CBoS to give fuller consideration of new courses. A similar system was in operation in MVLS.

Documentation

It was noted that, in Science & Engineering, documentation had improved due to early discussions taking place with key staff; however, in all Colleges there were significant workload/time pressures on administrative staff which meant they had less time to check documentation than in previous years. In MVLS, issues with programme ownership had complicated matters and led to delays in completing documentation. It was also noted that, for some programmes in MVLS, Intended Learning Outcomes were required by the professional bodies to be written in a specific style. This did not always match the University's requirements.

The process relating to document amendments and further scrutiny of these was highlighted. It was reported that staff were experiencing difficulty in picking up whether required changes had been made. In Science & Engineering, staff had been encouraged to include an annotated copy of the PAG's comments for clarity.

RIO 'traffic light' system

The current system was not considered particularly useful. It was proposed that it would be useful for RIO to compare their pre-approval advice with actual recruitment after the first two years' intake. ***Academic Standards Committee is asked to consider this proposal.***

PAG attendance

In 2011-12, College representatives had been invited to attend PAG meetings in order to respond to queries and also to be able to respond to feedback more quickly. On occasion this had been helpful, but at PAGs where no queries or concerns needed to be addressed, it had been perceived as an unnecessary burden on College staff selected to attend. It was proposed that Colleges could be advised of issues in advance of the PAG meeting in order to ascertain whether attendance was necessary; however, issues were not always identified in advance of the meeting.

Communication of PAG outcomes

There was some dissatisfaction with the current process of 'rejecting' proposals in PIP which required changes to be made prior to approval. In many cases only minor amendments were required. Given that few, if any, proposals were ultimately refused approval, there was a feeling that the use of 'reject' when returning these proposals for amendment might give a negative impression.

Communication of plan changes

The question of how plan changes are notified to interested parties was raised. For example, if a 30 credit Arts course was split into two 15 credit courses, it was not clear how students taking the course in other Colleges would know. Whilst the replacement courses would be approved in the normal way, it was not clear how this change would feed into all of the programmes in which the courses might be taken. At Honours level the change would be (generally) confined within the School, but at levels 1 and 2 a wide variety of Schools might have students taking the courses. ***Academic Standards Committee is asked to consider this point with a view to seeking a solution.***

Conclusion

The Group was generally satisfied with the operation of the programme and course approval process in the current session and recommended that current arrangements should be continued in 2012-13.