

## University of Glasgow

### Academic Standards Committee – Friday 14 February 2014

#### Proposed Revision to Programme and Course Approval Procedures

**Ms H Butcher, Clerk to the Committee**

In December Senate discussed University governance and decision-making and it was agreed that concerns raised by Professor Munck relating to the Programme and Course Approval process should be referred to ASC in order for these procedures to be reviewed.

Professor Munck met with the Convener and Clerk of ASC to outline the detail of his concerns and it was agreed that these should be presented to the next meeting of ASC, with Professor Munck in attendance.

Professor Munck 's concerns related primarily to the decision-making process at College level in terms of both appropriateness of the level at which decisions were made, and the transparency of decisions currently taken. He reiterated the point he had made at Senate that he considered the Programme and Course Approval process to be an example of governance not working well and proposed that this could be remedied by re-locating much of the academic decision-making in the early stages of the process to School level. His concerns focused on the early-stage of the process determining which programmes and courses should be delivered by the School in terms of academic strategy and viability. The latter stages involving monitoring and scrutiny by ASC's Programme Approval Groups to ensure the academic standards and quality of provision were considered to be appropriate.

#### **ASC is invited to consider the following points of detail raised by Professor Munck regarding the current programme and course approval procedures and guidance.**

- Current guidance (in the Senate Quality Enhancement and Assurance: Academic Quality Framework) does not adequately represent the role and tasks undertaken at School level in the approval process: for example consultations with students, external academics, and with RIO, take place within the School with information being passed on to College and ASC level.
- There is some conflict in the guidance on Programme Design and Approval which refers to the process for ensuring the relevance and appeal of programmes under development in the context of meeting the strategic objectives of the leading School and the University, but then suggests that the College Board of Studies is the level at which decisions to develop and offer programmes are made.
- There is currently a lack of transparency regarding how/why College decisions are reached with respect to the development of new programmes, with insufficient feedback, such as detailed minutes, being available to explain why programmes had been selected or not for development. This was liable to create confusion and sometimes hinder effective development of new courses and programmes

#### **ASC is also invited to consider the following recommendations from Professor Munck concerning the devolution of current College Board of Studies (CBoS) approval to School level:**

##### New Degree Programmes or Major Changes

Following preparation by proposer within School (input to PIP, consultation with students, external academics and RIO), and consideration of the Budget Plan by College to confirm

financial viability; ***the full proposal to be considered by the School*** and thereafter forwarded to ASC for scrutiny.

#### Withdrawal of existing Degree Programmes

***Proposals for withdrawal scrutinised and approved by the School*** before reporting to Senate Office.

#### New Courses, Course Changes or Withdrawals

***Course proposals scrutinised and approved by the School (or Convener of School BoS)*** prior to reporting to ASC.

College Boards of Studies would continue to consider budget plans for all new proposals and ASC would, through its PAGs, continue to monitor the academic quality of proposals for new programmes or major changes. Appendix 1 provides an annotated version of the Course and Programme Approval flowchart to indicate which functions would be transferred to School level.

In considering the University's programme and approval process, ASC must take account of Chapter B1 of Part B the QAA's Quality Code which covers Programme design, development and approval. Following consultation last summer, the final version of Chapter B1 was approved in the autumn ([www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/B1.pdf](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/B1.pdf)). The following sections in particular could be relevant to ASC's consideration of Professor Munck's proposals:

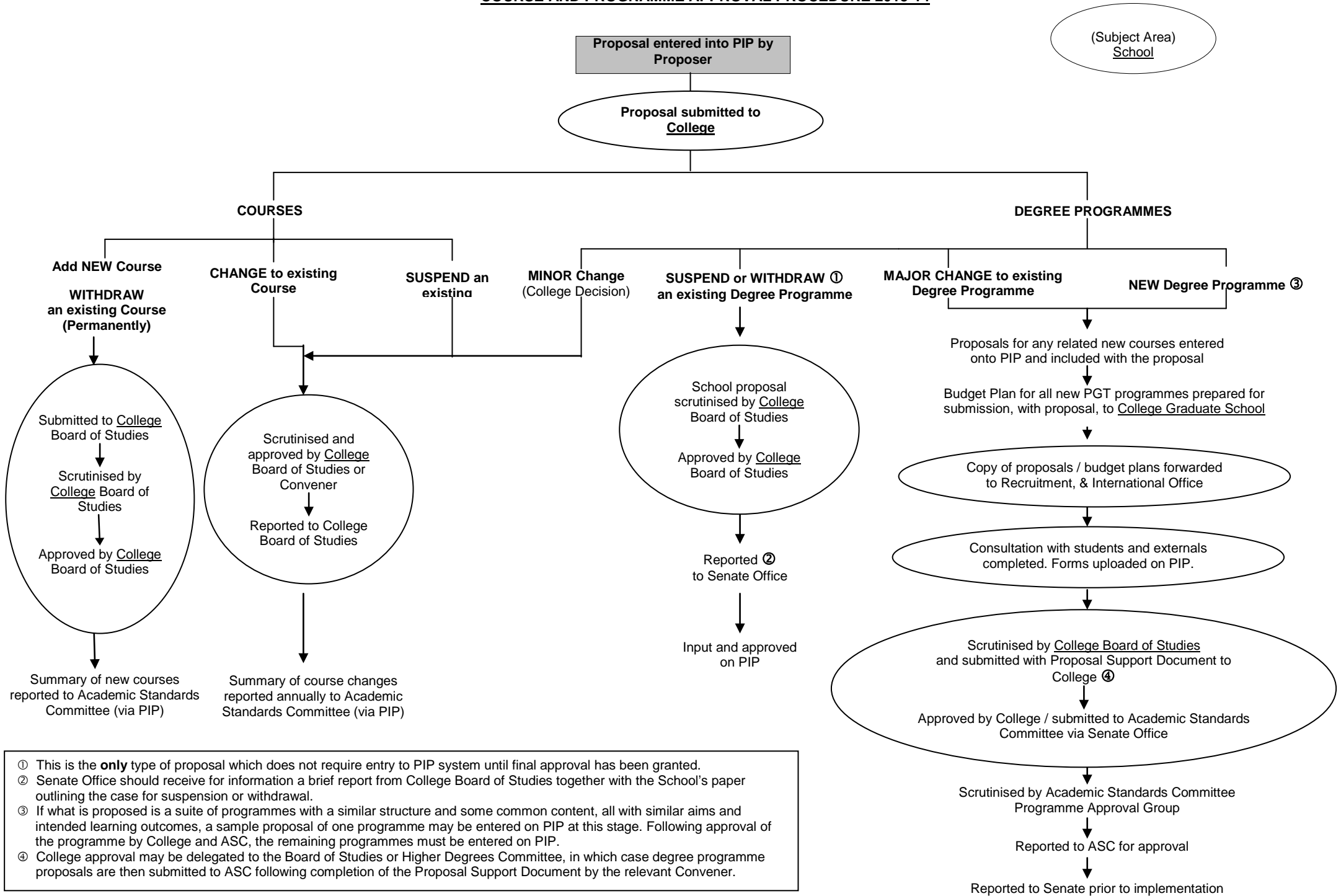
Under Indicator 1 the following is stated in relation to decision-making:

"Decisions relating to the processes for, and outcomes of, programme design, development and approval are taken at the appropriate level within the higher education provider, and the location of authority is made clear. Decisions are taken independently of those involved in developing and delivering the programme, to ensure objectivity."

Under Indicator 7:

"Programme design and processes for programme development and approval involve staff from across the higher education provider and from other organisations with whom they work, including academic teaching staff, professional services staff, such as educational developers and learning technologists, and quality assurance officers."

**COURSE AND PROGRAMME APPROVAL PROCEDURE 2013-14**



① This is the **only** type of proposal which does not require entry to PIP system until final approval has been granted.  
 ② Senate Office should receive for information a brief report from College Board of Studies together with the School's paper outlining the case for suspension or withdrawal.  
 ③ If what is proposed is a suite of programmes with a similar structure and some common content, all with similar aims and intended learning outcomes, a sample proposal of one programme may be entered on PIP at this stage. Following approval of the programme by College and ASC, the remaining programmes must be entered on PIP.  
 ④ College approval may be delegated to the Board of Studies or Higher Degrees Committee, in which case degree programme proposals are then submitted to ASC following completion of the Proposal Support Document by the relevant Convener.