University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Friday 23 May 2014

Report from the Meeting of Programme and Course Approval Working Group – 1 May 2014

Helen Clegg, Clerk to the Working Group

At its meeting on 1 May 2014, the Working Group agreed to report the following items to ASC.

1. **Role of Schools in the Approval Process (for noting)**

   A paper had been submitted by Professor Munck to the Academic Standards Committee to its 14 February 2014 meeting. It had been withdrawn from the ASC agenda and referred to this Working Group for consideration.

   Professor Munck expressed concern about the decision making process at College level, both in terms of the appropriateness of the level at which decisions were made, and the transparency of decisions taken. He did not consider that there was clear information communicated to proposers, particularly where proposals were rejected or changes were sought. He believed that Schools were the more appropriate locus of decision making because knowledge about the subject area, as well as the wider context in which the new course/programme was being proposed, was situated in Schools. He proposed that Schools, rather than Colleges, should be the focus of approval activity prior to the Programme Approval Group stage, with Colleges only participating in the process with respect to financial and resourcing concerns. Professor Munck also noted that the guidance on the operation of the approval process published on the Senate Office website did not reflect the role and tasks undertaken at School level.

   Professor Munck considered that relocating decision making to a full meeting of the School (rather than only School management) would permit open governance, enhance morale and promote participation.

   Representatives from other Colleges disagreed with the proposal to transfer decision making to Schools, indicating that the College stage was a valuable part of the procedure.

   The Convener explained that this Working Group was not the appropriate forum in which to consider a change to University governance. Enquiries would be made with the Convener of ASC as to whether the proposal might be returned to that Committee.

2. **Course Specifications (for noting)**

   2.1 *Review of Course Specifications*

   At its meeting of 14 February 2014, Academic Standards Committee had agreed to seek a review of the data held in Course Specifications in order to categorise it into different types for approval purposes (e.g. corrections, minor/major changes), and to consider the appropriate level of approval for each type.

It was noted by the Working Group that the content of the specification, and the levels of approval required for each field, had been updated incrementally, but there had been no systematic review for several years. It was agreed that a sub-group comprising the Convener, the Clerk and Ms Phelan would meet to review the specification, and would circulate recommendations to the rest of the Working Group.

2.2   Key Information Set (KIS) Data Collection

A meeting had been held on 4 February 2014 to discuss the required update to course specifications, following agreement by the PIP and Plan Building Working Group to revise the structure of the learning, teaching and assessment fields in order to align with the data collected for submission to the KIS. Two possible methods of data collection had been offered: (i) that the revised information be input directly to the specification at the same time as Course Catalogue checking was taking place, or (ii) that the data be collected separately by means of a spreadsheet circulated to Colleges. Option (ii) was preferred by Colleges. The data would need to be collected prior to the PIP annual rollover in August, and ideally by the deadline set for catalogue checking, in order that the catalogue entries linked to an up to date course specification. The Clerk would contact College Heads of Academic & Student Administration shortly to advise them of the requirements and deadlines.

3.   Programme Withdrawals (for noting)

The Working Group was asked to consider revising the PIP checklist for programme withdrawal/suspension, to ascertain whether the process could be streamlined, whether external consultation was required for suspension proposals was necessary, and whether the process could be carried out via PIP in the same way as other types of proposal.

It was agreed that external consultation was not required for suspension proposals, and the guidance would be updated to reflect this. It was also agreed that withdrawals and suspensions should be proposed via PIP in the same way as other proposals. The Clerk would notify relevant parties of this change and update the guidance documents.

A number of amendments to the process and the associated checklist had been suggested by colleagues in the College of Social Sciences. The Clerk agreed to discuss these with Ms Phelan after the PIP checklist had been updated to reflect the decision to propose withdrawals and suspensions via PIP. It was likely that changes arising from this decision would address some of the points raised by the College.

4.   Proposed Amendments to Specification Templates for Collaborative Provision (for noting)

A paper was submitted indicating several amendments to the specification templates, which were needed in order to accurately record information for students on collaborative degrees in line with the requirements of the QAA Quality Code (Chapter B10).

The required amendments were as follows:

- Allow up to five awarding institutions to be indicated on the programme specification;
- Clarify the intention of the 'location of study' field on the course specification;
- Add a text field to the 'location of study' field in the programme specification together with instruction text;
- Add a field for 'language of instruction' and 'language of assessment', with instruction text, to the programme specification;

- Indicate on the instruction text of the course specification that course titles should include the name of the institution, if not Glasgow;
- Indicate in the instruction text of the programme specification that course titles shown in the 'structure and features' section should indicate where the course is studied;
- Add new fields for 'collaborative' and 'type of collaboration' (which could be more than one type) in the programme specification;
- Add a field in the programme proposal support document for 'level of contribution'. ASC had approved thresholds for partner contributions, and this information should be provided in the instruction text.

The Working Group agreed to these changes, which would be made in time for the beginning of the 2014-15 session.