University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Friday 13 February 2015

Report from the Meeting of the Programme and Course Approval Working Group held on 2 December 2014

Ms Helen Clegg, Clerk to the Committee

The Working Group wishes to report the following items to ASC, which were discussed at the Working Group meeting of 2 December 2014.

1. **Review of Levels of Approval in Course Specifications (for approval)**

    Academic Standards Committee had requested that the data in Course Specifications be reviewed in order to categorise it into different types for approval purposes, and to consider the appropriate levels of approval for each type.

    The following fields were ruled too important to bypass College scrutiny:

    - Independent Work [7]
    - Subject [8]
    - Open Studies Credit Bearing [25]
    - All summative assessment fields (numeric and text) [30, 30.1, 30.2]

    The following fields are currently classed as 'minor fields' and changes to these can already be made with the approval of the School rather than College:

    - Collaborative [12]
    - Teaching Institutions [13]
    - Requirements of Entry [15]
    - Co-requisites [16]
    - Excluded Courses [17]
    - Associated Programmes [18]
    - Typically Offered [19]
    - Available to Visiting Students [22]

    It was agreed to recommend that the following fields would be added to the list of 'minor fields':

    - Location [9]
    - Timetable [20]
    - Available to Erasmus students [23]
    - Open Studies credit bearing [25]
    - Represents a work placement or period of study abroad [26]
    - Formative Assessment [31]
    - Additional Relevant Information [35]

It was also agreed to recommend that fields 36 – 38, which related to student numbers, be removed from the Course Specification and added to the Course Proposal Support Document.

ASC is asked to approve these recommended changes. If approved, the changes will be included in the next version of the Course Specification template, in summer 2015.

2. Intended Learning Outcomes (for noting)

At its meeting of 15 April 2014, ASC had considered a report on feedback received by the Learning and Teaching Centre, concerning the structure of ILOs within programme specifications. In the report it was noted that the programme specifications' division into knowledge, skills and transferrable skills was not particularly helpful, as many ILOs overlapped between these areas. It had been requested that these distinctions be removed.

The Working Group agreed that, provided the relevant areas were covered, there was no need to continue presenting ILOs under the current headings. The instruction text within the specification, and the guidance notes on completing programme specifications, would be amended in summer 2015.

Concern had also been raised regarding previous PAG feedback on the wording of ILOs, as there was a sense that certain verbs (such as 'describe' and 'identify' had been banned from the construction of ILOs.

The PCAWG concurred with ASC's view that no words should be banned, but noted that in many cases the wording of ILOs was not appropriate to the award level and that more active verbs needed to be used in order to more appropriately reflect the level of work undertaken by the student. It was agreed that clarification would be made in the guidance documentation, in consultation with the Learning & Teaching Centre.

3. Submission of Proposals One or More Sessions in Advance (for noting)

A request had been made to allow submission of course and programme proposals a year or more in advance of their proposed start date. This was considered to be important from a marketing perspective.

It was noted that the main difficulty with meeting this request was that proposals would be submitted on a specification template which changes annually. If new fields were to be added, they would not be completed for proposals submitted before the implementation of the new template.

It was agreed that PIP would be developed to permit the submission and approval of proposals a year or more before their proposed start date, but on the understanding that any gaps in data arising from changes to the specification template were addressed before the start date.

4. Currency and Validity of Data (for noting)

At its meeting of 14 February 2014, ASC had noted difficulties in maintaining current and valid data, and requested that the Working Group consider ways of reducing these difficulties.

The main issue was the annual updating of programme specifications and, to a lesser extent, the updating of course specifications for the Course Catalogue. It was understood that Schools did not prioritise these tasks, focusing instead on keeping their course and programme handbooks up to date.

Since the introduction of the online Course Catalogue, which includes all courses, course data had steadily improved and this was seen as less problematic than programme information. The Working Group agreed to focus on ensuring the accuracy and currency of programme information. Schools would be reminded that, when making even very minor changes to their programme specification, they must check the entire document to ensure it is complete and current. Additionally, it was agreed that a report would be run from PIP indicating which programmes had not been changed in any way throughout the session, and these would be highlighted to Schools with specific instructions to ensure they were checked.

5. **Currency and Validity of Data (for noting)**

A request had been received to permit the use of web links, rather than documents, for course handbook information held in PIP. This would remove the need for annual uploading of documents to PIP.

It was noted that this could be done easily, but there were concerns that there might be inconsistent use, with some Schools uploading documents and web links and not keeping both up to date. It was agreed that a facility to add a web link would be introduced, but Schools would be advised that they must either upload a document or include a web link, but not both.