

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Friday 13 November 2015

Course & Programme Review – Action Plan

Dr Jack Aitken, Director, Senate Office

Proposal to re-establish the Programme & Course Approvals Working Group as 'Course & Programme Approval Steering Group' (CPASG)

Senate approved the review of the Course and Programme Approval process at its meeting in June. (Copy agreed recommendations appended).

One of the areas where change was recommended was the governance of the approval process. The idea was to adopt a more strategic and proactive approach - engaging more with users and addressing their concerns more visibly. To assist with this, it is proposed to re-form PCAWG, with a slightly different membership and remit (the current remit refers back to the review of the process in 2006, so needs to be refreshed anyway). A new name might also help re-establish the group's existence in the mind of the community also, and the title 'Course & Programme Approval Steering Group' is proposed.

Review recommendations also included the potential establishment of a user group and the development of online guidance for general users. It is proposed that the new Steering Group oversees this.

Remit:

To oversee on behalf of ASC the process for the approval of courses and programmes for the University, submitting proposals to ASC for the development and improvement of the process.

In this, the Steering Group will maintain links with the user community to identify issues and possible enhancements to the process and/or the supporting IT system.

The Steering Group will also maintain a process User Group and online user advice and good practice resources to support the user community and act as a communications channel.

Composition:

Convener: tbc

1 X Dean Learning & Teaching (Deans to select)

1-2 appointees from each College, normally School L&T Conveners

Convener, User Group

1 ITS representative

1 SLSD representative

1 Senate Office representative

Clerk: Senate Office

User Group composition:

Convener

1 x representative from each College

1 x ITS Representative

1 x Senate Office representative

Course and Programme Approval Process Review:

List of Recommendations

Programme Approval

1. Authority is delegated to College Boards of Studies across the University on a pilot basis to approve new and amended programmes from 2016-17.
2. Recommendation 1 to be monitored by ASC with a view to full implementation from 2017-18.
3. To support this change:
 - from 2015-16, Boards of Studies include in their membership either current PAG Chairs or members of PAGs (subsequently, experienced members of ASC) from other Colleges
 - ASC establishes a sub-group in 2016-17 (perhaps comprising the current PAG Conveners or other experienced PAG members) to consider and decide on its behalf the approval of programme proposals that span Colleges and/or where there is concern at the Board of Studies whether the proposal complies with University policy
 - The Senate Office audits and reports annually to ASC on programme approval activity by Boards of Studies
 - To help address workload issues at Boards of Studies, the practice at ASC and in some Schools and Colleges should be adopted across the University, whereby detailed consideration of programme proposals is provided by a small number of Board members, who then identify the key issues for consideration at the Board meeting. (Ideally, the sub-groups would include the Board members who are ASC members from other Colleges.)
4. As interim measures:
 - in 2015-16, the College Boards of Studies across the University are given authority to approve all changes to programmes
 - in 2015-16, PAGS are given authority to approve new programmes without the need to submit recommendations to a meeting of ASC for endorsement (though referring programme proposals to ASC for decision where there is concern that they comply with University policy)
 - and that these measures are monitored by ASC by means of an audit report prepared by the Senate Office
5. Further, that:
 - there is appropriate and updated guidance on procedural changes and training of the members of Boards of Studies as agreed by ASC and delivered and developed in conjunction with the Senate Office
 - there is appropriate promotion of the procedural changes to the University community
6. ASC reviews the definitions of minor and major presently provided to develop criteria to determine when the full approval process should be triggered by proposed changes, and that ASC develops appropriate lighter-touch arrangements to deal with less significant changes to programmes.
7. Judgement on the adequacy of resources to support programme proposals is removed from the role of the Boards of Studies.
8. Boards should receive by means of a simple box-tick confirmation that the College has approved the financial implications of introducing new/amended programmes.

9. Following appropriate consultation with the Vice-Principal/Head of College, the Head of School/Director of Research Centre signs off to confirm that the resource requirements have been assessed and approved and that the proposed programme is consistent with College and University strategy.

Course Approval

10. Authority is delegated to Schools and Research Institutes across the University on a pilot basis to approve new and amended courses and withdrawal of courses they provide from 2016-17.
11. Recommendation 10 is monitored by ASC and Boards of Studies with a view to full implementation from 2016-17.
12. To support this change:
 - from 2015-16, School/Research institute Learning and Teaching Committees include in their membership experienced members of the corresponding Board of Studies from other Schools/RIs
 - School/RI L&T Committees refer to the Board of studies for consideration and approval course proposals that raise issues of precedence or principle or significantly impact on the provision of other Schools/RIs
 - Boards of Studies audit annually and report to ASC on course approval activity by the corresponding Schools/RIs
 - To address workload issues at L&T Committees, detailed consideration of proposals should be carried out by a small sub-group of Committee members, who then identify key issues for consideration at the Committee meeting. Where practicable, these sub-groups should include a member from another School.
13. Further, that, as interim measures:
 - for 2015-16, Schools/RIs across the University are given authority to approve all changes to courses (also **withdrawals**, subject to confirmation that it will be possible to amend PIP to accommodate this in time)
 - and that this is monitored by the Boards of Studies and ASC by means of an audit report compiled by each Board
14. As with changes to existing programmes, that ASC reviews the criteria used to determine the approval process required for the approval of changes to courses with a view to adopting lighter-touch arrangements proportionate to the scale of the activity. Again, a further consideration in this regard is the need to ensure that the documentation produced for the approval process is also minimised. As part of this activity, consideration should also be given to the retention of the process for suspending courses in PIP.
15. The School/RI Learning and Teaching Committee receives confirmation that the financial and other resource issues and strategic fit of the proposal are certified for the L&T Committee by means of a simple box-tick confirmation approved by the Head of School/RI Director.

Information Issues

16. Re Specifications and Support Documents, fields concerning resource issues to be removed and replaced by a simple box to indicate that the College is content in this respect.
17. Re Specifications and Support Documents, additional fields are pre-populated with standard responses and that additional options are added to drop-down lists (e.g., re assessment types).

18. Specifications are reformatted to foreground student-related rather than technical information, and that their general appearance is revised, to make them more appealing and accessible to students and to foreground pedagogic matters better. As part of this, consideration should be given to either splitting the document into two parts or enabling two versions of the document to be viewed: one version to include the technical information and guidance on completing the template, with tick-boxes to highlight where the proposal would deviate from standard wording. In the other version, to be viewed by (prospective) students and to be the focus of attention of the L&T Committee/Board, the guidance and technical information would be invisible.
19. Consideration is given to including in Specifications further information about the plans (and requirements) likely to be affected by newly approved courses, to assist in updating in MyCampus.
20. Guidance is provided to indicate that **as an option only**, further detail may be provided to field 14: Short Description (possibly along the lines of a brief syllabus, it has been suggested).
21. Recruiting agents working for the University should receive a briefing document on the terminology used to describe provision so they may better advise prospective students.
22. The Support Documents should include the name of the person proposing the new/changed course or programme.
23. The User Group proposed below reviews the content and structure of the pro formas to ensure they are supportive and submits recommendations to ASC to ensure the consultation pro formas are helpfully and appropriately configured – for example, while it is appropriate that students are requested to provide views on the withdrawal of an optional course and may wish to voice strong support for its retention, the context for the proposal may be the retirement of teaching staff concerned, rendering the course effectively undeliverable and potentially provoking needless tension. A link to the room-booking system has also been suggested and the Group should also consider this.
24. The Senate Office should revamp guidance information thoroughly in line with the report.

Supporting IT

25. Further consideration to be given to how PIP can be changed technically with a view to reducing the thresholds that prompt re-approval of provision, subject to decisions made under recommendation 26.
26. Fresh consideration is given to extending the functionality of MyCampus to support the course and programme approval process. As a first step, it is recommended that a specification is prepared and an estimate of the resource required developed for consideration by the MyCampus Approvals Board.
27. If it is agreed that the course and programme approval process is integrated into MyCampus, thorough testing and piloting of the system and full involvement of users in the design and building processes should be required before it is implemented.
28. Amendment of PIP is made to facilitate the changes to the approval process, to be taken forward during 2015-16.
29. With respect to the detailed potential amendments to PIP listed in Appendix 5, that:
 - it is decided which proposals are implemented in light of a decision whether to maintain PIP or not

- the review of PIP suggested by the Head of Development and Integration in ITS proceeds and implements the agreed amendments to PIP.
30. The governance structure for PIP is reviewed, with a view potentially to establishing a Steering Group and Good Practice and online general users' Fora.

List of Changes to PIP Suggested During the Review

The following comprises the list of suggestions received during the review concerning possible changes to PIP.

As noted in the report, it is recommended that consideration is given to extending the functionality of MyCampus to support the course and programme approval process. The outcome of that consideration (which would include likely timescales for such a change) should determine what changes should be made to PIP. To help with the latter decisions, the following provides an approximate grading of the scale of the undertaking required to effect the suggested change. It is also recommended that detailed assessment and recommendations on potential changes should be provided by a new PIP Steering Group. That apart, however, change will be required to PIP to accommodate the changes to the approval process itself.

1. Minor amendments

- Re Specifications:
 - reformatting,
 - revision of appearance
 - possible splitting into technical and general user versions
 - possible addition of information on plans and requirements likely to be affected by proposed changes
- Open access to system (for Library staff, eg)
- Add to drop-down prompts for assessment and L&T methods, etc
- Amend heading to '**Planned** L&T Methods'
- Check why course code allocation can stall
- Additional pre-population of fields – awarding institution, eg
- Reorder table for KIS to match HESA table
- Course Specification Qu.11.1 – consider removing
- Course Specification Qu. 25 – remove
- Proposal Support documents – consult Schools and Colleges on retention/removal of resource questions and replacement with tick box to confirm resources and strategic fit are approved

2. Mid-level amendments

- **AMEND TO FIT REVISED APPROVAL PROCESSES: REQUIRED**
- Improve interface with CMIS
- Action to reduce sensitivity of system in prompting need for approval
- Can system be amended to facilitate better use on Apple devices?

3. Substantial/fundamental amendments

- Can the system be changed to foreground/highlight the proposed changes to courses and programmes and significantly reduce documentation?
- Can the requirement to cut and paste be reduced?
- How to facilitate analysis across courses and programmes?
- Enhance interface with MyCampus –can the systems correspond better?