

University of Glasgow**Academic Standards Committee – Friday 6 October 2017****Feedback from College Deans of Learning & Teaching/College Boards of Studies on the Revised Programme & Course Approval Processes****Ms H Clegg, Senate Office****September 2017****Introduction**

In the 2015-16 academic year, revisions were made to the programme and course approval processes, to allow Schools to approve course approvals, and Colleges to approve programme changes. The processes were further revised in 2016-17 to extend College approval responsibility to new programmes.

In line with previous years' practice, College Deans of Learning & Teaching, and College Boards of Studies, were invited to comment on the operation of the revised processes, indicating what had worked well and what might need further consideration.

In addition, Deans were asked to comment on the appropriateness of, in the future, extending School responsibility such that minor programme changes were approved by Schools. This would mirror the previous process whereby Colleges approved minor programme changes while ASC Programme Approval Groups approved major programme changes and new programmes. No date was suggested for implementing any such change.

Summary of Feedback Received**College of Arts**

It was reported that there had been mixed reports on the operation of the revised processes. Two of the Schools reported the process worked well at undergraduate level, with the main advantages being the improved speed of the process and a reduction of the time spent reviewing papers. However, difficulties had been created by differing practice in implementing the revised processes in the different Schools. Auditing of School activity was found to be bureaucratic and time consuming. It was noted that a high number of errors were being detected in PIP forms, and that courses were being approved without approved terminology being used. This was noticed in particular at PGT level, with the consequence that more time had to be spent auditing proposals and providing guidance to staff. Additionally, the large number of errors was problematic given that the course documentation is publicly available. It was reported that the revised processes had led to increased workloads for School staff. For these reasons, the revision of the process to devolve responsibility for courses to Schools was not found to be helpful. Further, the suggestion of devolving approval of minor programme changes to Schools was not supported at present.

College of Medical, Veterinary & Life Sciences

The College reported that the revised processes had operated reasonably well and, after some initial difficulty, was considered to be an improvement overall on the previous processes. The main advantage was the reduction of workload at College level. However, some difficulty had been experienced due to the requirement for two College representatives to be present at

School boards. Some issues were also noted in the quality of course documentation when this was audited by College.

The College did not support the proposal to devolve minor programme changes to Schools at this stage. There was concern that what constituted 'minor' changes might be open to interpretation. It was felt that College oversight was required in order to ensure that the quality of proposals and documentation was maintained.

College of Science & Engineering

The revised processes were found to have operated fairly well. Although College Boards of Studies had been lengthy, it was considered that the presence of former Programme Approval Group members was useful in guiding Conveners as to scrutiny requirements. It was noted that there were quality issues in terms of the documentation submitted by Schools, as had previously been the case. College, on auditing approvals, had found the quality of the documentation and the level of scrutiny to be poor (though it was suggested that the latter may have been due to minimal minuting). The College planned to run a training event for School Boards of Studies. That said, the College was in favour of devolving the approval of minor programme changes to Schools.

College of Social Sciences

On the whole, the revised processes had worked well though the volume of proposals to be approved by Colleges had been an issue due to staffing levels. It was also reported that much more guidance than usual was required as there was a lack of understanding of the new requirements within Schools. It had not been possible for the College to meet the requirement of having two former Programme Approval Group members on the Board of Studies, and it was requested that this role be formalised so that similar problems did not recur. Similarly, the Adam Smith Business School had been unable to secure a member from a cognate School to consider its undergraduate proposals. The increased workload at School level was noted as a concern, as was the lack of expertise in scrutiny of proposals.

It was reported that the process operated well after some initial difficulties. Within the Adam Smith Business School, improvements had been made by separating undergraduate and postgraduate proposals into separate Boards, which permitted greater scrutiny. The School of Social & Political Sciences believed that the revised processes had greatly improved approval, offering enhanced flexibility and agility, and placing greater emphasis on School management.

No College view was expressed in relation to the suggestion of further devolution of responsibility to Schools.

Recommendations

1. The role of the Cognate member on School Committees, and of the former PAG member on College committees, should be formalised, with named staff being allocated to each School/College. This ensures former PAG members have clear information about the meetings they will be expected to attend, and Schools/Colleges can be confident that they will be able to meet the membership requirement.
2. At present, no further change to approval levels will be progressed. Senate Office will consult again with Colleges at the end of the 2017-18 academic year.

ASC is asked to approve these recommendations.

ASC members were also asked to provide feedback regarding their involvement as ASC reps on College Boards of Studies.

The responses received so far are as follows:

Professor Douglas MacGregor - I have served as an external representative on the MVLS postgraduate board of studies for the past year. This has gone extremely smoothly, largely due to the very high standards of preparation of new programme documentation by the MVLS staff. The documents have been circulated in good time and the discussion at the board of studies meetings has been efficient and to the point.