

LTC09D137

Title: LTC Governance
Author: Alison Rhodes, Head of the Learning, Teaching and Quality Office
Date: 10 May, 2010
Version: Draft
Circulation: Learning and Teaching Committee – 26 May 2010
Agenda: LTC09A007
Status: Open

1. Background

- 1.1 Members may recall that in 2004/5 the University established a joint Council and Senate Committee on governance. This exercise coincided with the restructuring into Faculties.
- 1.2 The impetus for the Review of Governance was to promote efficiency and effectiveness. The review resulted in a revised constitution for the Learning and Teaching Committee and a change of name (from Learning, Teaching and Quality to Learning and Teaching). The Terms of Reference of the Committee were retained with adjustments to the titles of LTC Directors and to include reference to Faculty Associate Deans as Chairs of their respective Learning, Teaching and Quality Committees.
- 1.3 The Learning and Teaching Committee also considered:
 - proposals regarding the business of School Teaching Committees and student representation at the School level in February, 2005
 - a progress report in June 2005
 - in December, 2006 a review of the operation of the governance of learning and teaching introduced from 2004/5 resulting in proposals for further reviews. These reviews included the roles of School Directors of Learning and Teaching and of Faculty Associate Dean (Learning, Teaching and Quality) in the light of the establishment and operation of the new Faculty structures; the operation of the new course proposals process; arrangements for concessions against the regulations and the undergraduate advising system;
 - in May, 2007 the outcomes of the reviews in four of the above areas, noting that the review of the Advising System would be separately led by the Director of Taught Programmes and the Dean of Students.
- 1.4 This paper is an overview of the current “state of play” with regard to governance of learning and teaching. It also sets out for members’ information a number of developments that have been implemented since 2007, takes into account the 2009 Institutional Audit by the Quality Assurance Agency and concludes by recommending that the current division of responsibilities and balance between University and Faculty roles is appropriate.

2. Actions Since 2007

2.1 Faculty Associate Deans and School Director (LTQ)

- 2.1.1 In May, 2007, the Committee recommended to Senate (which endorsed the recommendations) that the roles of Faculty Associate Dean and of School Director of Learning, Teaching and Quality should be retained. There were some revisions to the role descriptions. These roles remain in place and carry key responsibilities with regard to the

conduct and operation of quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms. It was accepted that the scope of the role of the School Director carried significant responsibilities and to this end, it was written into the role description that the responsibilities of the role might be fulfilled in one or more ways, including by one individual, by two academics sharing stewardship of the role and dividing responsibility between them (normally between taught programmes and postgraduate research) or with the assistance of one or more academic staff carrying delegated responsibilities and reporting to the School Director.

- 2.1.2 In our 2009 Institutional Audit by the Quality Assurance Agency, we explained the role and relationship between LT Directors and Faculty Associate Deans as providing LTC and Senate with breadth, depth and “bottom up/top down” perspectives to the issues and challenges of managing and maintaining academic standards and enhancing the quality of the student experience. The subsequent audit report stated that (paragraph 8) “the University’s Executive and deliberative framework based on the reporting structures and memberships of the Learning and Teaching Committee, the Faculty Learning, Teaching and Quality Committees and the School Boards provides a structure that allows a systematic communication and the operation of the Institution’s management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities”.
- 2.1.3 The role and relationship between LTC Directors and Associate Deans (LTQ) has brought benefits to the Committee (and importantly to the student academic experience) in terms of the breadth (University-wide in the case of Directors) as well as depth (School to Faculty to University in the case of Associate Deans). Whilst there have occasionally been tensions in the “middle” where the roles intersect, the combination of the University-wide Directorship role and the drilling-down capacity of Associate Deans has been powerful. The Committee should continue to make use of the different experience and insights both roles can bring and to facilitate the sharing of good practice/developments between Faculties. It is also acceptable for Directors to liaise with and consult School Directors (LTQ) for example in pertinent issues.
- 2.1.4 The audit report’s strong endorsement (“systematic communication”) indicates that the balance is about right between Faculties and university-level Committees as far as formal quality assurance/quality enhancement is concerned. We should not therefore dispense with our current model without extremely careful consideration. Indeed, the resounding endorsement suggests that there are cogent reasons for continuing our present structure. It is also suggested that LTC’s focus should now be placed School Directors (LTQ) and Course Programme Leaders to encourage even greater coherence and to capture more systematically their experience, insights, concerns to ensure the maintenance of academic standards and the enhancement of the student academic experience.

2.2 **Advising System**

- 2.2.1 The review of the advising system led to the implementation of a new policy from the 2008-09 session. Whilst the system clearly works well in most Schools and for most students, we are aware that there are some pinch points in certain areas, as feedback from the National Student Survey indicates. The advising system should continue to be the subject of annual monitoring and consideration (the next survey is due in 2010-11). Following review (probably in 2012-13) of a revised advising system at UEA London, which will pilot an alternate model to that in place in Norwich, the advising system should undergo a full review.

2.3 **New Course Proposals Process**

- 2.3.1 The May 2007 proposal that the new course approvals process should be amended to introduce formal consideration of the business as well as an academic case, with central offices (including the Dean of Students’ Office, the Careers Centre as well as the Recruitment, Admissions and Marketing Committee) being more systematically consulted was accepted. The view that this would result in Faculty Executives having a more rounded view of the business case and Faculty LTQCs a more comprehensive overview of the academic case for new course proposals was endorsed. It was proposed that the new course proposal form should be updated and streamlined where possible.

- 2.3.2 The timetable for the formal implementation of this new system was subsequently affected by the development and implementation of SITS and the need to prepare for the 2009 audit. In the interim however, the Social Sciences Faculty has piloted a paper-based version of the new process (see the report to the Learning and Teaching Committee in December, 2009 (LTC09D046)), and a major project has been under way to develop the use of process manager as a tool for managing the many communications necessary in such a new process. The build of Process Manager is now complete and is in the initial stages of testing, with a demonstration having recently been given to members of the Taught Programmes Management Group (TPMG). It is planned that further testing with members of TPMG will take place in July with the prospect of role-out from early next Semester.

Other Faculties are also introducing the consideration of business cases e.g. Faculty of Health and Faculty of Arts and Humanities, ahead of the formal implementation of process manager.

- 2.3.3 Responsibility for approval of most new course proposals (those not involving new subject areas) was delegated to Faculties. On the whole this system is working reasonably well, as indicated in the annual report to the Committee on the operation of the procedure. It is the view of the Process Manager Development Team that the new tool will aid communication (with many steps in the communication process being done automatically), reduce the amount of paper in the system and thus help speed up the consideration of new proposals, as well as ensuring its continued robustness. In addition, LTC has recently approved a formal course closure procedure, the first formal notifications of which are included in Section C of the agenda for the 26 May, 2010 meeting.

- 2.3.4 **Taking the above into account, it is recommended that there be no change to the current level of authority for dealing with new course provision.**

2.4 Concessions

- 2.4.1 At the time of the review of governance, the review did not specifically examine current levels of authority to consider and approve various types of concession requests, but examined the principles behind the process and its operation.

The immediate outcome of the review was the adoption of a “circumstances affecting study” pro-forma which students might use, with accompanying guidance, to help them explain the impact of extenuating circumstances on their academic studies and how to submit appropriate supporting evidence.

- 2.4.2 The Learning and Teaching Committee’s Directorate and Faculty Associate Deans subsequently considered a range of proposals in April, 2008, concerning the future management of concessions. At that meeting, the principles of further devolution of decision making was considered in addition to the existing range of concessionary powers delegated to Schools via regulations and other mechanisms. It was considered that with the embedding of the Faculty structure, it would be appropriate to expand the range of concessionary powers at both School and Faculty level. In so doing, it was noted that as part of the annual review of regulations undertaken by the Learning, Teaching and Quality Office with Directors, minor modifications had been made to delegate more concessionary powers to Schools (within the regulatory frameworks) in the light of experience of operating the concessions.

- 2.4.3 The report considered whether appointment of examiners by the LTQ Office and Directors added value to the process. It noted that “whilst there could be complex cases requiring detailed solutions and in which issues of parity of treatment came in to play, the majority of concessions and appointments currently considered were regarded as straight forward”. It was consequently recommended that approval of Boards of Examiners (taught programmes) and individual examiners (research degrees) should be devolved to Faculties or Schools where these fell within normal parameters. The Directors and LTQO would continue to be involved in the consideration of recommendations for a fourth year of

appointment (taught programmes) or a fourth appointment (research degrees). A central registrar of examiners would still be maintained to ensure institutional oversight and to facilitate payment of fees and production of pass lists. External examiner reports would continue to proceed via LTQO on behalf of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor.

2.4.4 Other areas for further delegation of authority considered at that time included:-

- transfers between part-time and full-time versions of the same taught course and for research students;
- straight-forward course transfers extending authority to approve such transfers beyond the previous limit of within 4 weeks of the start of the autumn semester or satisfactory completion of the first or second stage of a course, provided that the student was in good academic standing and able to pursue the course profile of the intended course;
- approval for registration on dates other than those specified in regulations for research degrees only.

It was recommended that the following concession requests should continue to be considered by Directors because of the complexity of arrangements and/or because they involved issues of equity and/or of principle;

- repeat years of studies;
- intercalations (taught programmes) involving a repeat period of study in excess of the first four weeks of semester;
- intercalations (taught programmes) for more than 12 months;
- second or further assessment/reassessment opportunities (including good cause);
- extensions beyond those specified in regulations or readmissions;
- APL/APEL requests as specified in the APL policy;
- variation in assessments;
- proposal to extend the power of authority to Faculty Associate Deans (Learning, Teaching and Quality) and Associate Deans (Research) in respect of Chairing of Stage 2 Academic Appeals. (See 2.5.2 below).

2.4.5 The principles put forward in the paper had the support of LTC Directors and Faculty Associate Deans. These proposals were subsequently discussed by the Learning and Teaching Committee at its meeting on 4 February, 2009, following consideration within the Taught Programmes Policy Group on 14 January, 2009. Recommendations were then presented to LTC in 27 May, 2009 and adopted following consultation with Faculties and discussions in the Taught Programmes Management Group for implementation from 2009-10.

2.4.6 **Given that this is the first full year of operation of the delegation of the locus of decision making, it is recommended to the Committee that a review of their operation be conducted by the Taught Programmes Policy Group and the PgR Programmes Policy Group during next session.**

2.5 Academic Appeals – PgR Students

2.5.1 Members will be aware that Professor Richard Gray has been appointed Director of Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes vice Professor Chris Vincent. The appointment is for 1 day per week for one year in the first instance. This being the case, it is proposed that the existing responsibilities of the Director of Postgraduate Degree Research Programmes in respect of Stage 2 Academic Appeals should be extended to Associate Deans (Learning, Teaching and Quality and of Research) to enable them to develop and share expertise in this area.

2.5.2 It is envisaged that similar principles will govern the involvement of Associate Deans in Stage 2 Academic Appeals to those that apply to the involvement of LT Directors. Thus an Associate Dean will not consider an appeal arising from a student from their School, and

will not consider an appeal at the Stage 2 screening stage and then Chair a Stage 2 appeal hearing concerning the same case.

- 2.5.3 **It is recommended that the responsibilities of the Director of Postgraduate Research Degree programmes be extended to Associate Dean (Learning, Teaching and Quality) without the prior permission from the Vice-Chancellor, is recommended from 2010-11.**