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**Senate**

**Subject: Review of Regulation XXII (Taught Programme Internal and External Examiners and Review and Programme Boards)**

**Origin: Academic Registry**

1. **Executive Summary**

This paper proposes changes to Regulation XXII (paragraphs 11-13; 17-18). The amendments relate mainly to the removal of independent board members from the membership of Programme and Review Boards. However, the opportunity has also been taken to suggest removing the requirement for the Academic Registrar to approve the membership of Programme Boards.

This paper was discussed by the Academic Standards and Procedures Sub-Committee (ASPSC) on 21 May. The extract from the minutes of ASPSC follows:

12/14 Proposed Amendment to Regulation XXII (Taught Programme Internal and External Examiners and Review and Programme Boards)

ASPSC12-P07

Members considered a proposal to amend Regulation XXII. The amendments related mainly to the removal of independent board members from the membership of Programme and Review Boards and removal of the requirement for the Academic Registrar to approve the membership of Programme Boards.

The proposal to remove independent board members from Board membership had originated from DALG. Responses received following consultation with other HEIs indicated that the University’s inclusion of an independent staff member in board membership was out of line with practice at other HEIs. Consultation with Schools had revealed that removing this requirement would result in a time saving for both academic and administrative staff.

The amendments would also include the removal of the requirement for the Academic Registrar to approve the membership of Programme Boards. The current practice was considered to be an unnecessary administrative process which created additional work for schools and could lead to delays in appointing Boards. Instead Schools/departments would be asked to include a list of Programme Board members in the paperwork sent to the Academic Registry. This change had been supported by DALG.

It was AGREED to recommend the amendment to the regulations to LTC to come into effect from 1 August 2012.

This paper was also approved by Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) on 14 June.

1. **Proposals**

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| Independent Board Members |

Background

Regulation XXII currently states that the membership of all Review Boards and Programme Boards must include an “independent board member”. The Regulation defines an independent board member as follows:

**12.** In order to be eligible to serve as an independent board member, an individual must:

**12.1** Appear on the schedule of suitably experienced potential independent board members maintained and published by the Academic Registrar from time to time.

**12.2** Not be a member of the School responsible for the programme or, in the case of joint degree programmes, the partner School/Department and must not have engaged in any of the academic work which is the subject of the Board's consideration.

Members of DALG (Departmental Administrators Liaison Group) have requested that this requirement be reviewed for the following reasons:

* A significant amount of academic staff time is spent attending Programme and Review Boards as independent board members.
* A significant amount of administrative time is spent trying to find members of academic staff willing/available to act as independent board members.
* The move to Schools (rather than departments) has made it significantly more difficult for some Schools to recruit independent board members as the departments they would have traditionally approached are now part of the same School.
* In practice it has not been possible to create/maintain a list as described in 12.1 of the Regulation.

Risks of removing requirement to include independent board members

Any proposal to stop recruiting independent board members must address concerns/risks that have been raised via informal consultation with ADTs.

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| Risk | Mitigating Actions |
| Less opportunities for sharing best practice – the presence of members from other Schools/departments at Boards has been a useful mechanism for sharing good practice and this may be lost. | The creation of Schools has altered the membership of LTC to include all ADTs. This group may provide a forum for sharing good practice. This could be extended to include specific items regarding Programme and Review Boards. For example, LTC already receives an annual report on the use of condonement at UG Boards.  Best practice is also regularly discussed and disseminated via DALG. For example, SSEHS recently shared the way in which non-finalist IP claims were being handled (only PRAs being awarded) and many Schools have now adopted this practice. |
| External quality assurance – concern has been expressed that removal of independent board members from the Board membership could expose us to questions about our quality assurance. | The PVCT and Academic Registrar have both been consulted on the proposal and are satisfied that the University’s quality assurance processes remain robust even if this change were implemented. In practice, Boards have limited discretion and any changes to degree class boundaries are discussed, often at length, with the External Examiner involved. |
| Out of line with sector practice – it has been suggested that our practice should be comparable with that of other universities. | Sector consultation on this issue elicited responses from eight institutions\*. Seven did not include members of staff from other departments/Schools. The only exception was the University of Essex where Boards are chaired by a Dean/Associate Dean from another School. Therefore removing independent board members from our Board membership would appear more likely to bring us in line with sector practice rather than the other way round. |

\* Birmingham City University; University of Bradford; University of East Anglia; University of Essex; Glyndŵr University, Wrexham; University of Nottingham; University of Sheffield, University of Sussex.

Scale of the Savings

Schools have been consulted on the amount of time currently spent:

1. By academic staff sitting in Boards as independent board members
2. By administrative staff recruiting academic staff from other Schools to their Boards

In both cases, responses were received from some but not all Schools/departments and so responses have been scaled upwards to arrive at an institutional figure. It is recognised that this is a somewhat crude measure but does illustrate the situation.

This analysis suggests that:

* the academic staff time released for other activities would be approximately 268 hours per annum (over 7 weeks per annum based on a 37.5 hour week)[[1]](#footnote-1).
* the administrative staff time saved would be approximately 150 hours per year (effectively one day (7.5 hours) per year per department)[[2]](#footnote-2).

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| Academic Registrar Approval of Programme Board Membership |

The practice of the Academic Registrar (or nominee) approving the membership is considered to be an unnecessary administrative process which creates additional work for Schools and can lead to delays in appointing Boards. The main benefit of the current practice is that a central list of Board members is maintained. The recent removal of Programme Board Reports has meant that there is no other central record of Programme Board membership. Therefore if this amendment is suggested, Schools/departments will need to include a list of Programme Board members in the paperwork sent to the Academic Registry (which is then scanned and kept as central record). This has been discussed at DALG and members were supportive.

1. **Senate Action**

Senate is asked to **APPROVE** the changes to paragraphs 11-13 and 17-18 of Regulation XXII as set out in Appendix A with effect from 1 August 2012.

Appendix A

**Regulation XXII: Taught Programme Internal and External Examiners and Review and Programme Boards**

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| 11. | Programme Boards shall be appointed by the relevant Dean of School~~. Membership shall be approved by the Academic Registrar or nominee prior to the relevant meeting~~ and their membership shall be as follows: | |
|  | 11.1 | The Dean of School who shall act as Chair. |
|  | 11.2 | At least three other Internal Examiners, one of whom shall act as Deputy Chair and, in the case of joint degree programmes, at least one of whom shall be a member of the partner School/Department. |
|  | ~~11.3~~ | ~~One independent board member appointed in accordance with paragraph 12 hereof.~~ |
|  | 11.~~4~~3 | The External Programme Assessor for the programme where Parts B, C or D are under consideration or the programme is postgraduate level. |
| ~~12.~~ | ~~In order to be eligible to serve as an independent board member, an individual must:~~ | |
|  | ~~12.1~~ | ~~Appear on the schedule of suitably experienced potential independent board members maintained and published by the Academic Registrar from time to time.~~ |
|  | ~~12.2~~ | ~~Not be a member of the School responsible for the programme or, in the case of joint degree programmes, the partner School/Department and must not have engaged in any of the academic work which is the subject of the Board's consideration.~~ |
| 13. | In order for a Programme Board meeting to be quorate, the following minimum attendance requirement must be met: | |
|  | 13.1 | The Chair or the designated Deputy Chair; |
|  | 13.2 | At least two other Internal Examiners, one of whom shall be a member of the partner School/Department in the case of joint degree programmes; |
|  | ~~13.3~~ | ~~The independent board member;~~ |
|  | 13.~~4~~3 | The External Programme Assessor for all postgraduate programmes and for the final Part of undergraduate programmes. |

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| 17. | Review Boards shall be appointed by the relevant Dean of School~~. Membership shall be approved by the Academic Registrar or nominee prior to the relevant meeting~~ and their membership shall be as follows: | |
|  | 17.1 | The Dean of School who shall act as Chair. |
|  | 17.2 | At least three other internal examiners, one of whom shall act as Deputy Chair. |
|  | ~~17.3~~ | ~~One independent board member appointed in accordance with paragraph 12 hereof.~~ |
|  | 17.~~4~~3 | The External Examiners responsible for the modules under consideration. |
| 18. | In order for a Review Board meeting to be quorate, the following minimum attendance requirement must be met: | |
|  | 18.1 | The Chair or the designated Deputy Chair. |
|  | 18.2 | At least one other Internal Examiner. |
|  | ~~18.3~~ | ~~The independent board member.~~ |

1. 8 out of 20 departments responded – responses totalled 107 hours. This has been multiplied by 2.5 to reach an estimated figure for 20 departments in total. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 8 out of 20 departments responded - on average administrators were spending an average of an hour per board per year seeking independent board members. There are approximately 150 Boards per year. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)