Participative Process Review Session: Course Data Checking Exercises

16th December 2014

Introduction

This session, facilitated by OCSLD, was attended by the Head of the Course & Student Administration (CSA) Team, the Systems Managers, an Administrator (Systems) and the Consistent Programme Support Project Manager, all of whom are from the CSA Team. Also attending were three of the four Academic Administration Managers from the Faculties.

The purpose of the session was to ensure that we are maximising the effectiveness of our processes around the management of course information, reviewing how we present that information for checking purposes and how we ensure accurate and timely checking exercise returns.

Terms of Reference

The terms of reference, written by the Head of the CSA Team prior to the session, was reviewed to ensure that it was robust, accurate and useful. The group reviewed each section, making some small adjustments. The agreed and final terms of reference can be viewed here.

SWOT Analysis and Summary of Existing Processes

Strengths Agreement between professional non academic colleagues within the Faculties and CSA Team that this process has to happen every year. Existing processes have been consistent and comprehensive. Strong working relationships between professional non academic colleagues within the Faculties and CSA Team. The format (using Googledocs) works well.	**Weaknesses** Lack of comprehensive documentation. Academic colleagues not understanding importance of these processes: ‘cause and effect’ of inaccurate data. Implementation within the Faculties. Timing of exercises. Lack of repercussions when there are null returns.
Opportunities To produce a consistent approach across all Faculties. Improve efficiency. Link to Consistent Programme Support project and the new Student Record System.	**Threats** Different cultures and operating practices within Faculties. Induction processes for academic colleagues not including importance of OBU systems and the data held within the systems (which is

Increase feedback and communication. To map / document processes.	used by staff and students). Lack of ownership of module data. Lack of engagement by academic colleagues. If specialist knowledge (to produce checking documentation for example) is not retained.

The Head of the CSA Team sends out an e-mail in February setting out the procedures for the forthcoming UMP and non UMP Update exercises. This e-mail is sent to Deans, Associate Deans (Student Experience), Programme Leads, Academic Administration Managers, Systems Managers and the Academic Registrar.

March is reserved by the CSA Team to consider, approve, implement and check minor and major changes. Note that the update exercises are reliant upon the timely submissions of minor and major changes by the 28th February deadline. Late submissions after the deadline (if accepted) can throw out all of the other checking exercises that follow. The existing update exercises are split into two.

UMP Update

The information sent out to Academic Administration Managers to distribute to relevant colleagues within their Faculty includes:

- a list of the minor and major changes submitted (and received),
- a list of the UMP modules including module code, title, lead, aims, running time, contact hours and assessment weighting,
- recommended modules by subject,
- top-up modules by subject

This information is sent to the Academic Administration Managers at the beginning of April. A month is allowed for its return (either with or without amendments). The CSA Team then have one month to process any resultant changes that have been returned by the Faculties and run further checks. By the end of May, everything is ready for the forthcoming academic year.

Non UMP Update

The information sent out to Academic Administration Managers to distribute to relevant colleagues within their Faculty includes:

- a list of the minor and major changes submitted (and received),
- a list of the non UMP modules including module code, title, lead, aims, running time, contact hours and assessment weighting,

To allow Faculties to focus on the UMP Update return in April, the start of the non-UMP Update return process is delayed until May. The Faculties have that month to check and return the information (either with or without amendments). The CSA Team then have one month to process the changes and run checks so that by the end of June, everything is ready for the forthcoming academic year.

What has not been mapped in any great detail as part of the process review is how the information is distributed and co-ordinated within the Faculties. What was confirmed at the session on the 16th December is that the approaches in this area differ from Faculty to Faculty. In some instances there is a fairly light touch approach from the Faculty administrative offices and academic staff will submit the returns directly to the CSA Team, whereas in another Faculty, all of the information flows through the Academic Administration Manager.

Where updates are made and returned but these cannot be actioned, for example because the changes requested would require a minor change, this is fed back to the Faculties. Null returns are also highlighted and fed back to the Academic Administration Managers once the deadlines have passed.

New Processes

Whilst mapping out the current UMP and non UMP Update exercises during the session on the 16th December, it became clear that the timing of the exercises and the information included within the exercises should be the main focus of the review.

The following observations / proposals were made:

- not all of the minor / major changes are being captured within the information that is sent out (for checking) at the moment because some of the changes affecting Semester 2 modules cannot be made until Semester 2 has concluded,
- some of the information does not need to be included any more e.g. the contact hours information, as this now forms part of the KIS return undertaken by the University during the summer session,
- it would be useful to separate some of the information that is currently included in the checking exercises and add some other useful information too. At the beginning of April the CSA Team will be in a position to send out module running time (semesters) information for the following year for checking along with a list of the minor and major changes that have been submitted by the Faculties. The Academic Administrations Managers will then send the module running time information to academic colleagues for checking, the list of minor and major changes can go to the Faculty Quality Team for checks.
  At the beginning of June the CSA Team will be in a position to send out the additional module information (code, title, aims, leads, assessment weighting plus pre-requisites) and for UMP subjects, the recommended and top-up Stage I requirements as currently recorded on the system. By delaying this part of the exercise, all minor and major changes will be captured in the information sent out for checking. Faculty colleagues are more likely to know who is leading on their modules at this stage of the year too. The Academic Administrations Managers will send this information to academic colleagues for checking.
- because we are separating out the information as described in the previous point and sharing the information for checking in two stages, we don’t feel that there is a requirement to split the checking exercises in to UMP and non UMP phases as

before. UMP and non UMP can now be combined. The fact that the information has been broken down and will be sent in two stages means that it should not be too onerous for those academics with UMP and non UMP responsibilities, to have to check all of their modules at the same time. The return rate for the non UMP Update exercise in previous years had not been great, happening as it did after the UMP Update exercise (as a bit of an afterthought perhaps).

- it would be useful, once stage one has been completed, for the CSA Team to confirm with the Academic Office that the module run times for the new academic year have been checked. They could then feel confident in allocating slot and room information for those modules.
- it would be useful for the Head of the CSA Team to send a final e-mail, once stage one and two checking exercises have been completed in July, to confirm this and that the window of opportunity for changes has closed. This e-mail would go to the same people as on the initial e-mail sent by the Head of the CSA Team in February.

The new processes have been mapped. The maps for the new stages (one and two) can be found here.

This new process can be communicated to other Faculty colleagues at the Course and Student Administration Forum in Semester 2. The new process should be monitored carefully in 2015 by both the CSA Team and the Academic Administration Managers and reviewed at the Course and Student Administration Forum in Semester 1 (2015).