

PARM EVENT CHAIR – ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

NOTES OF GUIDANCE FOR NEW CHAIRS

NB Separate guidance is available for Chairs of University Standing Panels

GENERAL

Shortly after you have agreed to Chair a PARM event you should receive details of venue, times etc. The information will normally come from the Faculty/Campus Quality Administrator (F/CQA) and this person should be your contact person in the run up to the event and after the event.

DOCUMENTATION

A full set of documentation for the event (including all documents concerning the proposal and the administrative arrangements, agenda membership lists etc) should be sent to you three weeks prior to the event. If you had not received anything contact the Faculty/Campus Quality Administrator (F/CQA).

A full list of documentation required for different types of PARM events is listed in the Academic Regulations and Procedures Handbook available on the Centre for Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement (CASQE) website.

http://www.mmu.ac.uk/academic/quality_assurance.php

After you have thoroughly read the documentation, if there are issues of immediate concern that you consider have not been addressed and should be resolved or identified **before** the event, contact the F/CQA or, if necessary, the Head of Centre for Academic Standards & Quality Enhancement (Head of CASQE).

INVOLVEMENT OF PROFESSIONAL, STATUTORY AND REGULATORY BODIES (PSRBs)

Where proposals require PSRB approval/accreditation, the nature of the documentation, panel membership and the programme for the event may well differ from the standard University format. In such cases, contact the F/CQA well before the event to ensure that you understand:

- the nature of the PSRB(s) involvement (eg will the PSRB representatives be augmenting the University Panel or will the event be a “joint” event.
- what the expectations of the PSRB(s) are in terms of changes to the programme agenda (will they require their own private meetings in addition to the University’s normal meetings or meetings with different members of staff? Will they need a tour of facilities? etc)
- whether they have the right to impose their own conditions (in addition to those of the University panel). This is particularly common in programmes where PSRB approval/accreditation is required to offer students “licence to practise” in certain professions.

Confirm with the F/CQA that these issues have been discussed and resolved with the PSRB before the event takes place.

THE PARM EVENT

BEFORE THE START OF THE MEETING

- On arrival speak to F/CQA to ensure all plans are on course or get details of any last minute changes/issues etc.
- Introduce yourself to external members of the panel prior to the start of formal proceedings. You are acting as a senior representative of the University, to welcome them and thank them for their participation.
- PARM events are complex. Make sure that everyone understands the time constraints; explain at every meeting that it might be necessary for you to move discussion on; keep a careful eye on time.

THE MEETING

- Formally welcome all panel members and effect introductions around the table. Explain the different roles of all participants (eg External Assessors will take the lead on subject specialist areas) including the role of the Chair.
- Briefly outline the purpose of the event, the agenda for the day and any special/unusual arrangements (eg moving to a different building for lunch or a tour of facilities etc).
- **Private Panel Meeting:**
 - It is common practice for the programme team to have an “observer” at the private panel meetings. However, it is up to the Chair to decide if this is appropriate. If you are happy for the Observer to stay, briefly outline what you expect of them eg that you are happy for them to answer questions through the Chair during the private meeting but other than that they must remain a silent observer.
 - It is often helpful to ask for a brief first impression – whether members are, on the strength of the documentation, minded to approve, with the proviso of further detailed discussion with the programme team etc. This can set a positive tone to the event.
 - Ask all members of the panel for specific areas which they wish to raise and place these issues against specific headings on the draft agenda. A “Chair’s Matrix” is available to assist you with the process of slotting issues under specific agenda items. This is available from the Practical Guidance Notes webpage on the CASQE website:

http://www.mmu.ac.uk/academic/casqe/event/docs/agenda_matrix.docx
 - Once all members have made their comments, briefly summarise, for the panel, the issues under each heading. Ask the panel member who raised an issue to lead off on that particular discussion but make sure that other panel members are clear that they can jump in with any supplementary questions.
 - Make sure all panel members have specific issues to lead on.

- **Meeting with Students:**

It is not always a requirement of a PARM event to have a meeting with students. Where there is, this is usually scheduled at the beginning of the event so that any issues raised by the students can be discussed with the programme team. When meeting the students:

- Introduce yourself and ask panel members to identify themselves.
- Explain the purpose of the event and the importance of seeking the views of the students, as one of the most important ways in which the University can determine how well a programme is operating and how it could be improved.
- Explain that departmental and programme staff are not present in the meeting and they are free to talk frankly and in confidence about the course, their experiences etc
- Explain that issues raised could influence the discussions with the programme team and, although notes are being taken, these comments will, in no way, be attributed to individual students.
- Ask students to introduce themselves (first names only) and where they are at in their studies (make a note of names and routes and whether they are student representatives on their programme).
- Start proceedings with an easily answered question to put the students at their ease. Try and encourage “open” questions (ie not questions with yes/no answers) and try to avoid leading questions!
- Before the end of the discussion, ask whether they have anything to add that has not been covered by the questions.
- At the end of the discussions, thank the students for their time and willingness to participate.

- **Brief Private Panel Meeting to discuss student meeting**

- The points raised by students are extremely important but must be put into context and weighed against the range of other evidence (eg from documentation and from the programme team meeting). The students may well not be representative of their cohorts but that should not discount their contribution. In particular, issues raised in the student meeting might well result in the amendment of the agenda prepared for the meeting with the programme team.

- **Meeting with Programme Team:**

- Explain the purpose (if likely to approve the proposal, say that) and tell the programme team that the meeting is not intended as an interrogation but as an opportunity to discuss items of interest or clarification arising from documentation or the meeting with students.
- Try to work through the agenda in a logical manner. Discussions under one heading will often ebb and flow onto subjects listed under other headings. If it looks like a succinct discussion of the new area will complete scrutiny of that area, it is normally better to let the discussion continue but to flag that the

Panel is straying (particularly helpful to the FQA who has to decide under which heading of the report the item will finally reside). If the discussion strays completely, draw the discussion to a close and return to the agenda.

- When you are satisfied that all issues under a particular heading have been covered, draw discussions to a close and make it clear that you are moving on to the next agenda heading.
 - When all issues raised earlier have been addressed, check if the panel members have any issues which they still need to raise, or if there are any issues which remain unresolved and need further discussion. Ask the programme team if they have anything to add that has not been covered by the questions. If there is nothing further, thank the programme team for their openness and frankness and ask them to withdraw for 15-20 minutes while the Panel draw their conclusions.
- **Private Panel Meeting - to make decision:**

Outcome of Event

- Ask the panel members to revisit your initial question on the outcome and whether there is a consensus of whether or not they are happy to recommend approval of the proposals with or without conditions. Emphasise that the Panel does not approve the proposals but that it recommends that the University approves them.
- Explain to the panel members (particularly for the benefit of external members) that:

conditions must be fulfilled and approved by the Chair **BEFORE** the new/modified programme can enrol students. Examples of common types of conditions include:

- Updating and amendment of programme documentation
*(it is acceptable to indicate that finalised details will be sent to the programme leader in writing after the event. However, make sure, before the Panel breaks up, that **all** definitive document amendments are agreed or that panel members will submit these by an agreed date)*
- Completion and signature of formal agreements for collaborative arrangements
*(emphasise to the programme team that agreements **must be signed off before enrolment can take place**. The timescale for completion of such conditions must, therefore, be reasonable).*

recommendations must be considered by the programme team (normally as part of their annual monitoring of the programme). They do not **have** to be acted upon if the programme team decide, after consideration they are not appropriate. However, at the next review, the Panel will be looking to see whether the recommendations have been addressed.

recommendations to the Faculty/University – the Panel may, occasionally, wish to raise issues/make recommendations which are more appropriate for consideration at Faculty or University level. These will be submitted either to the FADC or Academic Standards Sub-committee of the Academic Development Committee as appropriate. It is important that any such issue is

not included as a condition that the programme team will be unable to fulfil as this will delay the completion of the approval process.

- Draw together a list of any conditions and recommendations. Conditions should be “do-able” in the proposed timescale (see below). It is the Chair’s responsibility to ensure that the outcomes are clearly and accurately recorded.
- Set a date by which any conditions must be fulfilled. Again, keep in mind that these must be completed and signed off by the Chair **BEFORE** the programme can enrol students (as indicated above, this is particularly important in the case of collaborative agreements). It is recommended that the time limit for the response should be no longer than **four** weeks. Where, for example, negotiations relating a collaborative arrangement are still to be completed this may receive a separate, extended time limit, but the ruling on no enrolment unless all conditions are met must still apply.
- In the case of a panel considering several or very significant conditions, the Panel must decide whether it should recommend a limited period of approval (eg 2 or 3 years rather than the standard 6 years) or non-approval.
- If “non-approval” of the proposal is being considered, the Panel must think through, carefully, the consequences of such a decision on existing students. Where non-approval is agreed, the programme team must be provided with a way forward to redeem the situation while ensuring the quality of experience for existing students. In the case of periodic reviews this might include, for example, suspending any new intakes for the coming year or extending approval of the existing programme for a further year to enable a new submission the following year.

Good Practice

- Ask Panel members to commend any good practice which they have noted as part of their scrutiny of the documentation and during their meetings with students and staff (there is a specific section in the report to record these) particularly where these could be transferable.

Confirmation of Next Review

- Confirm the date of the next periodic review of the programme:
- Approval or Review events: this is normally 6 years hence unless the Panel has particular reasons for suggesting a shorter period.
- Modification Event: the next review will be as scheduled at the time of the last approval/review event. It is not normal practice for the panel to recommend that, following a modification event, the review of the programme is put back.

• Feedback session:

- Thank the programme team for their attendance. Tell them immediately the outcome and read out (or ask the Panel Secretary to read out) the conditions, recommendations and the date for fulfilment of conditions. Commend the Team on the areas of good practice noted by the panel.

- Ensure that the programme team records the conditions and recommendations and agrees to the deadline date for conditions. In agreeing to the date the Programme Team must understand that they are undertaking to meet the deadline.
 - Ensure that the programme team is aware of the consequences of non-fulfilment of conditions. Programmes will not be allowed to enrol students onto programmes where conditions have not been fulfilled.
 - Close proceedings with the usual thanks to the panel. Make sure to specifically thank the external members. Tell them that if they need any taxis booking or want to submit expenses forms etc to speak to the programme team immediately after the meeting.
- **Before Leaving:**

Speak to the F/CQA to ensure that they are satisfied that they have all the information they need to write the report (particularly the wording of conditions). Identify if you will be away from the University in the following weeks so that the F/CQA can ensure that the draft report can be circulated in an appropriate way/timescale to minimise any disruption.

PREPARATION AND CIRCULATION OF THE PARM REPORT

- The F/CQA should send out a draft of the outcomes (ie the conditions/ recommendations and deadline date) within one week. The most effective way to do this is completion and circulation of Section A of the PARM report.
- The F/CQA should send a draft of the full report to the Chair before it is circulated to the Panel and programme team for comment. Check the accuracy of the conditions/recommendations and the general text. Let the F/CQA have any changes or comments ASAP (time is usually of the essence). The draft report should be circulated to the Panel and programme team within three weeks of the event. If you have not received it, contact the F/CQA.
- Once the draft report has been circulated and comments received from the Panel, the F/CQA should send all of the comments to, or discuss them with, the Chair. It is the Chair's responsibility to decide whether suggested changes to the meaning or outcomes should be incorporated.
- Once the Chair has agreed any changes with the F/CQA, the confirmed report will be sent out to the panel and programme team and will be sent to the CASQE for submission to the Academic Standards Sub-committee for approval of the Panel's recommendations.

RESPONSES TO CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

- As Chair of the PARM Event your responsibility does not end with the confirmation of the report. Part of the role is to monitor the fulfilment of conditions and approve the response from the Programme. Be proactive. Contact the F/CQA if you have not received a response or contact CASQE.
- The programme team will be requested to submit their response and supporting documentation to the F/CQA by the due date. Once the Faculty is satisfied that

these are appropriate, the F/CQA will then send the following to the Chair for approval:

- programme team's written response.
- relevant supporting documentation (eg revised definitive document).
- copy of the PARM Report, with Section C completed (*this section has signature box for the Chair to sign off the response*).

If you are satisfied that the programme team has responded appropriately and has taken action as required, sign Section C of the report confirming this and return it to the F/CQA. It is important that you do send written confirmation back to the Faculty to complete the University's audit trail.

If you are not satisfied with the response, you should pass your concerns, in writing, to the programme team (with copy to the F/CQA) or preferably via the F/CQA, as soon as possible. Again, time is usually of the essence and if the programme team needs do further work they should know as quickly as possible. If there are serious issues that have not been resolved, contact the Head of CASQE.

- Once the F/CQA has received a positive response from the Chair, they will update the electronic copy of Section C of the PARM report to indicate the Chair's approval and submit this to the CASQE for consideration by the Academic Standards Sub- committee.

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