

### **GUIDANCE NOTES FOR STAFF INVITING STUDENTS TO ATTEND PARM EVENTS**

As part of the procedures for Programme Approval, Review and Modification (PARM), MMU requires that, in the following circumstances, a representative group of students is consulted and given the opportunity to express their opinions of their programme of study under consideration:

- (i) programmes submitted for scheduled periodic review
- (ii) programmes wishing to make Major Modifications (ie significant modifications) to existing provision where those changes will affect students.

Where it has been agreed that the proposals will be considered by a Faculty-based PARM event, this will involve a Panel of internal staff and external subject experts reviewing documentation submitted by the programme team and engaging in discussions with relevant staff.

In addition, an important and integral part of the process of approval is soliciting the views of current and recently graduated students.

It is the responsibility of the Programme Leader to invite students and recent graduates to attend a meeting with the PARM Panel.

If your review/modification involves making changes to the programme which will affect students currently studying on the programme it is essential that you canvas student opinion and discuss the proposed changes with them at the earliest point possible. This is particularly important if you are proposing, as part of the review/modification, to move students over to a different structure part-way through their studies (eg if, as a result of a review, you want to introduce a revised programme structure for all years as opposed to rolling out the old programme and rolling in the new). The reasons for this are two fold:

- (i) affected students must **all** agree to any such changes
- (ii) the Panel will certainly ask students if they are aware of the proposed changes and what they think of them.

It is in the programme team's best interest to ensure that they make students fully aware of the changes before they are asked to take part in the event.

### **CONTACTING THE STUDENTS AND GRADUATES**

Contact students and recent graduates as soon as you know the final date and programme for the PARM event.

The University has no set requirements about who should be invited and how they are identified other than there should be a cross section of students representing all years and modes of attendance, plus recent graduates.

Practice varies in how these are determined. In the past staff have:

- asked student representatives to take on this role (as they are the official spokespeople for their cohort)
- sent out a blanket request to all students issued with the hope that enough students will reply
- invited a selection of students.

However you choose to identify students to meet the Panel you should ensure that they are representative of the student body and will be able/willing to speak to the Panel about their experiences, be they good or bad. You should aim to get a good mix of students from the following modes (as relevant) full-time, part-time, sandwich, distance learning, mixed mode and from all levels/years of the programme. If your programme includes any Combined Honours subjects you must invite representatives from this group of students. You might consider using Skype or video links to speak to distance learning students or students who are studying at a collaborative partner either home or abroad. If you intend to use this method, you must speak to the Faculty/Campus Quality Administrator at an early opportunity to ensure that appropriate arrangements (room, technical facilities etc) can be made to accommodate such a meeting.

The University recognises that it is sometimes more difficult to get recent graduates. They might have moved away or are in employment which makes it difficult to take time out to attend a meeting. However, their comments are extremely valuable to the Panel – particularly in terms of finding out how well the programme prepared them for their chosen employment. It is, therefore, important, to give people as much notice as you can. An interesting side effect of bringing graduates in to the meeting alongside current students is the interaction between the two groups which has, in the past, led Panels to recommend that programme teams should invite graduates in to talk to current students on a regular basis.

When you have identified your group, you should write to them and give them full details of the nature of the event (eg review, modification), where and when it is being held, and what is required of them.

It is good practice to arrange with the Faculty/Campus Quality Administrator for a room near to the Panel meeting to be booked where the students can assemble and wait until they are invited into the Panel meeting. Ensure that tea/coffee and water are provided for them while they wait. You should also ensure that the Faculty/Campus Quality Administrator is aware of any students with special needs so that appropriate arrangements can be made and that, if necessary, the Panel is made aware of these (eg hearing loops, rooms/buildings with wheelchair access).

#### WHAT THE STUDENTS SHOULD KNOW IN GOOD TIME BEFORE THEY MEET THE PANEL

Before students agree to meet the Panel they should be briefed as follows:

- Brief background on what the event is for ie:
  - o Reviews – what the purpose of a review is, how often they are held, why the University holds them, why the University wants to speak to them
  - o Modifications – what is a modification, why you are proposing the change, why the University wants to speak to them.

- The student meeting with the Panel is held early in the programme for the day so that their comments can be used to inform later discussions with the programme team.
- They should be aware of proposed changes, particularly those affecting their own studies.
- It is very important to stress that, during the meeting with the Panel, there will be no programme or departmental representatives in attendance so that they may speak freely about their experiences, good or bad.
- They should know that, whilst an account of their experiences will be included in the formal PARM report, all comments will be anonymised and will not be attributed to individuals.
- They should know that they are there, not just as individuals, but to represent their cohort as well. They should, therefore, have enough time to allow them the opportunity to canvas opinion across their colleagues.
- They should be aware of the format of the meeting. This will normally:
  - be a meeting between 30 minutes and an hour in length;
  - commence with a welcome and brief introduction from the Chair on the purpose of the meeting and how the students' comments will filter in to the overall event;
  - continue with introductions – the Panel will normally be asked to identify themselves and their roles and the students will be asked for their first name and what stage they are at in their studies and their mode of attendance;
  - followed by questions/discussions about their experiences on the course
  - concluded by the Chair normally asking if there is anything the students want to raise which has not already been covered by the discussions.
- They should know what the likely topics for discussion will be. These might include, but are not necessarily restricted to:
  - how they heard about the course
  - their general overall impression of the course
  - what they particularly like/dislike
  - relevance of the content of their course
  - relevance for their future employability
  - use of WebCT as a course tool/for general dissemination of information
  - resources available to the course and to the students
  - channels of communication – do they know what these are in case of problems
  - PDP and pastoral support arrangements
  - what they would change if they had the opportunity

### ON THE DAY

It is good practice for a member of the programme team to be in the waiting room to greet students when they arrive and to answer any further questions they may have.

A member of the PARM Panel will call the students through to the meeting room. After the meeting, it is good practice for a member of the programme team to spend a few minutes debriefing the students and thanking them for their participation.

CASQE  
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