

Project progress report

This Report is to enable progress monitoring of process improvement projects by the Operational Excellence Steering Group. An initial report should be completed by the Improvement Champion on completion of the Rapid Improvement Workshop, and then updated at 3-monthly intervals. The initial report and subsequent updates should be sent to the Chair of the OE Steering Group.

Project title

Doctoral Programme Upgrading and Completion Review Panel Process

Improvement Champion(s); **Andrew Sturdy and Farat Ara**

Project Manager (if appl'c'ble):

Progress stage **In progress**

Project reference/version

OESG approval date

RIW dates : **8th September 2009**

RIW Facilitator(s): **Trixie Gadd**

Brief

Objective

To streamline the process for arranging Upgrading and Completion Review panels for students on the Doctoral Programme in order to reduce the amount of time spent by DPO staff on scheduling the panels and to simplify the process for panel members and the panel chairs.

Business rationale

All doctoral students are required to attend progress review panels. The main panels take place in year 1 when students are required to upgrade from MPhil to PhD and in year 3 when they are nearing completion. In addition, a significant proportion of the students (c.25%) may be required to re-present their upgrading proposal or to attend a further review if there are concerns about their progress at the Completion Review.

Each panel consists of a Chair (usually the Associate Dean or Deputy Director of the DP), the main supervisor, the DPC representative from the student's Subject Group, a DPC representative from another Subject Group plus a subject specialist who is not the main or second supervisor (ie 5 academic staff in total).

The DPO currently arranges around 90 panels per annum. The process is complex with the date and time for each panel being negotiated individually with each panel member. DPO staff can spend an inordinate amount of time finding a suitable date and time for all parties only to find that at the last minute 1 member has to drop out which can often result in the whole process starting again.

Prior to the introduction of the Completion Reviews, the DPO arranged on average 30 Upgrading panels a year. It was estimated that this required 30% of the full-time Assistant Programme Co-ordinator's post. To continue in the same vein would necessitate at least another 0.5fte post at FA 3 level. A major reason for reviewing the process is, therefore, to enable the DPO to absorb the threefold increase in the number of panels required each year without the need for additional staffing.

The current process is also time consuming for academic staff not only in terms of the time they spend in preparing for and attending panels, but also time spent liaising with DPO re their availability and checking the numerous iterations of the panel schedule.

There is also a need to simplify associated processes such as how and when students should submit the documentation for the panels, how changes to the schedule are recorded within the Office and communicated to panel members, how the panels are serviced (ie the amount of time spent by DPO staff in setting up the AV equipment and room), and how the panel decisions are processed and communicated to the students.

Another issue that may need to be explored again is whether the panel membership can be reduced. It was agreed at the Workshop on 8th September that the composition of the Completion Review panels should be changed so that it is not necessary to have both the Group DPC rep and a subject specialist. Henceforth, the

Completion Review panels will be made up of Chair, supervisor, a non-Group DPC rep and one other member of academic staff. There may be a case also for reducing the length of the Completion Review panels. These are issues that will need to be considered by the new Associate Dean and the DPC.

Benefits expected

Benefit	For whom?	How & why?
Release of work capacity	DPO staff (in particular avoids need for additional 0.5 APC post), some time saving for panel members and Chair	Reduction in time spent negotiating dates individually and avoiding need for numerous iterations of the schedule. There will be a dedicated meeting room in the refurbished WBS Teaching Centre equipped for presentations, thus avoiding need for staff to spend time setting up and clearing rooms in Scarman Rd. The reduction in the number of panel members required for Completion Reviews will save some academic staff time.
Simpler process	For DPO staff, for students and panel members	Schedule will be agreed and published well in advance (ie at the start of the academic year) and there will be very limited scope for panel members to change dates once agreed. There will be a standard submission dates for documentation, and students will use my.wbs for document submission. There will be a proforma for recording panel decisions which should speed up the process for communicating decisions to students.
Better customer service	Panel members and students	Scheduling will be simpler and clearer. Panel decisions will be communicated more promptly.
Cost savings (Please be as specific as possible)	Saving in staffing costs – ie 0.5 fte post at FA 3 level	For reasons highlighted above.
Other		

Resource estimates

Resource	How much?	Why?
Champion & implementation team	No additional resources required.	
Additional Budget		
Applications development		
Other professional development		
Space		
Equipment		
Other		

Success criteria

Measure	Target	Progress	Comment
Reduction in time spent scheduling the panels	50%		Initial review of progress to be undertaken after next round of panels – late Nov – mid December.

Implementation plan

Action	When?	Progress	Owner
Agree blocks of dates by start of academic year	Mid-Sept	Done	VT/JB
Reduce number of hard copies of documentation for panels from 10 to 6	Immediately	Done	VT/JB
Use my.wbs for document submission and automated reminders to students re submission deadlines	April 2010		PD
Negotiate room in WBS Teaching Centre for panels	ASAP	Done	AS/FA
Develop decision proforma	Before Nov panels	Done	NW/FA/VT
Sort out data in MIS to enable panel requirements to be logged and monitors	ASAP	In progress	PD and whole DPO Team
Communicate to Doctoral Programme Committee	Nov meeting		AS/FA
Communicate to students and supervisors	Week 1	Done	AS/FA
Change guidelines in student handbook	Week 1	Done	FA/JV
Review in 9 months and seek feedback from all customers	July 2010		FA

Implementation team members

Name	Team	Initials
Andrew Sturdy		AS
Nick Webber		NW
Farat Ara		FA
Jane Varley		JV
Verity Tiff		VT
Janet Bennetts		JB
Paul Dawson		PD



At project completion

Project team statement

OESG Comments and Conclusion

Report sign-off

Improvement champion

date

OESG chair

date