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| Approach: **Agreeing a Plan** |
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| The situation was a change in policy to move from a 2 tier to a single tier Assessment Board approach. People had been used to a two tier approach for a long time, staff, students and academics. The broad policy direction was set at University level and would have to be translated to wholesale change of delivery across all faculties This involved moving from the two tier processes, boards for module marks first tier and courses/awards for the second tier, a course centric assessment board arrangement. This was a significant change and was overseen by the University Governance arrangements at that time.I needed to create a new vision for the team and other stakeholders around what the changes would look like in practice and then to operationalise the policy.I selected one of my managers to directly work with me and identified who else would need to be involved to ensure we engaged with all relevant stakeholders. Initially I worked with my immediate management team to identify what the new policy meant for service delivery within the Service, what the new approach would look like and the direction we needed to move in to successfully implement it.Once we had clarity about what it meant for us and also potentially for stakeholders we pulled in appropriate stakeholders to work out the detail.We used a range of communications to engage staff and help deal with concerns and issues.I set up a working group made up of volunteers from my immediate team and other staff who were identified for their specific skills and experience. Representatives from across the team were used as a means of communicating decisions and bringing back questions and concerns raised by staff members. We also communicated by email to ensure that the wider group were kept informed.I also worked closely with senior academic leads in faculties and other professional service leads to update them on the progress of the work and what the final arrangements might look like. Feedback was sought and taken into account as the work progressed.The whole process was driven by tight deadlines and we had to be able to maintain the drive to complete it on time. I made sure that contingencies were in place so that if we fell behind in any aspect of the implementation staff were confident that there was a fall back plan and things would still get done.Once the new process was decided upon it was shared with the academic community some of whom would be directly involved for the first time in assessment board operations. We confirmed what the new arrangements were and asked for related feedback and questions. Firstly, through the Faculty Governance and then to every Department.At first it received a mixed reception. Some got it straight away, others didn't and some of the question and answer sessions related to the original policy decision rather than operations. These sessions were helpful in understanding where each Department's thinking was in relation to the change.One particular change which was a consequence of the move to a single tiered system was that academics were given more freedoms in their approach to the timing and arrangements for moderation. It was assumed that more freedom in the moderating process would be seen as a positive. However, it was a departure from the previously clearly defined fixed approach and some academics found this difficult.This was a good example of how a change can have unintended consequences.In retrospect it would have been helpful to have offered some guidance on the new approach rather than leave it to others to interpret (even though this was outside of our remit it would have avoided some unnecessary difficulties.)People reacted to change in different ways. In my team some accepted it straightaway, others expressed concerns. For academic teams, some embraced the change and welcomed the opportunity to do things differently, others were perturbed and felt that it created more work, some felt their involvement had been reduced.The solution to the latter was to seek to clarify arrangements by offering development sessions for Chairs of Assessment Boards and crib sheets for Course Leaders, some of whom were new to presenting student results at assessment boards. Plus the offer of 1-1s for explanation and advice of what was required for the assessment boards.The first year of delivery was not without its teething problems, however we are now entering the 3rd year of the new approach and as a result of our actions single tier assessment boards have become embedded and most areas have appreciated the benefits. I achieved this through working with all stakeholders, undertaking a full review after the first year of operation and presenting the findings back via University/Faculty governance at that time. This identified a need for adjustment of delivery arrangements, plus appropriate and full guidance to support all stakeholders in their various roles at assessment boards. Providing the right guidance in the right format has been an ongoing piece of work as each year of delivery is reviewed. Although my role is strategic in undertaking the organisation and delivery of University wide processes, in many ways my role becomes that of fixer and facilitator. Setting a direction, providing a framework and dealing with problems and concerns.***What has pleased me is that we have delivered the change and embedded the new approach, continuing to always ensure students receive their results.*** We have received positive feedback from all stakeholders for most aspects of delivery. We have responded to critical feedback and made subsequent improvements. Ultimately I took the University policy and vision for change and translated that into successful delivery.  |