

SUMMARY OF ACADEMIC POLICY DECISIONS – AUTUMN 2007 AND SPRING 2008

This information note refers to decisions made at the following meetings:

Learning and Teaching Committee – 24/10/07
Quality Assurance Committee – 31/10/07 and 06/02/08
Undergraduate School Board – 05/12/07 and 19/03/08
Graduate School Board – 12/12/07
Senate – 17/10/07, 16/01/08 and 23/04/08

Minute numbers are given to indicate the source of the information set out below. Where extracts of minutes are included verbatim, this is indicated by speech marks.

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FOR ACTION

1. Precepts and Guidelines for Exam Paper Setting (S.M106/08)

'Resolved that the revised precepts and guidelines for the exam paper setting process, as set out in annex A to the report of the Quality Assurance Committee (6.2.08), be approved with immediate effect.

<http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/pages/CoPEExamSetting&ModeratingPapers.doc>

2. Guidelines for Work-based and Placement Learning (QAC.MM. 118-119/07)

‘Received The revised work-based and placement learning guidelines which had been amended in anticipation of the revised QAA Code of Practice, Section 9. Departments and Partners would be expected to operate in line with the revised guidelines from 2008/09.

Resolved That the revised guidelines for work-based and placement learning set out in QAC/07/31 be approved with immediate effect, for implementation from 2008/09.

<http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/pages/WBLGuideMay08.doc>

3. Student Union Representation (UGSB.M.198/07)

‘Noted The Students’ Union review of the student representation system would continue this year. To help improve student representation at the Staff Student Liaison Committee level, in particular, more support was needed from departments. The Chair of the Committee suggested that the Students’ Union and departments used the next SSLCs as a forum to discuss how improvements could be made.’

4. Anonymised Coursework UGSB.MM.175-176/07)

‘Noted The proposal from Dr Gallafent that candidates put their unique student number on all their work rather than putting their number on exam scripts and name on essays.

The University’s System Administration Services had created a new system that provided departments with the opportunity to use a student’s unique exam candidate number from the beginning of the academic year to facilitate anonymous coursework. This number could be used to provide clear correlations for External Examiners at examination boards if required. ‘

5. Submission of Coursework (UGSB.MM.07-08/08)

‘Noted Students who submitted their coursework online, but subsequently failed to submit a watermarked hard copy, were said to cause a considerable administrative burden for departments in terms of time and cost of copying the assignments.

Resolved UGSB agreed with the Advisory Group’s recommendation that the Course Deadline Policy should apply only to the primary method of submission. However, departments should be free to administer their own penalties for students who failed or were late to submit hard copies of coursework. Examples of penalties could include informing the student that they had forfeited the right to feedback or requiring them to pay an administrative charge, but it was confirmed that a marks penalty would not be appropriate.’

6. Variations to Rules of Assessment

There are further approved variations to the Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Rules of Assessment, which can be found at:

<http://www2.essex.ac.uk/academic/students/ug/rules.htm> and

<http://www2.essex.ac.uk/academic/students/pgt/pgrules.htm>

7. Undergraduate Student Progression (UGSB.MM.46-47/08)

‘Noted As the new Undergraduate Rules of Assessment prevented the use of discretion by Exam Boards, it was anticipated that the University’s progression statistics would worsen in the future. As a result, it was important for departments to continue to support students during the re-sit period. It was noted that the TRACS report had made recommendations relating to student failure.

Members discussed the link between students’ non-attendance and failure to progress. The Chair reported that background work was currently underway to consider ways in which the University could address the issue of non-attendance and relevant information would be circulated shortly.’

8. Implementation of the Undergraduate Rules of Assessment (S.M.120-123/08)

‘Resolved that the following matters, relating to the implementation of the Undergraduate Rules of Assessment, be approved:

- i. that the prohibition on the number of repeat stages should only apply from 2007/08 onwards. Students who have repeated a stage of study prior to the 2007/08 academic year (on the old Rules of Assessment) should still be allowed one further repeat stage on the new Rules of Assessment.
- ii. that this year’s final year Exam Boards should **not** use discretion to award a higher class of degree, simply because the student would have got one under the new Undergraduate Rules of Assessment.
- iii. that students who intermit from their final year this year and return in 2008/09 must remain on the same Rules of Assessment.’

9. Initial Registration of PhD Students (S.M.49/08, see also GSB.MM.251-255/07)

‘Resolved that, from entry 2008, students in receipt of a PhD admissions offer would be initially registered for an MPhil/PhD with confirmation of PhD status normally occurring in the second year.

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/committees/committeedocs/GSBD/2007/minutes/2007-12-12m.doc#gsb251>

10. Appointment of Examiners for Research Degrees (S.M.128/08)

‘Resolved that the criteria for the appointment of research degree examiners set out in Appendix A attached be approved for implementation with immediate effect.’

11. Criteria for Completion (S.M.129/08)

‘Resolved that revisions to Higher Degree Regulations 3.22, 3.45 and 4.13 be approved, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report of the Graduate School Board (19.3.08).’

[https://www.essex.ac.uk/committees/committeedocs/GSBD/2007/documents/2008-03-19-item7\(ii\).doc](https://www.essex.ac.uk/committees/committeedocs/GSBD/2007/documents/2008-03-19-item7(ii).doc)

12. Policy on the Use of Independent Chairs (S.M.130/08)

‘Resolved that the Policy on the Appointment of Independent Chairs for Research Degree Vivas (GS/08/5) be approved with immediate effect.’

[https://www.essex.ac.uk/committees/committeedocs/GSBD/2007/documents/2008-03-19-item7\(iii\).doc](https://www.essex.ac.uk/committees/committeedocs/GSBD/2007/documents/2008-03-19-item7(iii).doc)

13. External Examiners and Exit Awards (PG)(S.M.135/08)

‘Resolved that Interim Examination Boards for taught postgraduate/graduate programmes should have the authority to confirm a student’s eligibility for the award of a certificate or diploma as an exit award, where there is no External Examiner present, provided the External Examiner has reviewed the usual sample of work in advance.’

SECTION B – FOR INFORMATION

1. Online Coursework Submission (OCS) Failure Strategy (LTC.MM.49/07)

‘Agreed In the event of an OCS failure Departmental Administrators (DAs) should be notified and advised to either adopt a manual coursework submission contingency plan or delay the submission deadline. In addition departments should be encouraged to stagger deadlines and avoid deadline times outside of office hours. This will allow students time to seek advice and support if needed.’

2. Changes to Academic Offences Policy and Procedure (USB.MM.154.07)

‘Noted The changes to the Academic Offences Policy and Procedures that had been approved by the Chair on behalf of the Committee.’

<http://www.essex.ac.uk/academic/docs/regs/offpro.shtm>

3. Amendment to Regulation 6.8 (S.M.94/08)

‘Resolved that Regulation 6.8 be amended with immediate effect, as follows (new wording underlined, deleted wording struck through):

No candidate will be admitted to the examination room later than 55 minutes after the start of ~~the any examination of more than one hour’s duration~~. No candidate will be permitted to leave the examination room permanently during the first 55 minutes ~~of the examination~~ or during the last 30 minutes of ~~the an~~ examination of more than one hour’s duration. For examinations with a duration of up to one hour candidates will be admitted to the examination room up to 10 minutes after the start of the examination and will be permitted to leave the examination room permanently only with the permission of the invigilator.’

4. Policy on Study by Credit Accumulation (S.MM.55-57/08)

- ‘Resolved
- i. that the maximum period for the dissertation element of an award undertaken by credit accumulation should be twelve months;
 - ii. that students following a credit accumulation route should not be permitted to commence the dissertation module until at least 60 credits of taught modules have been passed at a first attempt;
 - iii. that the Department of Health and Human Sciences be permitted to extend the dissertation maximum period to 18 months in cases where NHS Ethical Approval is needed. Otherwise, the standard twelve months should apply.’

5. External Examiners and Involvement in Level 4 (S.M.126/08)

- ‘Resolved that first year Boards of Examiners should have the power to confirm exit awards without an External Examiner being present.’

6. ‘Frontrunners’ – Employability Skills (LTC.MM.68-69/07)

- ‘Noted As a result, the University has devised an innovative approach to embedding employability, enterprise and commercial awareness in the student experience through a new student placement scheme called Frontrunners. The scheme will give students the opportunity to develop skills via paid work placements around campus; the particular value of Frontrunners is that the nature of the placement will be determined by a skills analysis and student will be given opportunities to reflect on and record the skills they have acquired by using the myLife ePortfolio.

Frontrunners will be the first scheme of its kind in UK higher education and will deal with some of the major challenges faced by all HE institutions. The aim is that the scheme becomes the sector-wide model for student employment with integrated skills development.’

7. Approval of Late Changes to the Membership of a Board of Examiners (S.M.125/08 and S.M.134/08)

- ‘Resolved that the Vice-Chancellor should delegate his powers for approving late changes to the membership of a Board of Examiners to the Faculty Dean.’

8. HEA Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (QAC.M.18/08)

- ‘Noted The Chair had agreed with the Dean of the Graduate School that the University would participate in the HEA Postgraduate Research Experience Survey in 2008. To avoid duplication and survey fatigue, the University would no longer run a separate PGR Student Satisfaction Survey internally.’

9. Procedure for Re-appointment of PVCs and Deans (S.M.167/08)

‘Approved The procedure for the re-appointment of PVCs and Deans, as follows:

- a. the relevant University officer (the Vice-Chancellor in the case of PVCs and the Faculty PVC in the case of Deans) shall establish whether a PVC or Dean who is coming to the end of his or her term office wishes to be re-appointed and for how long;
- b. proposals for the re-appointment of a PVC or Dean shall be considered by University Steering Group;
- c. the Vice-Chancellor shall inform PVCs, Deans and Heads of Department of any PVC or Dean whose re-appointment is to be submitted to Senate and Council for approval;
- d. the re-appointment of a PVC or Dean shall normally be submitted to Senate and Council as an item of formal business.’

Joanne Tallentire
Deputy Academic Registrar
May 2008

CIRCULATION

FOR ACTION:

Heads of Department
Directors of
 Areas and Study Abroad Office
 Centre for Psychoanalytic Studies
 Centre for Theoretical Studies
 English Language Teaching Centre
 Human Rights Centre

Departmental Administrators (including Centres listed above)

FOR INFORMATION:

Vice-Chancellor
Pro-Vice-Chancellors
Deans
Academic Registrar
Academic Section Administrators

Senate, 23 April 2008 – Tabled Paper

Senate members are requested to note amendments to the Graduate School Board report, Appendix 1, agenda paper S/08/25, P.35.

Appendix A

Criteria for the appointment of research degree examiners

The external examiner

The external examiner for a research degree should be:

- (a) Research active with appropriate expertise;
- (b) Normally employed in an HE institution (if not, including Emeritus Professors, a case as to their suitability needs to be made);
- (c) A senior member of staff and/or an experienced examiner (if not, a senior and experienced internal examiner must be appointed);
- (d) Qualified to the level at which they are being appointed to examine (if not, a case as to their suitability needs to be made)

The external examiner should not:

- (a) Have been a former member of the academic staff or a student of the University or partner institution in the past five years
- (b) Have been involved in the supervision of the student
- (c) Have a professional or personal relationship with the student, the student's supervisor or the internal examiner that might give rise to a conflict of interest

The internal examiner

The internal examiner for a research degree should be:

- (a) A member of the academic staff of the University or partner institution;
- (b) Research active with appropriate expertise;
- (c) Normally have a degree, or equivalent¹, at the level at which they are being appointed to examine (if not a case as to their suitability needs to be made)

The internal examiner should not:

- (a) Have been the student's supervisor (main, joint or secondary) other than acting as a temporary supervisor for a period of ~~no more than up to 12 months a year but not in the final 12 months before submission of the thesis;~~ ~~(a) Where they have supervised the student's work for no more than 12 months, this should not have been during the final 12 months before submission of the thesis;~~
- ~~(e)~~(b) Have been a member of the supervisory board during the final six months before submission of the thesis
- ~~(d)~~(c) Have a professional or personal relationship with the student or the external examiner that might give rise to a conflict of interest
- ~~(e)~~(d) Be the partner or a close relative of the supervisor (main, joint or secondary)

10 April 2008
Revised 23 April 2008

¹ A Professor with appropriate publications would be considered to be 'equivalent' and a case would not need to be made.