

From: Academic Registrar

1 September 2003

SUMMARY OF ACADEMIC POLICY DECISIONS – SUMMER 2003

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

ASC – 28 May 2003

Senate – 11 June 2003

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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SECTION A – FOR ACTION BY HEADS OF DEPARTMENT AND CENTRES**1. Annual Monitoring of Degree Schemes (ASC.M.70/03) (S.M.123/03)**

'RESOLVED:

that the deadlines for the receipt of annual monitoring reports be changed to the following:

Undergraduate Schemes: End of the Autumn term following the end of the academic year to which the report applies.

Taught Postgraduate Schemes: End of the Spring term following the end of the academic year to

which the report applies.'

2. Single Marking Scale for Masters and Diploma Schemes (ASC.M.74/03) (S.M.124/03)

'RESOLVED: that a single graduate marking scale with the pass mark set at 50% and a distinction level mark of 70% be introduced for all schemes by October 2004'

Departments have been asked to decide whether they wish to implement the scale in the next academic year or defer it until October 2004.

3. Working Group on Student Satisfaction Surveys 2002/03 (S.MM 126-132/03)

'RESOLVED:

- (a) that Student Assessment of Teaching, in its current form, should be abandoned. **Teaching-related questions should be incorporated into the existing Student Assessment of Courses process with effect from 2003/04.**
- (b) An annual student satisfaction survey should be introduced in 2003/04, including separate questionnaires for undergraduates, taught course postgraduates and for research students on standard programmes of study.
- (c) Consideration should be given to introducing alternative surveys in future years for students in non-standard categories, e.g. year abroad, International Programmes, in the light of experience of the survey in 2003/04.
- (d) The Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Group should be responsible for receiving the outcomes of the annual student satisfaction survey, and for determining and monitoring the follow-up action to be taken within the University. The outcomes of the survey should be made available to academic and administrative officers of the University with responsibility for relevant areas.
- (e) Existing surveys, such as that run by the Library, and other student feedback mechanisms, such as the focus groups run by External Relations, should continue to run in their current form, but the relationship between existing surveys and the annual University-wide student satisfaction should be reviewed once the latter has become established.
- (f) The first annual student satisfaction survey in 2003/04 should be run online.
- (g) Academic Standards Committee should evaluate the success of the first annual student satisfaction survey at its meeting in Summer 2004, with a view to refining or enhancing the process in the light of experience.'

4. Timing of Appeals for Taught Postgraduate Students (ASC.M. 77/03)

'The Committee noted that the Graduate Board had determined that it would not be appropriate to permit taught postgraduate students who had lodged an appeal which, *prima facie*, was based on admissible grounds for appeal, to proceed to the dissertation pending the outcome of the appeal.'

5. Amendment To The Procedure For Approval Of A New Postgraduate Course (ASC.M.81/03)

'RESOLVED: to waive the requirement for special justification if coursework accounts for more than 50% of the course assessment in respect of new postgraduate courses, with immediate effect.'

6. Course Representative System (ASC.M.101)

'RESOLVED:

that departments should be encouraged to:

- (a) have a student representation webpage modelled on the Department of History pages;
- (b) give notice-board space to student representatives for communicating with their peers;

- (c) put photos and contact details for all student reps on the department notice-board ;
- (d) to elect all representatives, other than 1st year and Postgraduate representatives, in the summer term.'

Department of History pages: <http://www.essex.ac.uk/history/students/streps.htm>

SECTION B – FOR INFORMATION

1. Amendment to Appeals Procedure for Research Students (ASC.M 80/03) (S.M.125/03)

'RESOLVED: that the Appeals Procedure for Research Degree Students should be amended as set out in Appendix 1 to the report of Academic Standards Committee (28/5/03)'

The Appeals Procedures for Research Degree Students against the final degree and against the decision of a Review Committee have been amended by the addition of the following paragraphs:

An appeal following the formal conclusion of the appeals procedures set out above may be made on the grounds of procedural irregularities in the appeals process only. A student who wishes to appeal against the outcome of these procedures should write to the Academic Registrar within four weeks setting out in detail the nature of the evidence to support the claim that there were procedural irregularities in the appeals process. If prima facie there is evidence to support the claim then the case will be reviewed by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Development). If the Pro-Vice-Chancellor determines that there were procedural irregularities in the appeals process and that the appeal is well-founded, a new Committee will be established, and paragraphs 5-11 above will apply. The Committee will be comprised of Deans or former Deans and will be chaired by a Pro-Vice-Chancellor. No member of the Committee will have had any previous involvement in the case.

In certain circumstances it may be possible for a student to take a complaint to the University Visitor, who is a senior judge appointed by the Privy Council. The Visitor will only hear an appeal if all possible procedures within the University for obtaining relief have been exhausted. A student who is considering making a submission to the Visitor is encouraged to consult the Students Union Advice Centre and should contact the Registrar & Secretary to ensure that he or she follows the correct procedure.

2. Student Assessment of Courses (S.M.133/03)

'RESOLVED: that the *Procedures and Notes for Guidance on Departmental Student Assessment of Courses* (as set out in Appendix 3 to the report of Academic Standards Committee 28/5/03) be approved, subject to further amendment to incorporate the recommendations approved by Senate.'

At the beginning of the Autumn term the Academic Section Systems Management Office will send Heads of Department a reminder of the policy on SAC, together with a checklist of courses being run by the department in that academic year, sorted into undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

3. Teaching Quality Strategy (S.M.134/03)

'RESOLVED: that the Teaching Quality Strategy (attached as Appendix 4 to the report of Academic Standards Committee 28/5/03) be approved, in place of the existing Quality Strategy, with immediate effect.'

The new Strategy can be viewed on the University's Quality Assurance and Enhancement web pages www.essex.ac.uk/quality/pages/gastrategy.DOC

4. Changes to Higher Degree Regulations (S.M.156/03)

(a) Minimum and maximum periods for MPhil and PhD candidates.

Text between [] is to be deleted. New text is underlined

4.41.

- c. a candidate must register for the minimum period of [four] six-years part-time study, with a maximum period of [five] eight years; [in exceptional circumstances, and where the character of the research environment and the nature of the research make it appropriate, the minimum period may be reduced to not less than three years of part-time study.] Standard part-time fees will be charged;

(b) Clarification of the requirements for MPhil and PhD students entering the completion period.

MPHIL CANDIDATES

+ 3.45.

- a. At end of the prescribed minimum period, a candidate may be permitted to proceed to a twelve-month completion period by the Dean of the Graduate School on the recommendation of the departmental Research Students' Progress Committee. The Research Students' Progress Committee shall recommend that a student proceeds to the completion period only if it is satisfied that the student has completed [his or her research including] all necessary laboratory work in the case of Science departments, or, for other disciplines, that a substantial proportion of the thesis is written in draft. In all cases, the Research Students' Progress Committee must also be satisfied [and] that the thesis will be ready for submission within the completion period. The Research Students' Progress Committee's recommendation will take the form of a report on the student's progress accompanied by appropriate supporting documents.

PHD CANDIDATES

+4.13

- a. At the end of the prescribed minimum period, a candidate may be permitted to proceed to a twelve-month completion period by the Dean of the Graduate School on the recommendation of the departmental Research Students' Progress Committee. The Research Students' Progress Committee shall recommend that a student proceeds to the completion period only if it is satisfied that

the student has completed [his or her research including] all necessary laboratory work in the case of Science departments, or, for other disciplines, that a substantial proportion of the thesis is written in draft. In all cases, the Research Students' Progress Committee must also be satisfied [and] that the thesis will be ready for submission within the twelve-month completion period. The Research Students' Progress Committee's recommendation will take the form of a report on the student's progress accompanied by appropriate supporting documents.

5. Introduction of Award of Doctor of Medicine (ASC.M.79/03) (S.M.157/03)

'RESOLVED: (a) that the award of Doctor of Medicine (MD) be approved for introduction in October 2003'

The degree scheme, which is broadly equivalent to an MPhil in level, is targeted specifically at candidates who hold a recognised medical qualification (eg MB BS, MB ChB) who are at post-registration level and who wish to study for a higher degree by research in the field of Biomedical Sciences relevant to a clinical speciality. The degree of Doctor of Medicine provides an alternative to the MSc, MPhil and PhD research degrees. It is open to suitably qualified University staff and to employees of the various NHS trusts in our region which have an association with the University. It is envisaged that the majority of candidates will be employed by the University on grant-funded contracts. Some candidates may hold joint appointments between the University and an NHS Trust while others may be employed solely by an NHS Trust associated with the University.

6. Closure of Contemporary Japan Centre (S.M.165-166/03)

'The Senate noted that the Contemporary Japan Centre had no central funding and existed as a "virtual centre" to encourage postgraduate recruitment. This position was seen as being somewhat deceptive as the Centre was not active.

RESOLVED: that the Contemporary Japan Centre be closed with immediate effect.'

CIRCULATION

FOR ACTION:

Heads of Department

Directors of

Centre for Psychoanalytic Studies

Human Rights Centre

Pan-European Institute

Centre for Theoretical Studies

Departmental Administrators (including Centres listed above)

Executive Officer, Socrates Office

FOR INFORMATION:

Vice-Chancellor

Pro-Vice-Chancellors

Deans

Academic Registrar

Academic Section Administrators

This Information Note is being circulated electronically but a paper copy is available on request to Kay Windust, Academic Registrar's Office, kwindust@essex.ac.uk