

## **SUMMARY OF ACADEMIC POLICY DECISIONS – SUMMER 2005**

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

ASC – 4 May 2005

ASC – 1 June 2005

Senate – 15 June 2005

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. Departmental Student Handbooks (ASC.M.93/05)**

‘Resolved

That departmental student handbooks should be required to include centrally provided summary text about academic offences and extenuating circumstances and URLs to the full text of University policy.’

#### **2. Learning Outcomes Working Party (ASC.MM.100-103/05) (S.MM.117-121/05) (ASC.M.106/05)**

S.MM.117-121/05 read as follows:

‘Resolved

- a) that all students should be required to pass their core courses in both the second and final year and that second years should be given a reassessment opportunity in September. For third year students the reassessment should be in the following June.

A core course could be defined as a course where one or more of the following criteria were met:

- i. The course was either a unique site for a learning outcome or one of only two sites for a learning outcome;
- ii. The course was essential to meet external professional requirements;
- iii. The course was defined to be core, because it was seen as an essential part of a scheme by the department for pedagogic reasons.

Where a course was core, a reassessment opportunity should always be provided and this might include examination resit, reassessment of coursework, or a combination of both. Where the reassessment was of a dissertation or project, it would be for the examination board to determine whether a fresh piece of work would be required or a reworking of previously submitted work. A full-time student should not be permitted to be reassessed on more than fifty percent of the work undertaken in the year.

- b) that the Board of Examiners must make its decisions based on the fail mark presented on the grid. The Board must not attempt to discount marks penalties for late work in order to judge whether the student would have passed the course, and thereby have met the learning outcomes, had the penalties not been given.
- c) that where a student commits an academic offence and is given a zero for an entire course prior to the culmination of assessment for all elements, the student should be required to undertake the normal assignments and exam for the course and be required to attain the pass mark to demonstrate that s/he has achieved the learning outcomes. The zero will then be applied to the course. If s/he does not achieve a pass mark s/he will have to undertake reassessment but the zero will still be applied. The reassessment opportunity must not expunge the penalty and the transcript will therefore show zero for each attempt.
- d) that where a failure to achieve a particular learning outcome is due to extenuating circumstances, the failure should not automatically be condoned. Normally the student should be given the opportunity to be reassessed for an uncapped mark. However, in cases where the Board of Examiners is satisfied that a sufficient volume of work has been completed successfully, it has the power to condone the missing elements and adjust the weighting of assessments in the course;
- e) that the University will continue to award *Aegrotat* degrees, but only to students who have achieved the learning outcomes for their scheme.'

The text of ASC.MM.100-103/05 follows:

'It was noted that a course that needed to be taken as a pre-requisite for a later course would not necessarily be considered core. It was also accepted that a course could be defined as compulsory but not core if a department insisted that taking it was an essential part of the scheme but passing it was not.

[ASC m]embers agreed that, where a course was core, a reassessment opportunity should always be provided. However, in the case of courses designated as core to meet external accreditation requirements, *passing* a reassessment need not be compulsory where an alternative progression route was available. For example, in the Department of Law students who failed courses required by the Law Society or Bar Council could progress onto a non-qualifying law degree.

[ASC m]embers agreed that, in order to ensure equity, reassessment of courses must be determined by the scheme a student is registered on, meaning that not all students taking a course designated as core for some schemes might be entitled to a reassessment opportunity. It was hoped that, in the future, the student record database would be able to

flag automatically which students were entitled to a reassessment opportunity, using information provided by departments in scheme structure documents.

Having agreed that an opportunity for reassessment should be provided for core courses, [ASC m]embers considered what form the reassessment should take. [ASC m]embers concluded that an examination board could require submission of coursework, or a resit examination or both. They noted that this was current practice in respect to first years. For second year students it was agreed that the reassessment should take place in September. For third year students the reassessment should be in the following June. Where the reassessment was of a dissertation or project, it would be for the examination board to determine whether a fresh piece of work would be required or a reworking of previously submitted work. It was agreed that a full-time student should not be permitted to be reassessed on more than fifty percent of the work undertaken in the year.'

ASC.MM.106/05 relates to learning outcomes:

- i. 'that a caveat about accuracy, similar to that given in the Prospectus, should be included in all programme specifications. Students should also be informed that the scheme structure for the second and final year was normally fixed by the end of the student's first year, although it might sometimes be necessary to make changes after this point;
- ii. that information about the distribution of learning outcomes should be published to students either in the module map format or as text, until such time as they are available on the web;
- iii. that departments should adopt the principle that a pass at the course level demonstrates that the learning outcomes for a course have been achieved;
- iv. that University-wide terminology should be devised to describe the development of a learning outcome.'

### **3. GTA Code of Practice (ASC.MM.169-170/05)**

ASC approved amendments to the *Code of Practice on Teaching and Demonstrating by Graduate Students* including the Person Specification. These relate principally to English language competence and training opportunities. The revisions to the *Code of Practice* are set out in [Appendix A](#). The *Code of Practice*, together with the person specification, is also available at: [www.essex.ac.uk/quality/pages/graduateteachingassistants.htm](http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/pages/graduateteachingassistants.htm).

### **4. Extenuating Circumstances (S.MM.128-131/05)**

'Resolved

- a) that the Chair of the Working Party on Extenuating Circumstances should be asked to produce guidelines for extenuating lateness, in consultation with Deans and drawing on existing models both internal and external to the University. These guidelines should be approved by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Standards) on behalf of Academic Standards Committee and the Senate in advance of the autumn term;
- b) that the guidelines for extenuating lateness should be publicised to students at the beginning of the 2005/06 academic year:
- c) that, subject to guidelines being in place by the start of the autumn term, the recommendations of the Working Party on Extenuating Circumstances, with revisions as

detailed in [Appendix B](#), should be accepted and the policy of zero tolerance for late submission of coursework and the procedure for extenuating lateness should be adopted with effect from 2005/06;

- d) that an advisory group be constituted by ASC to oversee implementation of the policy and to provide advice on difficult cases, for one year in the first instance.'

## **SECTION B – FOR INFORMATION**

### **1. Periodic Reviews (ASC.MM.118-119/05) (ASC.MM.176-177/05)**

ASC.MM.118-119/05 relate to the separation of Periodic Reviews for UG and PG provision:

'Following a decision of the Committee during 2002/03, Periodic Reviews during 2004/05 had continued to permit undergraduate and postgraduate provision to be reviewed at the same time (ASC.M.66/03). By dividing the event into two parts, with undergraduate schemes considered in the first part and postgraduate schemes in the second, joint Periodic Reviews events were designed to allow sufficient time to concentrate on distinctive undergraduate and postgraduate issues. However, on balance, the Graduate School did not feel that sufficient consideration was being given to graduate issues and therefore the School believed that joint undergraduate and postgraduate events should be discontinued. It was noted that, where there was overlap between undergraduate and postgraduate provision, the department should draw attention to this in their reflective document and include, in their Periodic review documentation, a copy of any relevant Periodic Review reports.

- i) that undergraduate and postgraduate schemes should always be considered at separate Periodic Review events; .....

ASC.MM.176-177/05 relate to the dissemination of good practice identified in Periodic Reviews:

'.....The Periodic Review reports also identified good practice, but there was not a systematic mechanism for disseminating this information.

Resolved:

that good practice identified in Periodic Review reports should be discussed at the end of each academic year at a Heads of Department meeting.'

### **2. New Scheme Approval Procedures for UoES (ASC.MM.156-157/05)**

'The proposal for a new sub-committee of all the School Boards to consider new scheme proposals for UoES would report to the appropriate School Board. It would not consider proposals for approval for publicity purposes and would not vary the new approvals process approved by Senate in March 2005. The sub-committee was designed to provide the necessary expert knowledge of the special requirements that apply to Southend developments.

- i. that the UoES Validation Committee (SVC) be established with effect from October 2005, to be chaired by the Dean of Learning Partnerships;
- ii. that the Chair of ASC should finalise the membership and terms of reference of the SVC, in consultation with the Deans, as appropriate.'

### **3. Academic Decision-Making Structures – Amendments to Ordinances (S.MM.132-133/05)**

Senate and Council approved amendments to Ordinances 22 and 35 to the effect that Senate's delegation of its powers to School Boards to determine rules of assessment is withdrawn from October 2005/06. The revisions to Ordinances 22 and 35, and a consequential amendment to the terms of reference of Academic Standards Committee, are set out in [Appendix C](#).

### **4. Amendments to Academic Offences Procedures (S.M.135/05)**

The Senate approved the following amendments to the Academic Offences procedures (new text underlined):

'A1. Academic offences include:

- a. Plagiarism, that is, using or copying the work of others (whether written, printed or in any other form) without proper acknowledgement in any coursework.
- b. Repeating work previously submitted for another assignment without full acknowledgement of the extent to which that previous work has been used.
- c. Falsifying data or evidence.
- d. Submitting a fraudulent claim of extenuating circumstances.
- e. Assisting another student to commit an academic offence.
- f. Submitting written work produced collaboratively unless this is explicitly allowed.
- g. Copying the work of another candidate or otherwise communicating with another candidate in an examination.
- h. Introducing any written, printed or electronically stored information into an examination other than material expressly permitted in the instructions for that examination.
- i. defacing or interfering with exam script booklets.  
This list is not exhaustive.

C5.

Prior to the submission of a doctoral thesis, allegation of academic offences by research students shall be dealt with in accordance with the Academic Offences Procedures. Where an offence is alleged by one or both of the Examiners during the examination process, the examination must be suspended and the allegation referred to the Dean of the Graduate School. If plagiarism is alleged before the viva takes place, then the viva should be held over until the investigation has been completed. If plagiarism is identified during the viva, the Examiners should inform the candidate and suspend the viva. In both cases, the Examiners should prepare a written report for the Dean of the Graduate School. All allegations brought after the thesis has been submitted will be considered by an Academic Offences Committee. Parallel procedures will used in the case of vivas for those other than doctoral candidates.'

### **5. Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Programmes (S.M.43/05)**

The Senate approved the introduction of the *Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes*, which is available at: [www.essex.ac.uk/academic/docs/regqs/prdcode.shtm](http://www.essex.ac.uk/academic/docs/regqs/prdcode.shtm).

### **6. Review of the Effectiveness of the Senate (S.MM.179-180/05)**

Following the review of the effectiveness of the Council, which took place in 2004/05, a Working Party to review the effectiveness of the Senate has been established with the following terms of reference:

- a) to conduct a review of the effectiveness of the Senate, including a review of:

- (i) the role of Senate, including its relation to other committees and to Council;
- (ii) the composition and membership of Senate and its committees.

b) to make recommendations to Senate accordingly.

Joanne Tallentire  
Senior Assistant Registrar  
September 2005

**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

## Code of Practice on Teaching and Demonstrating by Graduate Students

### A. Selection (Graduate Teaching Assistants only)

- i) Vacancies for GTAs should be advertised in departments and a person specification provided.
- ii) All short-listed GTAs should be interviewed by the Head of Department or his/her nominee, and one other member of teaching staff, before initial appointment and their suitability assessed in relation to the essential criteria, including their English language competence.
- iii) Feedback should be provided on candidates' interview performance and suitability for the GTA role on request, after the selection process is complete, and all candidates invited to interview should be informed of their entitlement to request feedback. Candidates who are not selected on the grounds of English language competence should be advised on the English language courses available to them.

### B. Training and development of GTAs and Demonstrators

- i) Departments should ensure that all new GTAs and Demonstrators undertake a Learning and Teaching Unit [Staff Development Office] training course, or an alternative programme of training proposed by the Head of Department and approved in writing by the LTU. [University Staff Development Officer.]
- ii) Training for GTAs and Demonstrators (wherever delivered) should include training in sensitivity to cultural issues, including language and special needs.
- iii) Departments should normally provide written information on teaching arrangements and responsibilities within the department for GTAs and Demonstrators.
- iv) Early in each academic year departments should organise a briefing meeting for new GTAs and Demonstrators providing formal induction on departmental teaching and assessment practices, student progress procedures, the role of the GTA and guidance on academic content. At this meeting or separately departments should provide appropriate training on health and safety.
- v) Departments should normally hold, at the end of the Autumn term and at the end of each academic year, a seminar/workshop for GTAs, aimed at sharing good practice and providing a preliminary induction for potential new GTAs.
- vi) Departments should maintain systems for monitoring the quality of teaching by GTAs, which should include documented observation of teaching, the dates of observations and names of observers to be held on departmental records. Each GTA should be allocated a mentor, normally the relevant course/module supervisor.
- vii) Departments should advise GTAs and Demonstrators of appropriate training opportunities, including those provided by the Learning and Teaching Unit and should also keep the [Staff Development Office] LTU informed of any emerging training needs of GTAs and Demonstrators.
- viii) Departments should encourage and support GTAs who may wish to develop portfolios for accreditation.

### C. Teaching and Demonstrating duties

- i) Teaching should normally be class teaching or demonstrating; lecturing duties must be associated with a student's research interest, and require prior approval from the Dean of the Graduate School and the Dean of the Undergraduate School in which the teaching will be conducted.
- ii) Where GTAs are asked to have office hours, they should be paid appropriately and provided with a suitable room.

D. Departmental organisation (Graduate Teaching Assistants only)

- i) Departments should make every effort to ensure the integration of GTAs into course teaching teams, and their inclusion in the information and communication networks appropriate to their role as team members.
- ii) GTAs should be represented at departmental meetings where there is discussion on teaching issues.
- iii) Wherever possible, GTAs should be listed alongside academic staff in course details, reading lists and departmental booklets and included on staff e-mail lists and lists of office hours.
- iv) GTAs should be provided with appropriate resources to carry out their teaching duties.