

SUMMARY OF ACADEMIC POLICY DECISIONS – 2006-2007

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

Learning and Teaching Committee – 11/10/06 and 24/1/07 and 18/5/07
Quality Assurance Committee – 1/11/06 and 7/2/07 and 9/5/07
Undergraduate School Board - 6/12/06 and 14/3/07 and 6/6/07
Graduate School Board – 13/12/06 and 21/03/07 and 13/6/07
Senate – 18/10/06 and 17/01/07 and 6/3/07 and 25/4/07 and 4/7/07

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.

This summary does not include any changes or variations made to the undergraduate and postgraduate Rules of Assessment. The new rules can be found at:

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

Please note that the policies and documents mentioned in this summary may not be updated on the University's Web Pages at present, however all updates will be available by the end of September.

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SECTION A – FOR ACTION BY HEADS OF DEPARTMENT AND CENTRES

1. Student Assessment Of Courses And Teaching (QAC.MM.55-59/07, 9.5.07)

‘Resolved

1. that departments should be encouraged to divulge the results of SACT as widely as possible to both staff and students;
2. that departments not currently sharing SACT results via SSLC should take immediate steps to do so;’
3. ‘that the examples of SACT questionnaires provided should be made available via the QEO WebPages as a resource for departments when reviewing and designing their own questionnaires;’

2. Review of Progression and Achievement Statistics (QAC.MM.73-74/07, 9.5.07)

The Quality Assurance Committee reviewed statistics relating to levels of progression and achievement in respect of undergraduate and postgraduate taught awards. The Committee encouraged departments to unpick the data to help determine whether particular groups of students were influencing identified trends, which could then be explored at the faculty level.

http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/pages/sapd/2006-2007/1_Table1QACUGProg3yr.xls

http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/pages/sapd/2006-2007/1_Table2ugdegreesqac.pdf (pdf)

http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/pages/sapd/2006-2007/1_Table3pgentryqac.pdf (pdf)

3. Supporting First Year Student Progress (GSB.M.107/07, 21.3.07)

The Secretary of the Graduate School Board noted how departments were encouraged, from 2007/08, to hold individual meetings between the Director of Undergraduate Studies, or his/her nominee, and every first year student before the end of the Autumn term; a recommendation of the Working Group on Academic Support and Guidance which was approved by Senate on 22 March 2006.

4. Externals’ Power to Change Marks (UGSB.M.15/07, 14.3.07)

‘Noted

The University’s policy in relation to the authority of External Examiners was extremely clear; the Externals’ role was one of moderation rather than an additional marker. The University had recently reaffirmed this policy as part of the quinquennial review of External Examiner policy and procedure and continued to consider it appropriate. While the Externals’ role as moderator was explicitly specified in the Roles and Responsibilities document they received upon appointment, it was important that departments reinforced this when Externals’ came to consider students’ work. To assist with this, a briefing note had been prepared for departments, outlining the key principles governing External Examining at the University and the Externals’ main duties. The briefing note had been circulated to the Committee in paper UGSB/07/09.’

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

5. Late Submission of Coursework and Extenuating Circumstances

(Advisory Group on Extenuating Circumstances)

i) **Changes to terminology (UGSB.MM.2-3/06, 6.12.06)**

At the meeting of the Undergraduate School Board on 6 December 2006, it was noted that the Chair had approved changes to the terminology used in respect of late submission of coursework and extenuating circumstances, which will be implemented from 2007/08.

- ‘The ‘Extenuating Lateness’ form will now be named ‘Late Submission Form’
- The ‘Extenuating Performance’ form will be named ‘Extenuating Circumstances Form’.

These changes are effective immediately. The PVC and the AGE C recognised that departmental documentation will refer to the old titles of the forms this year, so to avoid confusion, the forms will have the old title below the new in brackets.’

ii) **Changes to the Late Submission of Coursework Policy (UGSB.MM.116-124/07, 6.6.07)**

Members of the Undergraduate School Board discussed ‘the recommendation that a change be made to the Late Submission Policy to allow a period of twenty-four hours from the date/time of the original deadline within which students could submit their work for a capped mark. There was a strong discipline-based divide regarding this recommendation and it was concluded that this divide would be most effectively addressed by giving Extenuating Lateness Committees (ELCs) greater powers of discretion in cases where work was received shortly after the deadline. This would permit ELCs to deal with the issue within the wider context of the subject area and the local assessment regime.’

It was noted that Partner Institutions had their own policies regarding the submission of coursework and therefore were not included in this policy.

‘Resolved

- a) that the Advisory Group on Extenuating Circumstances should consider the discretion available to Extenuating Lateness Committees in the light of the discussions concerning the proposed twenty-four hour rule and make recommendations to the Undergraduate School Board as appropriate;
- b) that the term ‘zero tolerance’ should be replaced with “Course Deadline Policy” in all central and departmental publications giving guidance on the policy applied to late submission of coursework;
- c) that all academic departments and centres with students should use the OCS system where possible and appropriate to do so from October 2007;
- d) that the current policy of ‘five working days’ within which to submit late work accompanied by an Extenuating Lateness Form, should be changed to ‘seven days’;
- e) that with effect from the academic year 2007/08, a change be made to the policy allowing students to submit beyond seven days of the deadline only in cases where the coursework makes up 100% of the assessment for that course/module or has the status of an examination. Otherwise, students would have seven days from the deadline within which to submit late coursework, unless model answers had been released. Departments should aim to publish in advance normal release times for model answers;
- f) that students who had experienced longer-term and/or more serious extenuating circumstances could only submit late work beyond seven days of the deadline for formative feedback, but should submit an extenuating circumstances claim for the Board of Examiners to consider. Once approved the Board could use its discretion to employ a suitable method within its powers to deal with the student’s claim. The current guidelines for students should be supplemented to give examples of the discretion available to Examination Boards in relation to such claims.’

The ‘Extenuating Performance Form’ becomes the ‘Extenuating Circumstances Form’. Subsequently, reference to ‘Extenuating Performance Committees’ should change to ‘Extenuating Circumstances Committees’.

<http://www2.essex.ac.uk/academic/students/ug/ztm.htm> - zero tolerance

<http://www2.essex.ac.uk/academic/students/ug/extlateug.doc> -ext lateness form

<http://www2.essex.ac.uk/academic/students/ug/extcircsug.doc> - ext circumstance form

6. **Role of External Examiners in Relation to Stage One (QAC.MM.47-49/07, 9.5.07)**

‘Noted

With the introduction of a new undergraduate credit framework and rules of assessment from 2007/08, all degree schemes offered by the University would include an exit award of a Cert HE upon successful completion of 120 credits at level 4 or above. Under the existing undergraduate framework, Stage 1 (level 4) was not covered by external examiners except in cases where the Cert HE was a stand-alone award to which students were recruited directly.’

‘Resolved

1. that, from 2007/08, Award External Examiners should, as part of their responsibility to oversee the appropriateness of the standards set for the awards for which they are responsible:
 - b) scrutinise the examination papers or other major assessment instruments used in Stage 1;
 - c) consider Stage 1 progression data for the cohort, in order to judge the overall standards of student performance;
 - d) have the right sample examination scripts.
2. that external examiners should not normally be involved in first year boards or be required to sign-off on first year marks grids, but that this decision should be kept under review in the light of the number of Cert HEs awarded by the University;

that, when a student withdraws between the successful completion of Stage 1 and the end of Stage 2, their marks profile should be sent to the Award External Examiner. The Award External Examiner should be asked to confirm the decision of the first year board that the marks profile indicates that the student has successfully completed Stage 1 and that they are therefore eligible for the award of a Cert HE.’

7. **Promotion and Allocation of University of Essex Scholarships (GSB.M.152/06, 13.12.06)**

The Graduate School Board encouraged departments to promote the availability of the Scholarships as part of their student recruitment activity. It was noted that the budget for the University of Essex Scholarships Scheme was confirmed until 2007-08. Departmental allocations for 2007-08 would follow the same formula as previous years and would be confirmed in the summer term.

8. **New Two-part Scheme Approval Process (UGSB.M.84/07, 6.6.07)**

The Quality Assurance Committee approved a new two-part approval process in May 2007. The new procedures and accompanying proformas can be found on the Quality Enhancement Office web pages.

http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/pages/new_programme_approval.htm

9. **Marking Policy (UGSB.M.114/07, 6.6.07)**

The Undergraduate School Board approved the Marking policy for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Work with effect from 2007/08.

<http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/pages/examinationsandassessment.htm>

10. **Planning Approval for Overseas Partnerships (QAC.MM. 22-23/07, 7.2.07)**

Planning approval for new overseas partnerships must now be obtained from the Budget Sub-Committee, not the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Group. Full details on planning approval can be found at:

<http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/pages/procsCB.htm>

SECTION B – FOR INFORMATION

1. **Audit timing and Preparation (QAC. M. 6/07, 7.2.07)**

‘Noted

The QAA had confirmed that the Institutional Audit would take place in the week commencing 10th March 2008 and that a Core Audit Team had been formed to co-ordinate preparations.’

2. **Research Degree Matters**

i) **Report on the QAA Special Review Of Research Degree Requirements (GS.M.6/07, 21.3.07)**

‘Noted

Following the Special Review Of Research Degree Requirements by the QAA of research degree programmes across the sector, it had published a summary report of its findings. The Report was published at <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/postgraduate/ODEnglandNI.pdf> (pdf). In future, research degrees would be reviewed as part of an Institutional Audit.’

ii) **Entry Requirements for Research Degrees (GSB.MM.151-152/0713.6.07)**

The Graduate School Board approved a statement of the standard entry requirements for admission to the University's research degrees. Departments are free to adapt these entry requirements on their web pages; a general statement will be published in the prospectus.

http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/pages/sapd/2006-2007/4_stdentryreq.doc

iii) **Revision to Codes of Practice on Postgraduate Research Degrees (S.M.263/07, 4.7.07)**

Senate resolved that the revisions to the Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Degrees and to the Code of Practice on Professional Doctorates be approved for introduction in October 2007.

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

3. Assessment of Part-Year Study Abroad (S.MM.257-259/06, 18.10.06)

‘Noted

It was proposed that the policy already approved in relation to resit examination arrangements under the revised Rules of Assessment to come into effect in 2007/08 should also be adopted for the assessment of part-year study abroad and exchange students. The basic assumption was that an unseen examination would be set for these students; however, alternative assessment arrangements could be approved by the Faculty Dean, as long as they were of equivalent rigour.

Resolved

that assessment arrangements consistent with those agreed for resits under the Rules of Assessment to be introduced in 2007/08 be put in place for all part-year study abroad and exchange students from 2006/07 onwards.’

4. Policy and Procedure for the Accreditation of Prior Learning (S.M.257/07, 4.7.07)

Senate approved the revised Policy and Procedure for the Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) and the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) for implementation from 2007/08 in relation to undergraduate and taught postgraduate awards.

<http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/pages/APELpolicy.html>

5. External Examiners and Exam Boards

i) Examination Board Discretion (GSB.MM.121-123/06, 13.6.06)

‘Noted

Members discussed the Working Party's recommendation on the operation of discretion by Exam Boards. It approved the proposal but suggested a minor rewording of the requirement that Boards document their reasons to include both their reasons for exercising discretion and their reasons for the decision taken.

Resolved

That the statement on the use of discretion by Exam Boards be amended to read:
Except in the case of extenuating circumstances, the Board of Examiners should restrict its use of discretion to exceptional circumstances. Where the Board of Examiners agrees to exercise its discretion the reasons must be documented as part of the Examination Board report, setting out the reason for exercising discretion and the reason for the decision taken, and a copy sent to the Graduate School.’

ii) Examination Board Decisions (S.MM.151-153/07, 25.4.07)

‘Resolved

- (a) that Examination Board decisions should not be overturned after the Board and that the Chair was within his/her right to suspend Boards in cases where there was concern regarding the decisions being made;
- (b) that decisions on extenuating circumstances should be checked during the Exam Boards and not afterwards, to ensure that any inconsistencies could be dealt with during the meeting;
- (c) that reviewing decisions concerning borderline cases and extenuating circumstances should be

an item on Exam Boards' agendas, to ensure consistency of decision-making by the Board.'

iii) Operation of Exam Boards (S.MM. 255-256/07, 4.7.07)

'Reported

The Vice-Chancellor's action on behalf of the Senate to approve the following with effect from 18 June 2007:

- i. the procedures for handling errors/cases of potential inconsistency after an exam board has met
- ii. that in cases where an error is discovered after results have been published and correcting the error would be to the detriment of the student(s), the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) should be involved in the decision-making and approve the final decision of the re-convened exam board.'

http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/pages/sapd/2006-2007/7_handlingerrors.doc

iv) The Role of The Deans In The Scrutiny Of External Examiners' Reports (QAC.MM.70-72/07, 9.5.07)

The Quality Assurance Committee approved changes made to the procedure for dealing with external examiner reports, with the exception of collaborative partners, to ensure that the role of the Dean does not duplicate activity undertaken within departments and promotes quality enhancement.

<http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/pages/ExternalExamining/procreports.htm>

v) External Examiner Report Proformas (UGSB.MM.128-129/07, 6.6.07) (GSB.MM.202-203/07, 13.6.07)

Revisions made to the External Examiner Report Proforma for undergraduate and postgraduate taught provisions were approved by the Undergraduate School Board and Graduate School Board respectively. Both forms can be obtained from the Quality Enhancement Office web page.

<http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/pages/ExternalExamining/pgproformaJun07.pdf> (pdf)
<http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/pages/ExternalExamining/ugproformaJun07.pdf> (pdf)

6. Postgraduate Cases of Extenuating Circumstances (GSB.M.171-173/07, 13.6.07)

The Graduate School Board approved guidelines for handling substantiated cases of extenuating circumstances by Boards of Examiners for taught postgraduate and graduate students.

http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/pages/sapd/2006-2007/9_extencircum.doc

7. Pre-Sessional Pathway Revisions (S.M.159/07, 25.4.07)

Senate resolved that the changes to undergraduate pre-sessional pathways be approved with immediate effect. Further information about Pre-Sessional Pathways can be found at:

<http://www.essex.ac.uk/internationalacademy/courses/ps/ps-programme.shtm#pathway>

8. **Regulations, Policies and Procedures**

i) **Amendments to Progress Procedures after Undergraduate Examinations for First and Second Year Students (UGSB.M.107/07, 6.6.07)**

The Undergraduate School Board approved amendments made to the University Progress Procedures after Undergraduate Examinations for first and second year students with effect from 2007/08.’
Further information can be found at: <http://www.essex.ac.uk/academic/docs/regs/progress.shtm>

ii) **Revision of University Regulations (S.M.323/07, 4.7.07)**

Senate resolved that revised University Regulations be approved with effect from 2007/08’.

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

iii) **Higher Degree Regulations (S.M.275/07, 4.7.07)**

Senate resolved that changes to the Higher Degree Regulations be approved with effect from October 2007.

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

iv) **Academic Offences Policy and Procedures (S.M.260/07, 4.7.07) (S.M.273/07, 4.7.07)**

Senate resolved that the revised Academic Offences Policy and Procedure be approved with effect from 2007/08, in relation to undergraduate and postgraduate students.

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

v) **Procedures for Study Abroad Students with a Disciplinary Record (S.M.314/07, 4.7.07)**

The University has in place a policy stating that students with a disciplinary record are not permitted to undertake study abroad as a component of a degree scheme. With the need to formalise policy, Senate approved procedures devised by The Student Discipline Office relating to prospective study abroad students with a disciplinary record, with immediate effect.

<http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/pages/sapd/2006-2007/13-DiscReportJuly07.doc>

Joanne Tallentire
Senior Assistant Registrar
August 2007

CIRCULATION

FOR ACTION:

Heads of Department

Directors of

Study Abroad Office

CCFEA

Centre for Psychoanalytic Studies

Human Rights Centre

Departmental Administrators (including Centres listed above)

FOR INFORMATION:

Vice-Chancellor

Pro-Vice-Chancellors
Deans
Academic Registrar
Academic Section Administrators